PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTIETH PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
THIRTY-SIXTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SESSION 1987-88

COMPRISING PERIOD
25 JANUARY—5 FEBRUARY 1988

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THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTIETH PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 25 JUNE 1987]

THIRTY-SIXTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

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House of Commons

Monday 25 January 1988

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Imprisonment of a Member

Mr. Speaker: I have to inform the House that I have received two letters—one from the resident magistrate at Belfast petty sessions and the other from the clerk at the petty sessions in Enniskillen—informing me that Mr. Peter Robinson, the hon. Member for Belfast, East, has been sentenced to a period of imprisonment of seven days.

I shall cause the text of the letters to be published in the Votes and Proceedings and in the *Official Report*.

Following are the letters:

Dear Mr. Speaker
Peter David Robinson, Member of Parliament for Belfast East, was convicted by me at Belfast Petty Sessions on 11 December 1987, of taking part in a public procession, contrary to Article 3 of the Public Order (Northern Ireland) Order 1987. I fined him £20.00, to be paid within 28 days.
As that fine has not been paid Mr. Robinson was today committed to Prison for a period of 7 days.
Yours faithfully
C. P. McRandal
Resident Magistrate

Dear Sir
At Irvinestown Magistrates Court on Friday 23 October 1987, Mr. David Peter Robinson of 57 Gransha Road, Dundonald, Member of Parliament for Belfast East, was convicted of taking part in a public procession on 27 May 1987 in respect of which the requirements of Article 3 of the Public Order (NI) Order 1987, as to notice had not been satisfied, contrary to Article 3(5)*(a)* of the said Order. Mr Robinson was fined £20.00 to be paid within 28 days.
On the 27 November 1987 a Warrant of Execution was issued in default of payment. I have just been informed that defendant was lodged in H.M. Prison, Crumlin Road, Belfast on Wednesday 29 January 1988.
Yours faithfully
Signed Clerk of Petty Sessions

Oral Answers to Questions

ENERGY

Energy Conservation

1. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what recent representations he has received about the adequacy of existing energy conservation schemes.

The Minister of State, Department of Energy (Mr. Peter Morrison): I have received a number of representations. On 22 January I said in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Berkshire, East (Mr. MacKay) that there would be continuing role for the energy efficiency office, with no change in its budget for 1988-89. I have asked the EEO to target its work at the most economically attractive sectors and to examine how the contribution from industry and commerce can be increased. I am not committed to extending the present level of funding beyond 1988-89.

Mr. Knox: What is my hon. Friend's estimate of the potential for further energy savings? Is he satisfied that the existing schemes will enable us to achieve those savings?

Mr. Morrison: What my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and my hon. Friend the Deputy Chief Whip did when they were Secretary of State and Minister with responsibility for this Department was a remarkable success story. They heightened awareness enormously in industry and commerce about the efficient use of energy. Doubtless some firms and managements need to learn a thing or two, and we shall direct our efforts to that matter.

Mr. Barry Jones: I am sure the Minister will agree that British Aerospace has done very well with regard to energy

conservation. May I tell him of one of its worries—the mooted increase in electricity prices? The local factory at Broughton, which is adjacent to his constituency——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Does this have anything to do with energy conservation?

Mr. Jones: Yes, Sir, it is directly related to the matter. British Aerospace at Broughton spends £1 million or more a year on electricity. If the Government increase the price of electricity, the profits of and jobs at British Aerospace in Broughton, which is a factory that the Minister knows well, will be affected. Will the Minister reconsider electricity prices for industry?

Mr. Morrison: As the hon. Gentleman will be aware, I have the honour to be his next door neighbour, with the Broughton factory lying on his side of the constituency. I am particularly well aware of the point that he has made, and I agree that the management and labour force have proved to be outstandingly successful. I have no doubt that the company will continue to make commercial and industrial decisions that will ensure that it remains competitive, which is the best way of ensuring the continuation of the labour force.

Mr. Speaker: Nothing that I have heard leads me to believe that all this has anything to do with energy conservation.

Mr. Butler: As my hon. Friend will be aware, 2 million lofts remain uninsulated and there are 11 million houses without cavity wall insulation. If we were to press ahead with home insulation schemes, would that not, to some degree, save the need for expensive electricity generating capacity?

Mr. Morrison: As my hon. Friend is probably aware, about 300,000 community insulation projects are carried out per year. Some 3 million houses have benefited from the home insulation scheme since the Government came to power, which is an outstandingly good record.

Domestic Consumers

2. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has any plans to review the code of practice for domestic customers issued by the electrity and gas industries.

Mr. Peter Morrison: No, Sir. It is for the Gas and Electricity Consumer Councils to keep the operation of the code of practice under review and, if appropriate, to recommend any changes.

Mr. Hughes: The Minister will be aware that I am returning to a matter that I raised last month. He accepted the figures that I gave that gas disconnections increased by 40 per cent. last year, whereas electricity disconnections decreased slightly. We have had one cold snap—I am not talking politically — and there may be a severe winter. Will he be less complacent and say that the number of disconnections this winter will be reduced, to prevent thousands dying from or being affected by hypothermia?

Mr. Morrison: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman is not referring to his particular political cold snap. I know that he is concerned about this matter, and I think that at the last Energy Question Time I explained that this is a matter for the Gas Consumer Council. I assure the hon. Gentleman that, under the present code, a commitment not to cut off the supply between October and March to pensioner households is something that is abided by, and I am sure he will agree with that.

Mr. Stern: Does my hon. Friend agree that as both gas and electricity boards have gained experience of working with the current codes of practice it has been possible for them to look more advantageously at the consumer, as long as the consumer is prepared to contact the gas or electricity boards as early as possible? Indeed, the experience of many of us in our constituency work has been that, provided such negotiations start early enough, many of the problems that the codes of practice were brought into being to prevent are avoidable.

Mr. Morrison: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. The arrangements in place for both gas and electricity are very welcome to many of his constituents as well as to the constituents of all hon. Members. However, as the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) pointed out, there has been an increase, and the Gas Consumer Council is looking carefully into this at the moment.

Mr. John Garrett: Is the Minister aware that gas disconnections increased by 25 per cent. in 1986 and by 35 per cent. in the first nine months of 1987? Has not privatisation been a massive and major cause of fuel poverty? What level of disconnections will there be after next April, when the 2·5 million households receiving help for heating through social security will cease to receive it? Is it not a case of putting profit before people?

Mr. Morrison: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman can have noticed what has happened to the price of gas since privatisation. In relative terms the price has gone down, and presumably that will lead to a better situation.

Coal Industry

3. **Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many people are currently eligible for British Coal's redundant mineworkers payments scheme.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Michael Spicer): By 15 January 7,350 men had accepted redundancy under British Coal's industrial redundancy scheme. There have been no compulsory redundancies.

Mr. Davies: Is the Minister aware that despite the general welcome to extend RMPS to the Tredomen engineering works in my constituency, there is considerable anger at the decision announced a fortnight ago to close the works? Is the Minister further aware that considerable sacrifices were made by the employees at those works over very many years, including the acceptance of voluntary redundancies? In the light of the present closure, will he reconsider his decision not to extend retrospective payments under the RMPS to those former employees?

Mr. Spicer: There will be no change of policy on that matter. The work force at Tredomen has accepted that redundancy closure proposition.

Mr. Andy Stewart: In view of what my hon. Friend has said, would he like to bring a little joy into Arthur Scargill's life, since his disastrous election at the weekend, and let the country know that he would still be eligible for the mineworkers redundancy scheme?

Mr. Spicer: Mr. Scargill was elected on the basis of 35 per cent. of the mining work force. If Mr. Scargill pursues his confrontation policies, far from saving jobs, which he professes is his wish, he will threaten jobs.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Minister aware that the figures announced yesterday for the election of the president of the National Union of Mineworkers, referred to by the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart), showed a handsome majority of which any political leader in Britain would be proud? It is time that we stopped this Orwellian fantasy that, because Arthur Scargill has been elected on a reduced majority, just as the Prime Minister was in the last election, somehow or other he has to adopt the policies of his defeated opponent. That is nonsense.

Mr. Spicer: The hon. Gentleman is right, that Mr. Scargill was re-elected as president of the NUM, although that is only one union representing the miners. I had hoped that the hon. Gentleman would go on to say that if Mr. Scargill's policies are pursued we could end up with more closures in the mining industry, whereas if, for example, the overtime ban were removed, that could lead not only to fewer closures but to the opening up and development of seams and new pits.

Mr. Speaker: May I make a plea for hon. Members to stick to the question. There is a later question about this matter on the Order Paper.

Offshore Supplies Office

4. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has any proposals to enhance the export support role of the offshore supplies office.

The Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Cecil Parkinson): The offshore supplies office has recently increased the resources it devotes to supporting the offshore industry in overseas markets. My hon. Friend the Minister of State and I will be doing all we can to support the United Kingdom offshore supplies industry in its bid to win export orders worldwide.

Mr. Greenway: Does my right hon. Friend agree that there are enormous export opportunities in offshore supplies? Will he say what he is doing to assist the process?

Mr. Parkinson: The United Kingdom offshore supplies industry is now a formidable industry employing tens of thousands of people. It supplied nearly £2 billion worth of goods to North sea operators last year. We believe that technology is capable of wide applications in many markets overseas, and my hon. Friend and I will be leading teams of British business men to markets all over the world and supporting them in promoting British exports.

Mr. Dalyell: May I ask the Secretary of State an urgent question affecting the offshore supplies industry in Scotland? How, in what form and when do Ministers propose to use the golden share in Britoil?

Mr. Parkinson: I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his ingenuity, but I have nothing to add to the remarks of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The golden share exists and it is in the hands of the Treasury Solicitor. The parties bidding for Britoil have been warned that the powers will be used to prevent any of them getting control. When that situation arises, they will be used.

Nuclear Industry

5. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the release of information concerning the nuclear industry, in the light of the recent release of documents relating to the 1957 Windscale fire.

Mr. Parkinson: I am sorry; I cannot find the answer immediately.

Mr. Tony Banks: Do not worry. We will talk among ourselves.

Mr. Parkinson: Do. It would help.

The latest release of records included no new information on the causes or effects of the fire that was not already in the public domain. Four White Papers were produced within a year of the fire, and altogether some 70 reports have been published.

Mr. Taylor: Does the Secretary of State accept that there is justified public and scientific concern to see all the papers—if the Secretary of State can find them, that is—and that there is no justification on national security grounds for withholding them? In view of that tragedy, and the tragedy at Chernobyl, will he ensure, not only that all the papers relating to Windscale are released, but that those relating to the proposed test at Trawsfynydd on 12 February are released now? The safety advice given to the Central Electricity Generating Board by the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate should be released and the test called off in the interests of public safety.

Mr. Parkinson: None of the limited number of papers retained deal with the causes or consequences of the Windscale fire. All the information made available on 1 January had been in the public domain—for those who cared to read it—for a very long time.

On the question of Trawsfynydd, which has very little to do with this question, the proper procedures were being followed to get approval for that test. There was a leak from a source which let the information out early with the intention of causing alarm and concern, but there is no need for alarm or concern.

Mr. Adley: On the question of dangers from energy generation, can my right hon. Friend say now—or will he drop me a note—how many miners have died or had their health destroyed by pneumoconiosis since 1957?

Mr. Parkinson: I do not know the answer to that question, and I am not sure that it is relevant to this question.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: If the remaining documents do not deal with the causes or consequences, will the right hon. Gentleman state what they do deal with in terms of a general heading?

Mr. Parkinson: As the hon. Gentleman knows, successive Governments have followed a policy of not revealing the details of papers that have been retained. He knows that the procedures for having a retention approved are strict. However, I can assure him that nothing relating to either the causes or the consequences of the fire is contained in the retained documents.

Dr. Thomas: In view of the continuing public concern about the safety of the nuclear industry, will the Secretary of State tell the House whether he is prepared to review the

information procedures of his Department and of the CEGB, especially as applied to the forthcoming test at Trawsfynydd? Does he agree that unless engineers can convince the public, by commonsense arguments, that tests should take place, in a democracy they should not take place?

Mr. Parkinson: What has alarmed the public is the comparison between the test of safety mechanism at Trawsfynydd and Chernobyl. As the hon. Gentleman knows—I explained it to him at our meeting on Friday—at Chernobyl the reactor was active, safety systems had been switched off and a deliberate experiment was carried out. This is a controlled test of a safety feature. The reactor will not be operative and the safety equipment will be working. What is being proved is that the natural circulation, built into the system and designed to produce cooling, works. That test will take place only if the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate approves of the proposals and it is carried out under its monitoring.

Miss Widdecombe: Does my right hon. Friend welcome the open information policy of British Nuclear Fuels plc, and does he agree that it will go a long way to allay public fears about nuclear safety?

Mr. Parkinson: My hon. Friend is right. Every incident that takes place, whether reportable or minor, is now recorded, and that information is filed in the Library of the House of Commons. It is also supplied to the local liaison committees and to local Members of Parliament. There is no attempt at concealment. In fact, we have the most open system in the world.

Mr. Prescott: Does the Secretary of State not recognise that what causes public concern about the experiments and controls is excessive secrecy and the leaks associated with it? That is what is causing concern at the Welsh plant. Will the Secretary of State confirm the CEGB view that the experiment that is to be conducted there is not necessary to a long-term safety review of the plant? If that is the case, will the right hon. Gentleman assure the House that the experiment is being conducted in order not to extend the life of the old Magnox plants, thus reducing the liability of the high decommissioning costs and the effect on the price for the privatisation of electricity?

Mr. Parkinson: I am afraid that I find it hard to follow that convoluted logic. However, I advise the hon. Gentleman that the test is taking place because built into the Magnox system there is a safety measure that is designed to ensure that, even if the fans fail, natural circulation will produce cooling. The test is being proposed under the most strict circumstances to prove that that safety factor works. It is a safety mechanism that is being tested.

Windscale Fire

6. **Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the plans to remove the debris from the site of the 1957 Windscale fire.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is a matter for the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority. Plans for carrying out decommissioning work on the Windscale piles, including the removal of fuel and debris, were announced by the chairman of the authority on 5 October 1987. A copy of his statement is in the Library.

Mrs. Michie: Given that the Government's radioactive waste strategy has had four major setbacks and cancellations since 1981, and knowing the opposition throughout the United Kingdom, especially in Scotland and in my constituency of Argyll and Bute, to nuclear dumping sites, will the Minister explain more clearly the way in which the debris from the 1957 Windscale fire is to be removed, when the work will be completed, how much it will cost and where it is to be stored or disposed of?

Mr. Spicer: It will be an expensive operation—it will cost tens of millions of pounds.

It will take some time—anything up to 10 years. Perhaps the hon. Lady is aware of the fact that the longer it takes, the safer it is. We have already found that radioactivity has decreased to 100th of what it was at the time of the accident. The Government have yet to pronounce their final decisions on storage.

Mr. Alan Williams: Does the Minister agree that, as with decommissioning nuclear power stations, which the Government have just decided they can leave standing for a hundred years before attempting to decommission them, the safest thing to do with the Windscale reactor is not to touch it, but to keep it under constant monitoring at its present site?

Mr. Spicer: The right hon. Gentleman may be confusing two phases in the decommissioning process. The one that we are considering here is the removal of fuel and debris from the piles. The question to which the hon. Gentleman is addressing himself is the long-term destruction of the plant. That could well take a considerable period, and he may be right that it may be a good idea to leave that for some time.

Oil Demand

7. **Mr. Irvine:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the projected level of demand for oil in the United Kingdom over the next five years; and what proportion of this will be met by output from United Kingdom oilfields.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The demand for oil in the United Kingdom is expected to remain fairly constant during the next few years. On current estimates of production, the United Kingdom is likely to remain self-sufficient well into the 1990s.

Mr. Irvine: Does my hon. Friend agree that the fact that the United Kingdom is likely to remain self-sufficient in oil well into the 1990s is a considerable tribute to the oil exploration companies operating in the North sea? Does he further agree that it underlines the importance of maintaining a favourable tax regime which provides, and will provide, positive encouragement to oil exploration?

Mr. Skinner: The hon. Gentleman means subsidies.

Mr. Morrison: I certainly agree with what my hon. Friend said. What the oil companies have achieved in the North sea, both in exploration and development, has been outstanding—and, indeed, unsung up and down the land.

As for the regime in which the companies operate, it is the economic climate, the tax climate and the entrepreneurial climate that the Government have promoted that have ensured that further exploration and development go ahead.

Mr. Rowlands: Have not Ministers repeatedly praised the role of the British independent oil companies in the development of the North sea, and especially the role of Britoil? If that is so, will the hon. Gentleman now seek an urgent meeting with the chairman of BP to make it clear that the Government do not believe in the destruction of the integrity of Britoil as a company, and that if BP pursues the matter it will forfeit much of the co-operation that it receives from the Department of Energy?

Mr. Morrison: Many companies — including, of course, Britoil — have made a major contribution to North sea development.

The answer to the hon. Gentleman's point is that my right hon. Friend has made quite clear what the Government's position is in reflecting what my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has said.

Mr. Salmond: Is the Minister aware of the assurances given to the House on 31 March and 1 April 1982 about Britoil's independence by the Chancellor of the Exchequer and Lord Gray, then Minister of State, Department of Energy? Does he recognise that those assurances contained the statement that the golden share would be part of

"effective safeguards for Britoil's independence"?—[*Official Report*, 1 April 1982; Vol. 21, c. 450.

Does the hon. Gentleman accept that in present circumstances it hardly looks as though those assurances are being carried through? Does he therefore accept that the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the noble Lord misled the House as to the efficacy of the golden share when they were looking for support for the privatisation of BNOC in 1982?

Mr. Morrison: I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's statement that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer misled the House when he was Secretary of State for Energy. My right hon. Friend explained his position, clearly to the Shadow Chancellor — in the present circumstances he reserves the right to use the special share.

Power Station (Fawley)

9. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects to receive an application from the Central Electricity Generating Board to construct a coal-fired power station at Fawley.

Mr. Parkinson: The CEGB informs me that it expects to be in a position to submit an application for consent to construct Fawley B shortly.

Mr. Colvin: I am pleased to hear that comment. The sooner this happens, the better. Is my right hon. Friend aware of the mounting opposition to the Fawley B proposal as we manage to squeeze additional information out of the CEGB and learn a bit more about what it proposes, especially its plans for a coal-importing facility for the redistribution of coal inland over a totally inadequate infrastructure? Should there not be two applications—one submitted by the CEGB to my right hon. Friend for the power station, and a separate application to local planning authorities for the proposed coal importing facility?

Mr. Parkinson: When the CEGB decides to apply, it has to advertise its proposal to give objectors the right to register their objections. I suspect that that will lead eventually to a public inquiry. If the CEGB wishes to build a jetty into the Solent as part of its plans to import coal, it has to apply under the Harbours Act 1964 to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport for further permission.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Barron — but, this question is about Fawley.

Mr. Barron: Since there has not yet been an application for consent to construct this second power station, and since it will be several years before most of the building starts, why has the Minister forced up the cost of electricity to consumers and industry from April this year, when the CEGB cannot even spend that money on the proposed power station?

Mr. Parkinson: There will be a substantial investment programme on generation and transmission in the next financial year. Nearly £1·5 billion will be invested. In the following year an increasing amount of money will be spent on Sizewell B. Some of that additional expenditure will involve Fawley. There is a big investment programme, which will grow every year from now on.

Sir Trevor Skeet: Would it not be much more economic to put a further cable across from France to import nuclear electricity at a very much cheaper price than we could produce it? Is this not a unique and odd place to put a coal-fired power station?

Mr. Parkinson: As my hon. Friend knows, we need more generating capacity in the south of England to maintain the stability of the system, for purely technical reasons. The possibility of a further link with France has not been ruled out. We may well need both.

Mr. Prescott: The Secretary of State is closing down generating capacity and mines in the northern part of the United Kingdom, and opening new generating capacity in the south. Does he accept that it would make much more sense, and be a cheaper option, to keep the jobs in the northern area and increase investment in transmission, and not go ahead with the investment in the south? Export power, not jobs, from the north to the south.

Mr. Parkinson: Most of the proposals for building power stations centre on the north. I suggest that the hon. Gentleman consult his advisers. There is a need to maintain the stability of the system by increasing the supply of power, which is inadequate, from stations in the south. It is a matter, not of transferring jobs from the north to the south, but of improving the system's stability.

Coal Industry

10. **Mr. Hannam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next plans to meet the president of the National Union of Mineworkers to discuss the future of the coal industry.

Mr. Parkinson: I have no plans at present.

Mr. Hannam: If and when my right hon. Friend meets a chastened Mr. Scargill, will he remind him that the main reason for his substantial loss of support in the election was his aggressive and militant opposition to the modernisation of the coal industry? Will my right hon. Friend also point out that the one way of losing more jobs in the mining industry is continued industrial unrest and strikes?

Mr. Parkinson: My hon. Friend is right. When Mr. Scargill was elected president he promised members of the National Union of Mineworkers that he would preserve jobs and stop closures. Mr. Scargill was elected by 70 per cent. of an electorate of 200,000 on that promise. Yesterday he was re-elected by 54 per cent. of an electorate of 80,000. That is the measure of the damage that Mr. Scargill has managed to do and the failure of his previous promises.

Mr. Haynes: Is the Secretary of State aware that this question appears to have come from Conservative Central Office as a plant? *[Interruption.]* I shall be gentle with the right hon. Gentleman. However, when he meets the president of the National Union of Mineworkers, will he congratulate him on his prophecy that the present Administration would have a massive pit closure programme? They have brought that programme into operation, and the end result has been that youngsters of 30 have been taking redundancy, never to work again. Moreover, what about the youngsters leaving school in my constituency, who cannot obtain a job at the pit, although they would like to?

Mr. Parkinson: Conservative Members would say, as would many people in the industry, that militancy, a refusal to negotiate and a determination to resort to strikes and other forms of industrial action have produced the accelerated closure programme—and, by the way, will do so again if that policy is continued.

Mr. Ashby: If my right hon. Friend meets Mr. Scargill, will he remind him that in Leicestershire only 100 miners voted for him? Will my right hon. Friend also remind Mr. Scargill that Mr. Jack Jones, the leader of the south Leicestershire miners, said that all that Mr. Scargill was trying to do was to continue class warfare—whatever, he said, class warfare could possibly mean in 1988?

Mr. Parkinson: I heard Mr. Jones this morning, and I thought that he talked a lot of good sense. I remind the House that, if Mr. Scargill's policies had not driven 26,000 people out of his union and into a rival union, he would have been defeated soundly. He now speaks for a minority of mineworkers, because those 26,000 are 20,000 more than his majority.

Mr. Patchett: May I congratulate Mr. Scargill on his victory, despite the interference of British Coal, the media and members of Her Majesty's Government in the trade union election campaign?

Mr. Parkinson: I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's final point. The Government have no vote in the election, and kept out of it. The mineworkers made up their own minds and, as I said earlier, instead of having the support of 70 per cent. of 200,000 electors, Mr. Scargill now has that of 54 per cent. of 80,000.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: The future of the coal industry is, in some ways, very much the reverse side of the coin that we discussed on question 3 concerning redundancy. Does my right hon. Friend not feel that the re-election of Mr. Scargill is likely to increase those pressures of redundancy, rather than decrease them, because, as he puts it, British Coal is the enemy?

Mr. Parkinson: Many people believe that Mr. Scargill is as interested in using the union to promote his political views as he is in promoting the welfare of his members. Until he puts the politics second and the industry first, the industry will continue to decline.

Mr. Skinner: The right hon. Gentleman got his job back.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) must not keep interrupting. I called him on an earlier Question, and he was out of order then.

Mr. Eadie: The Secretary of State cannot bandy figures and percentages across the House in this fashion. He knows perfectly well that many Members of the House would settle for 53 per cent. of the vote at an election, bearing in mind that the Government whom he represents did not even get 50 per cent. at the last election. Why does the Minister not put his money where his mouth is, meet the president of the National Union of Mineworkers, and put on the agenda conciliation and not confrontation?

Mr. Parkinson: I understand that in four and a half years my predecessor met Mr. Scargill once. That was not because he did not want to meet him, but because Mr. Scargill did not want a meeting. Mr. Scargill should do his talking to the chairman of British Coal. Coal is an industry, and management and labour should get together to promote the welfare of the industry. It is not a political battleground. The hon. Gentleman is trying to make it one.

Oil Exploration

11. **Mr. Summerson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the trend in issues of licences for oil exploration for United Kingdom offshore areas since 1979.

Mr. Peter Morrison: There have been four rounds of licensing over this period, at intervals of approximately two years. A total of 285 licences have been issued.

Mr. Summerson: In the light of that reply, will the Minister show us the contrast by giving the comparable figures for the period 1974 to 1979?

Mr. Morrison: The figure for this Government is 285 licences. During 1974 to 1979, 54 licences were issued. The Government have, therefore, issued over five times that number.

THE ARTS

Area Museums Councils

34. **Mr. Fisher:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what information he has on the level of funding in 1988-89 for the area museums councils.

The Minister for the Arts (Mr. Richard Luce): The grants to the English area museums councils are administered by the Museums and Galleries Commission. It is for the commission to decide the level of grants from within its grant-in-aid. I understand that the increase in the basic grant to the councils in 1988-89 is some 4 per cent.

Mr. Fisher: Does the Minister accept that although long-term underfunding of area museums councils has been a serious threat to them, there is an even greater threat to them in clause 28 of the Local Government Bill, which is now being considered in another place? That

clause would prevent local authorities from "promoting homosexuality" and could mean that local authority museums and galleries could not, for instance, put on, promote, advertise and catalogue pictures by David Hockney? Does the Minister approve of that form of censorship and that threat? Will he say categorically that the clause is a threat to area museums councils and local authority museums?

Mr. Luce: First, I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's suggestion that the area museums councils are underfunded. The money that goes to local museums and galleries, including through the rate support grant, amounts to a total of £72 million. That is a substantial sum of money.

I am not clear as to how the hon. Gentleman's second question relates to his first question. Clause 28 is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. Like my colleagues, I support the intention of the clause, but I recognise that it is causing anxiety in the arts world. I have been advised that local authorities seeking simply to provide the public with access to a comprehensive range of artistic and literary material would not be put at risk by that provision.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Will my right hon. Friend comment on the amount of money raised through voluntary funding by the Victoria and Albert museum? It is remarkable that that museum, through its own efforts, and separately from public funding, has raised so much money and made such good use of it.

Mr. Luce: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. The more money that is raised by joint funding by the public and private sector, the better. There are many examples around the country of museums that have been very successful in raising more resources from the private sector in addition to the state funding that they receive.

Greater London Arts

35. **Mr. Sedgemore:** To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he plans to meet the chairman of Greater London Arts to discuss the funding of the arts in London in 1988-89.

Mr. Luce: I visited the offices of Greater London Arts and met the chairman and director last year. I expect to meet them again from time to time this year, and funding will no doubt feature in our discussions.

Mr. Sedgemore: Is the Minister satisfied that, whereas every other regional arts association is receiving a cut in its grant in real terms, Greater London Arts is receiving a cut in real terms and in cash? What is his message to the clients of GLA who have been asked to submit plans on the basis of a 10 per cent. reduction in their expenditure on account of a £232,000 shortfall due to abolition cuts, and cuts in the Arts Council grant?

Mr. Luce: I am interested in the hon. Gentleman's question, because I do not know where he got his figures. The simple fact is that the Arts Council has not yet reached an agreement with Greater London Arts about the sums of money that will be allocated. GLA is doing an excellent job. It has nearly £8 million worth of taxpayers' money in this financial year to allocate to arts organisations. Despite all the remarks about the South Bank and its achievements, it deserves enormous credit. For the first time since the Festival of Britain in 1951 it is undertaking a new festival with artistic collaboration from all types of art. There is £1 million of extra sponsorship from British Commonwealth Holdings. That is a good example of the sort of arts activity in London.

Mr. Colvin: Does my right hon. Friend agree that one way of supplementing official funding for the arts in London might be by way of the Government's new payroll giving scheme? How optimistic is he that that scheme will work? Will he consider holding discussions with his Treasury colleagues before the forthcoming Budget to see whether a little more beef can be put into the scheme, which looks at present as if it might be a bit of a damp squib?

Mr. Luce: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the importance of the payroll giving scheme. It is another way — a new way — in which individuals can be encouraged, with tax incentives, to give to charitable bodies, including the arts. I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer will note the views expressed by my hon. Friend. I believe that the scheme should not be underestimated and that the maximum number of people should be encouraged to join it. The scheme is now available to the Civil Service, and 300,000 civil servants could take part in it.

Mr. Tony Banks: Let me tell the Minister in response to his inquiry—[HON. MEMBERS: "Question."] No, let me tell him that the information given by my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) about the cut in the base budget for GLA came from the Arts Council. Is the Minister aware that, because of the cut in the money GLA will be receiving as a result of abolition, there will be a major economic crisis facing the arts in London? Whatever the Minister has done elsewhere in the country, he has clearly failed the arts in London yet again.

Mr. Luce: Two years ago, when we were debating abolition, the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) spent his time saying that arts activity on the South Bank would collapse and that arts in London would collapse. The opposite has happened. I have just described to the House the excellent news about the South Bank. It is approaching the matter in an imaginative fashion and the plan for its festival this coming spring is the first since 1951. It is the opposite of what the hon. Gentleman has been saying.

Crucible Theatre, Sheffield

36. **Mr. Cabora:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he next plans to visit the Crucible theatre in Sheffield.

Mr. Luce: I enjoyed my visit to the Crucible theatre in February last year and I admire the work it does.

Mr. Cabora: When the Minister next visits the Crucible theatre in Sheffield, will he take up the difficult financial position in which it finds itself, particularly after the statement by the Arts Council that over the next three to five years the parity of funding should be equal to that of the local authorities? With the restrictions on the local authorities, that is difficult, if not impossible. Will the Minister also take up the matter of clause 28 of the Local Government Bill, which is going through the Lords? Powerful statements were made last night by Ian McKellen at the Olivier awards, supported by the editor

of *The Observer*. The Crucible is a civic theatre and it will be one of those affected by clause 28. In Sheffield it is seen as major censorship of a progressive theatre.

Mr. Luce: The evidence is that the Crucible is an enterprising theatre. A total of 60 per cent. of its resources is now raised from private sector earnings, and it deserves credit for that. It has 82 per cent. audiences on average, and has had throughout 1986 and 1987. It is a good candidate to negotiate an incentive funding arrangement between itself and the Arts Council and to take advantage of the three-year funding now available so that it can plan a stronger financial base in the next three years.

Arts Council (Grant)

37. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Minister for the Arts how much of the grant to the Arts Council may be carried forward to the following fiscal year.

Mr. Luce: The Council is allowed to carry over at the end of the financial year a working balance of up to 2 per cent. of its grant-in-aid, subject to agreement with my Office.

Mr. Butler: I welcome the increased flexibility for the Arts Council. However, will my right hon. Friend tell me whether any money that is left over for the Arts Council at the end of the financial year can be carried forward to next year and used to increase the impact of incentive funding even further?

Mr. Luce: I know of my hon. Friend's interest in the matter. As I said, a working balance of up to 2 per cent. can be carried over, subject to my agreement. The money allocated for incentive funding will be £3·5 million in the first financial year, and that is an example of the flexibility in the arrangements, which will be of some help to arts organisations.

Mr. Robert Sheldon: Is the Minister aware that because of cuts in local authority funding the local authority contribution to the arts will be cut drastically? All that the right hon. Gentleman is doing will not cover that deficiency. Is it not important that any help, even to the extent of carrying forward extra spending, should be specially considered?

Mr. Luce: The practical evidence from round the country is that local authority support for the arts has been increasing, where local authorities identify arts projects that will be a good investment in their areas. Actual expenditure by local authorities on the arts, including museums and libraries, has been increasing. It is for the local authorities to decide how much to spend. It is their choice.

Mr. Cormack: Will my right hon. Friend, whose achievements are considerable, assure us that he regards 2 per cent. as a precedent, not as a final solution?

Mr. Luce: The present arrangements allow for a 2 per cent. carryover. It gives some flexibility, especially in incentive funding.

Mr. Heffer: Is it not clear that local authorities need all the assistance that they can get to ensure that the arts are made available to the local communities? The Minister mentioned the South Bank. One of the best exhibitions that has been seen on the South Bank for some time was the Diego Rivera exhibition, which should have been shown in every part of the country. Is it not important to ensure that every area has the opportunity to see such fine exhibitions.

Mr. Luce: I agree with the hon. Gentleman that the arts are not only for London but for all parts of the country. For example, we have set aside a special sum from the heritage budget and asked the Museums and Galleries Commission to make it easier to enable exhibitions to be mounted in all areas. I warmly support the idea.

CIVIL SERVICE

Staff Morale

62. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service when he next plans to meet trade unions representing civil servants to discuss staff morale in Southend-on-Sea; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of State, Privy Council Office (Mr. Richard Luce): I have no plans at present to meet the Civil Service trade unions.

Mr. Taylor: In view of the serious problems of securing and retaining staff in some of the major Civil Service offices in Southend, solely because of the high cost of housing and other costs, is it not time that the Government and the Civil Service unions began to discuss regional pay which would reflect the cost of living in different areas? Is my right hon. Friend willing to visit Southend, some time reasonably soon, to discuss the problems with those involved and to see for himself the seriousness of the position?

Mr. Luce: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. May I answer his last question first by saying yes, I am prepared to meet the 3,000 or so customs and excise officials in Southend, who are doing an excellent job. Pay and conditions are principally a matter for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, but, as my hon. Friend will know, arrangements are being made to offer flexible pay schemes and local pay additions, which would allow up to £600, from additional sources of money, to be spent in the area round London, including my hon. Friend's constituency. Those flexible pay arrangements are the best way to deal with the recruitment and retention problems of the Civil Service.

Mr. Livingstone: Does the Minister agree that it might help to retain civil servants in Southend if they were given the same £8,000 housing allowance as the Member of Parliament for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) receives?

Mr. Luce: I shall not take that point seriously. One sees varying costs of living in the different regions, and the south-east has the highest. A flexible pay scheme that would allow for those variations would be an important move forward.

Civil Service College

63. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service whether there has been any recent increase in the number and range of courses provided by the Civil Service college; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: The total volume of college provision remains fairly constant, but an increasing proportion of courses are run in support of recent initiatives to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of government.

Mr. Bennett: Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the ways in which professionalism in the Civil Service could be improved is through the provision of external qualification courses? What opportunities are provided for civil servants at the staff college to receive those external qualifications?

Mr. Luce: My hon. Friend is right. The college has a high reputation for achieving results in external qualifications. Some 30 per cent. of college training is related to qualifications of professional and specialist bodies. As I have said, the results are very high indeed.

Mr. Winnick: What advice is given at the college to senior civil servants who find that the Cabinet Minister whom they are serving is being constantly undermined by hostile press stories coming from his own Cabinet colleagues, as is happening now with the Secretary of State for Social Services?

Mr. Luce: I am not sure whether I follow the hon. Gentleman's question, but very often I do not follow him.

Mr. Soames: Although the courses provided by the Civil Service college are excellent, will my right hon. Friend consider taking en bloc courses for civil servants at other colleges so that they may have the opportunity to broaden their horizons in colleges outside the Civil Service environment?

Mr. Luce: My hon. Friend has an important point. It is worth noting that the college provides about 5 per cent. of the training of civil servants. About 75 per cent. is internal departmental training, and my hon. Friend will be interested to know that the remaining 20 per cent. comes from external providers. That is an important contribution to the standards of the Civil Service. In addition, many outsiders come in to lecture at the college, and sometimes even to participate.

Political Activities

65. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if there are any proposals to change the regulations governing the political activities of civil servants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: New rules on the political activities of civil servants, which were agreed with the Civil Service unions, were announced in the House on 19 July 1984 and introduced in September 1984. It was agreed then that the rules should be reviewed every three years. A review is consequently now taking place, but it is too early to draw any conclusions.

Mr. Banks: Is it not a fact that the Government are destroying the political impartiality of the Civil Service by using civil servants as Tory stooges? Bernard Ingham immediately comes to mind. When will the Minister address himself to the serious problem of the way in which the Civil Service is being used in a politically partial fashion by the Government, and particularly by the Prime Minister?

Mr. Luce: The hon. Gentleman seems this afternoon to have an even greater capacity than usual to talk absolute nonsense, and that is saying something. My experience over two and a half years as the Minister of State responsible for the Civil Service has led me to believe that we have a service of which we can be highly proud. It is professional and the vast majority of civil servants are utterly impartial, and that is the way that it should be.

Mr. Cormack: Is it not a slander verging on the totally defamatory to call Mr. Bernard Ingham a stooge?

Mr. Luce: It is. My hon. Friend is absolutely right.

Dr. Marek: Will the Minister assure the House that the present review will be conducted openly between the Government and the trade unions, and that any results of the review will be mutually acceptable to both sides?

Mr. Luce: Yes, I can give that assurance to the hon. Gentleman. It is worth reminding him that the main purpose of the rules is to give maximum freedom to civil servants to take part in political activities, consistent with a need to maintain ministerial and public confidence in the political impartiality of the Civil Service.

Secondment

66. **Mr. Chapman:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what initiatives he is taking to encourage part-time or short-term periods of secondment between the Civil Service and industry.

Mr. Luce: Part-time and short-term secondments can play an important part in interchange between the Civil Service and industrial organisations, as can full-time and longer secondments. As an aid to stimulating interchange generally, we published towards the end of last year a promotional leaflet, "The Ins and Outs of Civil Service Secondments", a copy of which has been placed in the Libraries of Parliament.

Mr. Chapman: I appreciate the increase in recent years, and I am aware of the practical difficulties, at least of long-term secondment, but will my right hon. Friend nevertheless agree that the prospect of short-term or part-time secondment—even if the short-term was only for three to six months—would be benefitial to industry and to the Civil Service? Will he consider particular schemes for short-term secondments?

Mr. Luce: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his continuing interest in this problem. In 1986 there was an increase of 22 per cent. over the previous year in inward and outward secondments, but I am now reviewing the overall targets for inward and outward secondment and I hope to be able to say something about that in a few weeks' time. I shall consider the point raised by my hon. Friend about short-term attachments. This is something at the senior levels of the service that we are seeking to increase.

Mr. Wells: Will my right hon. Friend consider what inducements and encouragements he can give to industrial candidates wishing to work in the Foreign Office? He will know that the Foreign Office is able to second its civil servants to industry, but industry cannot reverse the position. Therefore, some incentive is needed.

Mr. Luce: I shall consider that problem with my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and draw his attention to it. Some exchange already takes place both ways, but, without further notice, I should have to discuss the matter with my right hon. and learned Friend.

Ethnic Communities

67. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what steps he is taking to increase the opportunities offered to members of the ethnic communities employed in the Civil Service.

Mr. Luce: The Civil Service has a comprehensive programme of monitoring to study the progress of ethnic staff and identify areas for further action. Pilot schemes are currently under way in a number of Departments to monitor promotion boards and ensure that blacks and Asians have every chance of reaching the higher grades by selection on merit.

Mr. Hughes: Does my right hon. Friend have any plans to seek to increase representation of blacks and Asians in the senior levels of the Civil Service?

Mr. Luce: It is worth noting that the surveys make it plain that the proportions of black and Asian people in the Civil Service are similar to those in the population as a whole, but, of course, the weak areas are in the higher grades. Certainly, on the basis of selection on merit and equality of opportunity, we are doing everything possible within the service to ensure that they have the opportunity for promotion.

Royal Ulster Constabulary (Stalker-Sampson Investigations)

3.31 pm

The Attorney-General (Sir Patrick Mayhew): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement on directions given by the Director of Public Prosecutions (Northern Ireland) following the investigations carried out by Mr. Stalker and Mr. Sampson.

In November and December 1982, in three separate incidents in County Armagh, six persons were killed and one person was seriously wounded by shooting by members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

The circumstances of each shooting were investigated by the CID of the RUC and three files reporting the results of these investigations were submitted by the Chief Constable of the RUC to the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland for his consideration and decisions.

In relation to the incident which occurred on 11 November 1982 at Tullygally East road, Craigavon, in which three persons, Eugene Toman, James Gervaise McKerr and John Frederick Burns, were killed, the Director directed that three members of the RUC be prosecuted for the murder of Eugene Toman. These members were subsequently tried for murder and acquitted.

In relation to the incident which occurred on 12 December 1982 at Mullacreevie park, Armagh, in which two persons, Peter James Martin Grew and Roderick Carroll, were killed, the Director directed that one member of the RUC be prosecuted for the murder of Peter James Martin Grew. This member was subsequently tried for murder and acquitted.

In respect of the other incident which occurred on 24 November 1982 at Ballynerry road north, Lurgan, in which Michael Tighe was killed and Martin McCauley was seriously wounded, the Director concluded that the evidence did not warrant criminal proceedings and directed no prosecution.

Upon consideration of the evidence and information in the files initially submitted to him, the Director required further investigations to be undertaken and the results of these reported to him. When the results of such further investigations were reported to the Director, it appeared to him that, in certain of the statements of evidence furnished for his consideration, material and important facts had been omitted, and that matters which were untrue and misleading in material and important respects had been included.

In consequence of this, on 11 April 1984, the Director formally exercised his statutory power to request the Chief Constable to ascertain and furnish to him full information with regard to the circumstances in which false or misleading evidence was provided by any member or members of the RUC. He also requested him to investigate whether there was evidence to suggest that any person was guilty of an offence of perverting, or attempting or conspiring to pervert, the course of justice, or of any other offence in connection with the investigation of the three shooting incidents.

On 24 May 1984, the Chief Constable of the RUC appointed Mr. John Stalker, deputy chief constable of Greater Manchester police, to conduct an investigation. Mr. Stalker was furnished with a full copy of the Director's request, dated 11 April 1984.

On 18 September 1985, Mr. Stalker delivered to the Chief Constable of the RUC an interim report on the investigations that he had conducted up until that date. On 13 February 1986, the Chief Constable of the RUC furnished to the Director Mr. Stalker's interim report, together with the Chief Constable's observations upon it. On 4 March 1986, the Director directed that futher investigations be undertaken.

On 29 May 1986, Mr. Stalker ceased to have responsibility for the investigation that he had undertaken. Mr. Colin Sampson, chief constable of West Yorkshire police, then undertook responsibility for the continuing investigation, assisted by the same team of detectives and by an assistant chief constable from West Yorkshire police. On 22 October 1986, 23 March 1987 and 10 April 1987, reports were delivered by Mr. Sampson to the Chief Constable of the RUC and on the same dates to the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland.

The interim report by Mr. Stalker and the reports that were subsequently delivered by Mr. Sampson together provided the Chief Constable and the Director with the full results of detailed and thorough investigations undertaken by the investigation team of Greater Manchester police, initially under the leadership of Mr. Stalker and subsequently under the leadership of Mr. Sampson.

In regard to the shooting incidents to which I have referred, the Director has considered all the facts and information ascertained and reported by Mr. Stalker and Mr. Sampson, and he has re-examined the original RUC investigation files. He has concluded that the evidence does not warrant any further prosecution in respect of the shootings which occurred on 11 November 1982 and 12 December 1982 and which have already been the subject of prosecutions. He has further concluded that the evidence does not warrant any prosecution in respect of either the fatal shooting or the wounding that occurred on 24 November 1982. I have considered the Director's conclusions and I agree with them. He has given directions accordingly.

The Director has, however, concluded that there is evidence of the commission of offences of perverting or attempting or conspiring to pervert the course of justice, or of obstructing a constable in the execution of his duty, and that this evidence is sufficient to require consideration of whether prosecutions are required in the public interest, and he has consulted me accordingly.

I have therefore taken steps to acquaint myself with all relevant circumstances, including matters concerning the public interest and, in particular, considerations of national security that might properly affect the decision whether or not to institute proceedings.

I have informed the Director fully with regard to my consultations as to the public interest, and in the light of all the facts and information brought to his notice, the Director has concluded, with my full agreement, that it would not be proper to institute any criminal proceedings. He has given directions accordingly.

The Director has arranged to discuss with the Chief Constable and deputy chief constable of the RUC safeguards to ensure that, in the future, facts and

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information reported to the Director are in all respects full and accurate, whether or not any security interest is involved.

In respect of other matters arising from the investigations, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has already informed the House that he would wish, at the earliest opportunity, to make a statement on those issues that affect his responsibilities. Now that the decisions on prosecution have been taken, I understand that he hopes to report shortly to the House.

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): We on this side are pleased at last to have had a statement from the Attorney-General, but that is the extent of our pleasure. You will recall, Mr. Speaker, that the matters concerning the allegal shoot-to-kill policy have been raised repeatedly by my right hon. and hon. Friends and myself. You will recall the widespread concern that led to the appointment of Mr. John Stalker. You will remember that, in May 1986, he was abruptly removed from the RUC inquiry and was replaced by Mr. Colin Sampson, chief constable of West Yorkshire, who was also asked to inquire into the allegations directed at Mr. Stalker which had led to his suspension. You will recall that that greatly increased some hon. Members' concern about the inquiry into the RUC and the consequent further delays in what had already become a protracted affair.

I have gone briefly through the events to remind the House of what we had to wait two years for, despite repeated Opposition urgings for a statement. In the meantime, there has been growing concern in Northern Ireland, Britain and international circles about the affair. Six men died in 1982. A coroner resigned. A deputy chief constable began an inquiry and then found himself the subject of an inquiry. We have had allegations of RUC cover-ups, of perjury by police officers, of illegal incursions by members of the security forces in the Republic of Ireland. Some questions have been raised about the RUC special branch, about the role of the headquarters mobile support units, about the involvement of MI5 and about the withholding of information from police inquiries by members of the security forces.

In the context of all this, and the long wait for the Government, we have listened with interest to the statement by the Attorney-General. I find it incredible beyond belief that the Government have come to this conclusion. Article 8 of the Anglo-Irish Agreement talks about achieving confidence in the administration of justice in Northern Ireland. That article has suffered a grave blow from today's statement, which has also undermined all the efforts of the RUC since Portadown to gain acceptance by the minority community.

We must therefore ask what the grounds of national security are. What are the grounds of public interest which could shield members of the police force, against whom there was evidence of perjury, of conspiracy to pervert the course of justice, of impeding a police constable in the execution of his duty? All this, yet we are to be denied knowledge of the reasons why the Government have come to this conclusion. It is insufferable, it is a Government of gag that we have had, when we have made effort after effort, to use this particular method.

What we need to know now is if there was a shoot-to-kill policy. We will never know. What is the Government's attitude to the use of lethal force, necessary force or reasonable force? It has been alleged that before his inquiry, Mr. Stalker faced delays, evasions, lies and refusals to act from members of the RUC, bent on obstructing his work. That is the sort of statement that was made. That was the attitude of people at that time. Now the Government seem to support that same degree of hindrance to the work of justice.

We, of course, are in no position to comment on these matters, because we have not seen the reports. Will the Attorney-General therefore publish both the Sampson reports, so that we can form a judgment? Quite honestly, on this matter we do not trust the decision of Mr. Attorney. The question of justice in Northern Ireland is too important a matter. All this undermines confidence in the forces of law and justice. It is a grave blow to peace in that area.

The Attorney-General: The hon. Gentleman has described this as the decision of the Government.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): It is down to you.

The Attorney-General: The decision is that of the Director of Public Prosecutions—a decision with which I entirely agree.

As was laid down in a classic statement — *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is a very serious matter. Mr. Attorney has an absolute right to give his reply.

The Attorney-General: As was laid down in a classic statement by a Labour Attorney-General, Sir Hartley Shawcross, the Attorney-General of the day has the constitutional duty to consider where the public interest lies in relation to any question of prosecution. He is entitled, said Sir Hartley Shawcross, to consult in some circumstances. In some circumstances, he said, "he would be a fool" not to do so. I have consulted. It is the right of those whom I consult to indicate to me matters that in their view bear upon the public interest. The decision is the decision of the prosecuting authority. This is not a decision which requires my statutory consent; it is taken by the Director, and I wholly agree with it.

Secondly—he is entitled to say this—I am told that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) does not trust me. If he will allow me to say so, I can bear that philosophically. But in the case of a distinguished public servant, Sir Barry Shaw, who has held the office of Director of Public Prosecutions in Northern Ireland for 16 years and has established standards of unexampled integrity, as anybody in Northern Ireland will confirm, I resent that aspersion.

I was asked whether there is a shoot-to-kill policy, and I was told, "We will never be told." It is plain from my statement that no offence has been disclosed, apart from possible cases relating to perversion of the course of justice. That means that no evidence has been disclosed of any offence—such as incitement to murder—such as would be comprised in what has been loosely called a shoot-to-kill policy.

I have been asked, "What is the Government's attitude to the use of force?" Every police officer in Northern Ireland is subject to the law and will continue to be subject to the law; accordingly, his actions are liable to the most detailed investigation, such as has been carried out by Mr.

Stalker and Mr. Sampson. The law relating to the use of force applies to a police officer just as much as it does to any other citizen.

I have been asked, "What are the grounds of national security that are involved?" In conformity with the policy of long standing of successive Governments, I am not prepared to comment on national security. But I will say that national security in Northern Ireland and elsewhere gives rise to considerations that affect the safety of people's lives. In judging the public interest, I, and any prosecuting authority, must balance one harm to the public interest against another. That is one of the tasks that our constitution places on me, among others.

On the other question of whether the report will be published, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has, on several occasions, informed the House that, in conformity with the usual practice relating to reports on police investigations into criminal matters, the report will not be published.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that, apart from the fact that if he had taken any other conclusion it would have meant overruling the decision of an impeccable public servant in a wholly independent context, to have taken any other course would have meant putting at risk the lives of Crown servants completely innocent of any wrongdoing? To have taken such a course would have been completely unacceptable to the House or the country at large.

The Attorney-General: While I do have power to direct a prosecution and I do have power to direct no prosecution, I gave no direction to the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland; the Director reached this decision, and he did so with my full agreement. I agree entirely with my hon. and learned Friend about the danger to lives that must be considered in the context of matters of national security.

Mr. Ken Maginnis (Fermanagh and South Tyrone): I welcome the statement in so far as I believe that its conclusion is in the best interests of everyone. However, one cannot be other than dissatisfied with some of the information that is made available to us.

The Stalker-Sampson saga has been most unfortunate. It has been laced with rumours, counter-rumours and allegations that have caused disquiet throughout the community. One is unable to sort out matters concerning Manchester as distinct from those concerning Northern Ireland.

One must recognise that, of the people who were killed, five were accepted and recognised as being members of the IRA. The right hon. and learned Gentleman will admit that members of the security forces face tremendous difficulties in dealing with known terrorists. Part of the difficulty is not, as the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) suggested, whether or not the police have a shoot-to-kill policy, but rather a recognition of the fact that the IRA has a shoot-to-kill policy and a bomb-to-kill policy. Until there is proper law to deal with these people then, I believe, our security forces will continue to run into the same sort of problem that they faced in Armagh and Lurgan.

I hope that the right hon. and learned Gentleman will agree with me that, until we recognise that the civil law is inadequate to deal with terrorism in Northern Ireland, and until special arrangements are made to take the terrorists off our streets, we may, again and again, see this type of unfortunate situation, which does not help the people whom I represent.

The Attorney-General: I must say to the hon. Gentleman that matters of policy for the criminal law, as distinct from the civil law, in Northern Ireland are not for me, and therefore he will excuse me from answering that part of his question. We will all acknowledge the difficulty to which he refers, which confronts the security forces. I must emphasise that the security forces are subject to the law, as is every other citizen of this country, whether in Northern Ireland or in Great Britain.

Sir John Biggs-Davison (Epping Forest): Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that, in due course, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland will be coming to the House to report on any disciplinary implications arising from his statement and any implications for the discipline and control of the RUC?

The Attorney-General: I am very happy to confirm what I have said in my statement, and what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has said on many occasions in this House—that he will wish to come at an early opportunity to the House and make a statement on those issues affecting his responsibilities that arise out of these reports.

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): Does the Attorney-General agree that this is, in effect, a very sad day for the North of Ireland? It is sad on three counts. It is sad because six people who were my constituents and who were unarmed were killed in 1982. No inquests have been held, and as a result of this statement——

Mr. Maginnis: They were not your constituents.

Mr. Mallon: I said "as of then"—there have been redrawings of the boundaries since. We will never know the answer to that question. It is sad from the point of view of the communities and the families of those people.

Secondly, does the Attorney-General agree that it is a very sad day for those who believe in the process of justice in the north of Ireland? Make no mistake about it, justice has been dispensed with in this statement to cover up the murky and illegal methods of MI5 and MI6, and the darker elements within the RUC. Will he further agree that that section of the community that has been trying to wean people away from violence and trying to establish confidence in the process of justice and in the process of policing has been dealt a tremendous body blow?

In conclusion, does the Attorney-General agree with the premise that, once one dispenses with justice in a Northern Irish or any other context, one has dispensed with the prospects for peace? Does he not agree that that body blow to the hope for the maintenance of freedom of speech and justice in Northern Ireland, which are indispensable and cannot be separated, have been dealt a serious, if not terminal, body blow by his statement?

The Attorney-General: Northern Ireland is a sad Province; with that, every sensible person in these islands must agree. The hon. Gentleman, whose constituency has more than its fair share of sadness, asked about inquests. Inquests will, of course, be held in due course, and they are no part of my ministerial responsibility.

As to the standards of justice, I remind the hon. Gentleman that in respect of the killings, of which he

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properly reminds the House, four members of the RUC have been prosecuted by the Director of Public Prosecutions upon the application to their cases of the standard rules and criteria that apply to prosecution decisions. Those standard criteria themselves include reference to the question whether the public interest requires a prosecution.

I therefore reject any aspersion—if such an aspersion is intended—upon the independence and integrity of the Director of Public Prosecutions. However, I remind the hon. Gentleman that the standard criteria require the question of the public interest to be considered. He will know, perhaps with better cause than most, that the public interest in Northern Ireland must embrace questions of national security and that national security in Northern Ireland has connotations that bear upon the safety of a very large number of individuals.

Mr. Michael Mates (Hampshire, East): In deciding whether this action is acceptable to the House, is it not important to bear in mind that, for 16 years, Sir Barry Shaw has been the most respected Director of Public Prosecutions? He has been widely praised by hon. Members from all parties, including the hon. Member for Kingston-upon-Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) and his integrity has never been questioned. Is it not therefore reasonable for us to accept that this decision, difficult as it may be, will have been taken with all the honour that he has applied to his job over the past 16 years?

The Attorney-General: My knowledge of Northern Ireland extends over some five years in my position as a Law Officer, and some hon. Members' knowledge is far greater than mine. Anyone who has that knowledge will concur with what my hon. Friend has said. The office of Director of Public Prosecutions of course calls for immaculate impartiality and integrity, whether that office is held in this country—I should say, in Great Britain—or in Northern Ireland. I entirely agree with what my hon. Friend has said. I can only record my own impression. Over the past five years I have never met a single person from any sector of Northern Ireland society or any interest group who has cast a single aspersion upon Sir Barry Shaw's discharge of his responsibilities.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): Will the Attorney-General accept that it is not the Director of Public Prosecutions in Northern Ireland whom we seek to hold to account? It is the Attorney-General whom we seek to hold to account. Notwithstanding his dulcet tones, will he not accept that he has acted in a most high-handed manner? If there is evidence of the perversion of the course of justice, why is that evidence not put before a court of law to be tested? Why should we have cover-up rather than accountability? If there are two concepts—that justice must be done and that it must be seen to be done—why is it that in this case we shall have neither?

The Attorney-General: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman can escape the consequences of blaming the Director of Public Prosecutions for making a decision that is a dishonest one, by saying that it is not his decision but mine.

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): You said that it was your decision.

The Attorney-General: I did not say that it was my decision; nor was it my decision. I will say again, for the benefit of the right hon. Gentleman, that this is a decision for the Director of Public Prosecutions and it was made by the Director of Public Prosecutions. Sir Barry Shaw would never accept a decision or trim his own opinion to take a decision that was contrary to what he believed to be right—I do not believe that he would ever do so, but he would certainly not do so without a direction from me, and there has been none.

The hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) asked why we could not have this tested in a court of law. That is a consideration for which I have the deepest sympathy. I have said to the House that, in weighing the public interest, as I am constitutionally obliged to do, and as the Director is obliged to do, one has to balance one harm to the public interest against another. That is not an easy consideration. It is one that causes me the deepest anxiety. Having done that to the best of my ability, it is my duty to announce my decision. *[Interruption.]* No, it is my responsibility to announce my resolution of the balancing requirement and to communicate it to the Director. It is for the Director to say whether he agrees with it. The Director has made this decision — that is his responsibility—and it is one with which I wholly agree.

I agree that it is an anxious matter. I should like in all circumstances, wherever it is consistent with the national interest, to have evidence tested in a court of law. In this case, it would not be in conformity with the public interest by reason of the matters to which I have referred in connection with the national security.

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): Is the Attorney-General aware that his decision will give great satisfaction to the long-suffering and hard-pressed people of Northern Ireland, of all religions, who desire peace and who are facing a war in Northern Ireland that has now been going on for between 18 and 20 years and that the security forces are now facing ruthless terrorists, while working within the rule of law, which I hope everyone in the House respects? Is it not extraordinary that certain apologists for the IRA always challenge the fairness of a guilty verdict in a British court against an IRA terrorist, yet are prepared to make wild and prejudicial——

Mr. Seamus Mallon: (Newry and Armagh): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I regret that anyone should be described——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We cannot have a point of order in the middle of a question.

Mr. Kilfedder: The Attorney-General ought to be aware that the police in Northern Ireland can now go back to giving 100 per cent. of their attention to finding those ruthlesss terrorists who murder without mercy.

The Attorney-General: While I note the hon. Gentleman's satisfaction with the outcome of the Director's deliberation, with which I wholly agree, any Attorney-General or Law Officer who discharges his constitutional duty conscientiously must be as little moved by plaudits as by condemnation. I note what the hon. Gentleman says about the duty of the security forces—and of course he is right to say that they have dangerous tasks to discharge, but they have to discharge them, and will continue to discharge them, only in accordance with the law.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Is not the content of the Attorney-General's statement that there is evidence that RUC and CID officers perverted the course of justice; that, were it not for the national security considerations, they would have been prosecuted for those offences; and that, simply because of national security considerations, they have not been prosecuted, but if they had been prosecuted and convicted for those offences they would have received severe sentences of imprisonment? Therefore, the least that the community of the North of Ireland can now expect is that disciplinary proceedings be immediately undertaken and pursued to their proper conclusion. The paramount objective must be to restore confidence in the security forces in Northern Ireland, which this silent decision will have abysmally failed to do.

The Attorney-General: I do not wish to add to what I said in my statement to the House. Disciplinary proceedings are plainly not matters within my ministerial responsibility. They fall within the responsibilities of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. The hon. Gentleman will have heard that it is my right hon. Friend's intention to make a statement to the House at the earliest opportunity.

Mr. John Wheeler (Westminster, North): While I welcome my right hon. Friend's honest and frank statement to the House — I am sure that among Conservative Members and, indeed, other hon. Members, there is widespread respect for his integrity in his judicial capacity for making decisions—nonetheless, is it not a fact that decisions to question people before the courts in this country rest on the provision of facts that could be presented and would lead to a conviction and that we must have regard to those facts as well as to the national interest?

The Attorney-General: I am grateful for what my hon. Friend said at the outset. On the second part of his question, of course he is right. He will recall that in my statement I said that the Director had concluded that there was insufficient evidence to warrant any further prosecution in respect of the three incidents at which killings occurred. I remind the House that four members of the RUC have already been prosecuted at the instigation of the DPP in respect of two of those three killings. It is only in relation to the only other offences disclosed or to the evidence suggesting those offences disclosed in the report, that bear upon perversion of the course of justice, that the Director has concluded that the public interest does not require prosecution.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): Does not the Attorney-General realise that wheeling out expressions such as "economy" and "integrity" have no bearing on his own remoteness from the scene in Northern Ireland? Does he not realise that what he said today was so economical in the use of justice that it will itensify the violence in Northern Ireland; that the removal of Mr. Stalker and what that has caused to all kinds of people in our country, many of whom are not connected with Northern Ireland, has made everybody cynical about the Government's lack of real justice on the question of Northern Ireland? At this late stage, may I ask him to make another statement to give more hope, especially to the minority community, that there is some British justice in Northern Ireland?

The Attorney-General: I believe that the record of the criminal justice system in Northern Ireland should inspire confidence in the proper standards that obtain there and are applied. The hon. Gentleman chooses to overlook the fact—I remind the House again—that four members of the RUC have been prosecuted for murder in respect of two of the three killings. However, I must reject the assertion that I am wholly remote from Northern Ireland. I do not live in Northern Ireland but I make it my business to go to the Province as often as I can in the discharge of my responsibilities, being Attorney-General for the Province as well as for England and Wales.

Of course I acknowledge the need for confidence, but that does not mean that it would be right for me to waive the ordinary criteria for prosecution decisions and to take no regard of the public interest. That would not be in the interests of the people of Northern Ireland, nor, in the long run, would it sustain confidence in the system of criminal justice.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that the British constitution places him personally and ultimately in the seat of judgment on matters of this kind? Is he also aware that the House has complete confidence in his independence, integrity and judgment of the public interest?

The Attorney-General: My hon. Friend is absolutely right about the constitutional position. I am the ultimate prosecuting authority in England and Wales, and in Northern Ireland. In this case I gave no direction. Sir Barry Shaw took the decision, with which I wholly agree.

I am grateful for the latter part of my hon. Friend's comments. It is a confidence that any Attorney-General does his best to earn and he regards himself as constitutionally completely independent in matters affecting his judicial or quasi-judicial jurisdiction in criminal law.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): Is the Attorney-General aware that, in my view, we should read his statement carefully—listening is not enough—and we should return to it? Although it may be a trite thing to say, whatever the Provisional IRA does, or the Ulster Defence Association or anybody else, the men who serve the Crown and this country by working there, must always act in a superior way to those who seek to act not politically but by murder and killing? Therefore, if we question, it is not, as the hon. Member for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder) said, that one sympathises in any way with those who kill and murder.

I should like to make my view abundantly clear. I trust Barry Shaw implicitly. He is a fine man who has served Northern Ireland well and with complete independence from politicians of all parties. In any event, we must listen to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he reports on matters that concern us—the mixed role of the intelligence services and the Army, and of the RUC and the Army proper down on the border, where something may well have gone wrong. It is the Secretary of State's job to report on that.

Much has been said about things going wrong on the border; it has been said that there were disagreements between arms of the security service and that there were disagreements between it and the growing special branch of the RUC. It is surely not in the national interest to cover up when something goes wrong. It is in the national

[Mr. Merlyn Rees]

interest not to reveal matters that put people's lives at risk. The concern—it is a genuine concern—is that something went badly wrong and people acted in a way that was outwith the law. I want an assurance that there has not been a cover-up of that latter point.

The Attorney-General: First, I am extremely grateful for what the right hon. Gentleman said about the reputation of Sir Barry Shaw, the Director of Public Prosecutions, and his complete trust in him. That I acknowledge with much gratitude.

As to the Secretary of State, he will of course be coming to the House at an early opportunity to discuss and make a statement about those matters that fall within his responsibilities. He has for long said that he wishes to do so when it is open to him to do so, as it now is, with the prosecution decision question now resolved.

As to the question of a cover-up, may I make it absolutely clear that I agree with the right hon. Gentleman that the public interest is never to be equated with the interest of the Government or of the majority party, and is never to be prayed in aid to protect the Government from, for example, embarrassment, and it has not been in this case. I cannot conceive that I should ever be pressed by any member of any Government of any party; I do not believe that any Attorney-General has ever been pressed in that way. I certainly have not been pressed, and I would never so interpret the public interest. I can give the right hon. Gentleman that assurance.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend (Bexleyheath): Is it not almost unprecedented for there to be a statement that there will not be a prosecution? Should not my right hon. and learned Friend therefore be most warmly congratulated on his courage in making his statement, when of necessity he has to operate with one hand tied behind his back? Will not he confirm that it is a long-established convention that the national interest should be taken into account? Would it not be a matter of grave concern to the House if that were not so?

The Attorney-General: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for what he has said. I know of one occasion on which a Law Officer has announced a decision not to initiate criminal proceedings. If we made a habit of it, it would take up rather a lot of time, but I thought it right in these circumstances to do so, by reason of the great interest that centres, quite properly, upon these matters.

As to the second part of my statement, I have already mentioned that the standard criteria which govern prosecution decisions require consideration of whether the public interest requires a prosecution. If I were to depart from those standard criteria in a case of this kind, or if the Director were to do so, we should not be serving the public interest.

Mr. Ken Livingstone (Brent, East): Does the Attorney-General agree that one cannot defeat terrorism by using the methods of terrorists, that his statement today will merely confirm the fears of millions of people in this country and abroad that Mr. Stalker was removed from his post because he was not prepared to go along with precisely this sort of cover-up, and that coming to the House with this sort of statement the Attorney-General has reduced himself and the office he holds to the level of an accomplice to murder——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must not cast aspersions of that kind. He will rephrase that last comment.

Hon. Members: Withdraw!

Mr. Livingstone: Mr. Speaker, innocent men have been shot dead——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I give the hon. Gentleman an opportunity to rephrase that last comment. He must not cast aspersions of that kind against another hon. Member.

Mr. Livingstone: Mr. Speaker, I have the greatest respect for your position and your impartiality. But if the rules of the House prevent me from denouncing this cover-up and those who are complicit in it, the rules are wrong and I will not be bound by them.

Hon. Members: Withdraw!

Mr. Speaker: Will the hon. Gentleman please withdraw that last comment? He well knows the rules here—that we do not cast aspersions of dishonour across the Floor of the Chamber. Will he please now unequivocally withdraw that comment? I give him one last opportunity to rephrase his last comment.

Mr. Livingstone: I would not want anybody to come away from this discussion with the impression that hon. Members are not prepared to name those who have sat at the centre of government and covered up the murder of innocent Catholics year by year——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I give the hon. Gentleman one final chance — [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] — and if he refuses to take it I shall be forced to name him.

Hon. Members: Name him.

Mr. Speaker: I name the hon. Member; Mr. Ken Livingstone.

Motion made, and Question put,

That Mr. Ken Livingstone be suspended from the service of the House.—*[Mr. Wakeham.]*

The House divided: Ayes 166, Noes 19.

Division No. 151] **[4.15 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Adley, Robert
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Barron, Kevin
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blair, Tony
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'l's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Butler, Chris
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Corbett, Robin
Cormack, Patrick
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Dewar, Donald
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dixon, Don
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Durant, Tony
Fallon, Michael
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Garel-Jones, Tristan

Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Ingram, Adam
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Timothy
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McNamara, Kevin
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Michael, Alun
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Miller, Hal
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Morrison, Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Gerrard
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stott, Roger
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Williams, Rt Hon A. J.
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd and
Mr. David Maclean.

NOES

Boateng, Paul
Bradley, Keith
Dalyell, Tam
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Heffer, Eric S.
Livingstone, Ken
McAllion, John
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Meale, Alan
Mullin, Chris
Patchett, Terry
Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Thomas, Dafydd Elis
Vaz, Keith
Walley, Ms Joan

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Dennis Skinner and
Ms. Diane Abbott.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: I direct the hon. Member for Brent, East to withdraw from the House in accordance with the order which the House has just made.

The hon. Member withdrew accordingly.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am sorry to detain the House, but it was within my hearing and that of my hon. Friends the Members of Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) and for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) that, immediately following your calling my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone), the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir. A Grant) said, "Here comes the IRA." Would it be in order for you to ask him to withdraw that remark?

Mr. Speaker: I did not hear anything of that. In matters of this kind, it is far better to leave the situation as it is. Such incidents do not do much for the reputation of this place.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it your intention to continue with the statement before taking further points of order?

Mr. Speaker: I sense that it is the wish of the House to move on.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. Would it not be better in these circumstances for you courteously to ask the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant) whether he said any such thing?

His comment was within the clearest hearing of many of us. Indeed, it was a very goading remark. Did the hon. Gentleman say it, or did he not?

Mr. Speaker: Did the hon. Member say it?

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): I certainly intended to say, "Here comes the apologist for the IRA." If you ask me to withdraw, Mr. Speaker, of course I shall do so completely.

Mr. Speaker: The Clerk will now proceed to read the Orders——

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Increasingly, the House has been confronted with a procession of Opposition Members who seek to enhance their publicity value by being thrown out of the Chamber. This has gone on far too long. I ask whether we may take action through some of the procedures of the House so that something is done to restrain this form of misbehaviour—misbehaviour which takes place without any known penalty for the offender.

Mr. Speaker: The penalties are laid down in the Standing Orders. Whether they should be increased is a matter for the Procedure Committee.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I put it to you that to terminate a statement in the way that you have done has implications for future statements where an hon. Member may wish to intervene, for whatever reason, and interrupt our proceedings.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The reason that I made that comment is simply that no fewer than 24 hon. Members wish to take part in the next debate, and I feel that I must have consideration for those who have a legitimate right to the time of the House. Unfortunately, the action that I have just had to take takes time.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Can you explain why an incident of this kind truncates questions on a statement?

Mr. Speaker: I have just explained that very matter. There is a further statement to follow and, as always, I shall have regard to those who are not called for this statement on the next occasion.

Mr. McNamara: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I say that I regretfully support your decision on this matter? Had I had the opportunity, I would have liked to make a statement about the full support of the Opposition for the Director of Public Prosecutions. The matter that is in question is the Attorney-General and the pressures that he brought to bear upon him. In the circumstances, however, and because we note the pressures on you and on other hon. Members, the Opposition will not press for debate on the matter to continue.

Orders of the Day

Regional Development Grants (Termination) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Speaker: Before I call the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, let me repeat that no fewer than 24 right hon. and hon. Members have already indicated their wish to take part in this important debate, many of them with a direct constituency interest. Today is another day on which short contributions would enable the majority of them to be called.

4.31 pm

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister of Trade and Industry (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The subject of the Bill is the closure of the regional development grants scheme, which was introduced under the Industrial Development Act 1982, as substituted by the Co-operative Development Agency and Industrial Development Act 1984. The transitional arrangements for running down the earlier RDG scheme are not affected by the Bill.

The current RDG scheme operates in the development areas of Great Britain. It enables grant to be paid automatically to projects that qualify under the rules of the scheme. Subject to certain limits, grant is normally 15 per cent. of the value of an investment project, or £3,000 for each new job created by the project, whichever is the higher.

Clause 1 removes the power to make grants for projects, unless applications are received on or before 31 March 1988. Clause 2 places restrictions on the availability of grants for projects in respect of which applications for approval are received after 12 January 1988, except where applications are in respect of projects started on or before that date.

The restrictions are of two kinds: broadly, time limits on counting jobs and assets for grants, and constraints on variations of the project. First, grants will be payable only on jobs and assets provided, or money spent on assets, within two years of the project's approval date, and for which a claim is received within three years of that date, or any earlier date specified in the approval. Secondly, grants will not exceed the total amount specified in the approval, regardless of subsequent changes in the project.

The Bill is one part only of the package of changes in industrial policy that I announced to the House on 12 January. In introducing these changes, it was the Government's aim to strengthen and modernise regional policy, and to bring it up to date with the economic conditions of 1988. I have always been committed to the idea of a strong regional policy, and I remain so. Any disagreement in the House is therefore about the most effective instruments of policy to continue to improve the economy of the assisted areas. The debate is about how best to create the conditions that will speed up job creation in the north, the west midlands, the south-west, Scotland and Wales. The Government are as determined as ever to see all our people share in the nation's rising prosperity and new-found business confidence.

We are changing our regional policy to make it more effective, and to concentrate all our efforts and resources on encouraging new and lasting business growth. However, another difference between the Government and some of our critics is that we aim to use regional policy to change and modernise the industrial economy of the north, Scotland and Wales. A few of our opponents—I am glad to say that the number is declining—still devote most of their efforts to attempts to conserve the old heavy industrial economy which brought prosperity to past generations in the oldest industrial areas. *[Interruption.]* —I said that it was a declining number. I am glad that the reaction on the Opposition Benches shows that the light is spreading ever more widely.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington) *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I shall give way way in a second. I have only a short time, so shall not give way throughout my speech.

Heavy manufacturing industry can, of course, prosper again nowadays if it becomes more competitive and efficient, as much of our heavy manufacturing industry has done. Look at the success of British Steel, Nissan and Jaguar. However, those industries will never again become mass employers sustaining whole cities, and we need to attract the full range of business activity around them. The north needs businesses as varied and as strong as those that are thriving in great numbers in the south. The north does not want a preserved and subsidised economy, or a weak, branch-line economy. We are creating in the regions an economy that is ever more similar to the thriving economy of the south-east, capable of selling goods and services in today's markets.

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield): If the Minister is telling us that the purpose of the existing scheme of industrial support is simply to conserve the traditional industries, can he tell us which of the firms in, for example, the north, Wales and Scotland that are in receipt of regional development grant are simply traditional industries that have outlived their usefulness?

Mr. Clarke: I am describing regional policy as a whole. I was putting forward what I consider the incontrovertible fact that some of our critics in the north and Scotland still devote most of their efforts to trying to conserve the old industrial economy, for understandable reasons. The old industrial economy of the north is being modernised, and the great industries of Scotland and Wales are becoming more competitive. Many of them have shed labour as a result.

The Government's aim in regional policy—I hope that it has the support of the more enlightened Opposition Members—is to change the fundamental basis of the northern economy, so that alongside more competitive heavy manufacturing is the full range of service and manufacturing industries, as good and as strong as those in the south.

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury) *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I shall give way only once more. The point that I am being pressed on is this: it is being said that what I am saying is now widely accepted, and that Opposition Members agree with me that the basis of the economy in Scotland and the north must change. If there is not a fundamental difference between us, I shall not dwell on the subject.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is the Minister aware that west Cumberland has willingly entered into the exercise that he describes over the past few years? It has seen the rundown of older industries, and the development of new businesses. However, the development authorities for the area now say that in the event that the money is cut off in the way that the Minister suggests, that process of rebirth will come to an end. Why is he doing it now, when we are getting into gear and beginning to develop a new industrial base in the west of the country?

Mr. Clarke: If the hon. Gentleman's development authority is under the impression that we are cutting off the money, that is a misconception that I shall be able to correct when I reach the part of my speech that deals with the Government's expenditure.

Mr. Baldry: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the only division in the House and the country on the issue is between those who understand how an enterprise economy works, and those who do not?

Mr. Clarke: I agree. However, it is possible that a new realism is dawning among those on the other side. Time was when their main aim was to preserve such industries as steel and shipbuilding exactly as they were. The present more modern and efficient steel industry, and the success of some of the car manufacturers, shows the achievement of our enterprise policy approach, both in manufacturing and in other sections of the economy.

We are changing the nature of our regional policy—while not reducing the emphasis that we give to it—to reflect the changing economic climate in the regions, and in the country as a whole.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Clarke: No, I must get on. If I give way as frequently as this throughout my speech, we shall never fit 24 speakers into the debate, as you, Mr. Speaker, have reminded us.

We are no longer trying to protect the assisted areas against the worst of a recession, because we have emerged from that. Investment is rising very strongly in service and manufacturing industry. The most recent DTI survey of investment intentions in the United Kingdom predicts a further increase of 11 per cent. in manufacturing investment in 1988. The number of jobs is rising. Unemployment is falling particularly rapidly, and I am glad to say that it has been falling faster in Wales, the midlands and the north than elsewhere. In those changed circumstances, regional policy has to change to continue to be effective.

Regional development grant is the direct descendant of the oldest standing approach to regional policy. It provided a virtually automatic subsidy to all capital investment in manufacturing or service projects in development areas in England, Scotland and Wales. RDG required no prior assessment about whether a project was viable, or whether it needed the money to go ahead.

The nature of the scheme meant that, inevitably, many grants were paid to companies which would have proceeded with their projects without any Government grant. Decisions about regional location for such companies were often, therefore, not affected by the availability of RDG itself. Sir John Harvey-Jones, ex-chairman of ICI, has made speeches saying that that was

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the case, for quite a large number of the grants paid to his company using RDG. It clearly does not add up to the best use of public money for the benefit of the regions or the national economy.

The scheme also operates without requiring companies to produce any supporting financial information for their project. We all know that this has meant that some of the projects supported by RDG have been ill-conceived in that either the project, or even the company itself, has not been commercially viable. When companies that received grants subsequently fold and go away from assisted areas, Opposition Members rightly are the first to complain.

Therefore, RDG has been an expensive scheme so far. It would be bound to become even more expensive if we kept it, now that the economy of the regions is expanding so fast. We wish to change the use to which the money is put, and RDG is bound, by its very nature, to absorb an increased proportion of our budget, once investment takes place of its own volition in the regions. That is inevitable with such an automatic scheme. If we use RDG as our main instrument of policy, the better companies do, the more they invest, the more the Government have to spend automatically. In my opinion, we should not be subsidising profitable and successful companies to make investments that they would have made, anyway.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): I understand the Minister's point about the need to ensure that the money is targeted effectively, but the reason for introducing changes to put a limit on the cost per job was to prevent such waste. Does the Minister accept that it is not the time for change yet again, because constant changes depress demand?

Mr. Clarke: The last changes that were made put a ceiling on the amount of grant available by linking it to the jobs created, but the automatic element was retained. No defender of automatic grants can deny that investment decisions which would have been taken anyway automatically attracted capital subsidy, when that subsidy made no difference to the decision of the investor. Expansion in the regions has been so rapid, and investment has proceeded so strongly, that more and more money has been drawn automatically to support investments that would have gone ahead anyway.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): People in Lancaster are delighted with the proposal. We can hold our own, level pegging, but we find it difficult to hold our own if people are bribed to go elsewhere.

Mr. Clarke: I am explaining why the Government do not think that people should automatically be subsidised to go elsewhere. I shall come to the way in which we shall make use of resources selectively to subsidise, where a case has been made——

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I shall give way once more and then decline to give way any further.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): Regional grants have done considerable damage to my constituency and have enticed one company to Wales. Despite the fact that it received regional grants, there is still not a great deal of technical expertise in Wales, and they still have some of their work done on the island. Is my right hon. and learned Friend able to console constituencies that do not receive regional aid by an assurance that the Bill will make it less likely for companies to be seduced away?

Mr. Clarke: I cannot give my hon. Friend the complete assurance that he seeks. It is of the nature of a regional policy that it seeks to attract people to invest in regions where otherwise they may not go. My constituency has never received regional aid, and that causes considerable distress to companies that compete with companies in the regions but do not receive the same grant. I am sure that many companies in the Isle of Wight and in Nottinghamshire will accept that the Government are committed to a regional policy whereby public money must be spent to affect investment decisions and that there is a case for that. Under RDG, competitors with companies in the Isle of Wight are, in any event, investing in the north, because they are doing well in the market, and are able to raise the capital and receive a 15 per cent. subsidy because they happen to be there. That is rightly seen as unfair competition with companies in the south.

If we are to devote public money to sustain the improved economy in the regions, we must do that in a way that can be justified, by ensuring that it is used to make things happen that would not otherwise happen in Scotland, Wales, the north and the south-west.

Mr. Tony Speller (Devon, North): Does my right hon. and learned Friend consider that there is considerable unfairness, with discrimination across a county? For example, Plymouth is an excellent city, with good roads and rail services, air and sea communications and no unemployment, whereas across the county, at Ilfracombe, there is 28 per cent. unemployment and none of those advantages? We are unintentionally attracting investment away from where it is needed and towards where it already exists.

Mr. Clarke: It is of the nature of any regional policy that there are boundaries. Any Minister who has had responsibility for regional policy knows that boundaries give rise to endless disputes and some unfairness to districts that are just outside the assisted areas. Many parts of the south-west benefit from the Government's regional policy, but it is always difficult to know where to draw the line, and it causes rivalries and competition in Devon and elsewhere.

I hope that I have explained that we are ending RDG because the economy has expanded so rapidly that companies in the north and in Scotland are able to raise capital more readily, and there is less need than ever before for the automatic subsidy that the RDG represents. The time has come to bring to an end a system that gives a grant regardless of need and commercial viability and to rely more on selective assistance and the new enterprise initiative that I shall describe.

Before I describe the alternative policy, I shall help the House by describing the detailed arrangements for winding down the RDG scheme. Firms in the constituencies of right hon. and hon. Members will wish to know upon what basis they can apply for RDG and what will happen to RDG applications that are already in the pipeline.

The detailed arrangements for winding down the RDG scheme are, we believe, fair and reasonable. We announced the closure of the scheme on Tuesday 12

January. The closing date for applications is 31 March 1988. Firms therefore have two and half months notice of the closure.

We have taken care to exclude from the restrictions operating after 12 January firms whose project plans were made or being implemented before the announcement of the end of RDG. Firms whose applications have been received on or before the date of the announcement will be unaffected. So will firms whose projects had started on or before that date, provided that their application is received by the closing date of 31 March 1988.

Even in those cases which are affected by those transitional arrangements, the restrictions are unlikely to change the course of the planned project. Firms will have two years from the date of project approval in which to complete their projects. More than 90 per cent. of projects by number which have benefited from the scheme in the past were to be completed within two years, so we believe that two years is the right time.

We shall make use of regional selective assistance to give grants to firms which apply in future for projects which genuinely require grant to make a difference to their location or to make them go ahead at all. Regional selective assistance, unlike the automatic grant system, requires companies to show that they genuinely need public money to proceed with a project. It will continue to be available and the maximum amount payable will continue to be higher in development areas than in intermediate areas, as before.

Projects which up to now have qualified for RDG will be eligible for RSA. Companies — both domestic and foreign — that meet the criteria for the scheme could indeed well receive more by way of RSA for the project to go ahead than they would previously have received from RDG. Let me add that we are making more money available for regional selective assistance to meet the higher demand for it. However, we shall, of course, be applying the criteria rigorously to make sure that the taxpayer gets maximum value for his money.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Clarke: I said that I could not keep giving way.

Regional selective assistance is open to all companies in industry, whether British or foreign. Therefore—this is an important point — we shall continue to attract internationally mobile projects to this country as at present. Let me make it clear—some people have been worried about this — that our policy on inward investment has not changed. The Government welcome inward investment and aim to build on the considerable success that we have had in attracting overseas investment to these shores.

I believe that the availability of grants usually plays only a relatively small part in attracting most of the foreign companies that come to Britain. We are being so successful at the moment because overseas investors are impressed with our good industrial relations, the general economic climate, the good infrastructure and communications and the quality of the staff. I accept completely that grants sometimes come into the equation. We do not want to be put at a disadvantage when compared with other countries that offer grants to attract internationally mobile projects and we shall use RSA and our other grant-giving powers to ensure that we are not.

Judging from some of the comments when I made my statement and some of the comments in the newspapers afterwards, the fact that we are now relying on selectivity has given rise to some of the controversy about what otherwise is just a change in our main instrument of regional policy. I am a little amused and rather amazed that the retention of RSA has suddenly aroused a small debate about how selectivity works. After my statement one of my officials pulled my leg when I returned to the Department by asking about the new powers that we were taking to enable civil servants such as himself to exercise the duty of picking winners again. *[Interruption.]* I think that my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbitt) accepts what I am about to say.

We are planning to spend more money on RSA but we are not changing it at all. Regional selective assistance has been in existence since the 1970s. As far as I am aware no one has criticised the way in which is has operated; certainly not for the last year or so. If anyone suddenly wants to criticise it now, I will, of course, listen. However, perhaps critics should first understand exactly how RSA works.

Any company may apply. All applications have to be assessed objectively against published criteria to establish whether the project would go ahead without public money. Private sector expertise plays the key part in this assessment. All offers over £100,000 are submitted to industrial development advisory boards made up of senior, experienced business men. Ministers and our officials do not, sad to say, "play God". We do not even decide whether a project should or should not go ahead. It is our job to judge how much money is necessary to enable a project to go ahead that would otherwise not go ahead. But it is the company that takes the initiative and the final decision whether to go ahead with the project.

Mr. Heffer: On the matter of criteria, is it question of viability? Who will determine the viability of a future product? That is the important question. Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman answer? When I was a Minister in the Department of Trade and Industry that gave us more headaches than any other question.

Mr. Clarke: The criteria are published. They are clear and, as far as I can recall, no one has raised a question to challenge them; certainly not over the past year or so. When the hon. Gentleman was a Minister in the Department, regional selective assistance was being operated by him. The main difficulty that used to arise in the time of the Labour Government was that the business men used to give their advice and judgment about the validity of the schemes being put forward and Ministers —I do not know whether it applies to the hon Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) but it applies to his right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) who I think was the Secretary of State — were in the habit of overruling the advice of business men and forming their own opinion.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Absolute twaddle.

Mr. Clarke: It is not absolute twaddle. I shadowed the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) who was slightly more respectful towards industrial development advisory boards. He understands the system I am describing, which is that operated by the previous Labour Government. However, when the right hon. Member for

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Chesterfield was Secretary of State, he did not have the same respect for private sector expertise and neither, I suspect, did the hon. Member for Walton. That is what caused the difficulty for the previous Government. Private sector judgments were overruled by Ministers. That is not usually the case with this Government, certainly not in terms of giving grants to projects that business men say are not viable.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman bear in mind that he is talking absolute rubbish? I administered regional selective grants for the last three years of the previous Government and I did not once overrule the industrial development advisory boards. Will he also bear in mind that the Government of which I was a member used RSA to help bring in Hoffman La Roche, Hitachi and so on? We used it for inward investment. Since RSA is so marvellous and is a system that the Government support, why is the level of RSA now 37 per cent. lower than it was when I administered it?

Mr. Clarke: I accept that the right hon. Gentleman may not have overruled the industrial development advisory boards. However, he was not the only Minister in the Department during the last Labour Government. I will not use the material held by my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Scottish Office. I believe that he is sitting here with quotations concerning the time of the previous Labour Government. One of the then Secretaries of State made a virtue of the fact that he overruled his business advisers when giving out grants. No doubt the hon. Member for Walton approved of that at the time. The difficulty the Labour Government faced was that they gave grants to ill-conceived projects that business men advised against.

When I shadowed the right hon. Member for Swansea, West, I supported some of the bids to which he referred. I remember the Hoffman La Roche case. I did not criticise regional selective assistance. It was used to attract inward investment and it can still be done. For that reason I do not understand why the Opposition are raising doubts about our choice of this instrument now. The cost has gone down because much of the investment in those days was purely capital investment, which sometimes cost jobs and certainly did not create jobs on an adequate scale. The first step the present Government took was to relate the level of grant more closely to the number of jobs created. I would have thought that that was the principal objective of policy. That has had the effect of reducing expenditure compared to a few years ago.

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): The reality is that the people in the north do not trust the Government because in the past 10 years we have lost over half our percentage of national regional aid. It used to be 32 per cent. and it is now 16 per cent. Under selective assistance we have lost £15·5 million since the previous Labour Government were in office. The Government have given no guarantees about what they will do to maintain the level of income to the north, let alone increase it.

Mr. Clarke: I am, as ever, seeking to dispel distrust. We have reached the stage in my argument when I am pointing out that we are changing the instruments of regional policy but not changing its essential nature or aims. We are replacing automatic grants because they are becoming steadily more expensive and wasteful as investment takes off of its own volition in the north, Scotland and Wales. We are replacing it with a reliance on regional selective assistance, which, as far as I understand, Opposition Members do not attack as an instrument of policy. I shall return to the quantity of aid.

I have already explained that we have seen a drop in expenditure because we are now relating the grant to the number of jobs created. However, the change in policy of which the Bill is a part is not part of any planned cutback in expenditure. I will make that clear when I reach that part of my speech.

Mr. Blair: May I remind the Minister that we are not debating whether to continue regional selective assistance —we agree with continuing that—but whether it is right to abolish and terminate regional development grants? Is the Minister saying that when regional development grant ceases to be paid, regional selective assistance will grow sufficiently to take that up?

Mr. Clarke: When I reach that part of my speech, which I shall reserve until I have described the entire policy, I shall say that we are increasing planned expenditure for the three years of the White Paper period compared with last year's plans. We expect a higher take-up of regional selective assistance because of the ending of regional development grant. Spending will vary, because, when there is an overlap between commitments on RDG and the new RSA, there will be a sudden surge of spending and it will then decrease again. But the total spending period plan exceeds the one that we published last year.

We are talking about a change in expenditure from automatic grant to selective grant, but it must be seen alongside the other policy changes that we have announced.

An important new feature of our policy is the enterprise initiative. I shall explain the contribution that it will make to strengthening business and industry in the regions. The aim of the enterprise initiative is to encourage and help entrepreneurs and managers to make their businesses stronger and more competitive. Small firms often find it difficult to make the leap to becoming a big business because they lack the management time and experience to tackle their problems and identify their opportunities. That applies across the country, but it is even more crucial in the regions where, more than anywhere, we need to facilitate the growth of new strong businesses, not weak shadows of those in other areas.

We intend to help small and medium-sized firms to improve their performance in marketing, design, quality and advanced manufacturing methods. We are encouraging firms employing up to 500 people to take expert advice in those key areas. We are offering two days' free consultancy and up to 50 per cent. of the subsequent consultancy costs for between five and 15 days.

That will be the position in most areas, but the aim of the initiative, and the need to strengthen the performance of companies, matters even more in the less prosperous areas. Therefore, we will pay two thirds of the consultancy costs in assisted areas and in urban programme areas, compared with one half in the rest of the country. Overall, during the next three years, we shall be providing about £250 million to encourage firms to take advantage of the initiative. The early signs are that they are anxious to do so. So far, 14,500 people have telephoned our enterprise initiative number to ask for more details.

That is an important change, because as an instrument of policy we are considering not just the subsidy to capital investment, which has been the mainstay of regional and most of industrial policy, but the provision of other forms of support to improve the quality of management and the quality of product turned out, especially by small and medium-sized firms.

Development areas will benefit from two new schemes offering grants for investment and innovation to firms employing fewer than 25 people. They will be able to apply for investment grants of 15 per cent. towards the cost of fixed assets, up to a maximum of £15,000, and innovation grants of 50 per cent. for product and process development, up to £50,000. We have targeted those new grants on very small firms in the development areas because those areas are most in need of an additional stimulus to growth. Firms of the size that we have chosen are often at a crucial and vulnerable stage of business development, where they need to strengthen management skills and to find a more secure financial footing.

I trust that I have satisfied the House that we are keeping special regional incentives in place. We are changing and improving them. They will still be based on the existing assisted areas map, with the addition that the higher level of enterprise initiative grant will be paid in the inner cities, too. This is the first time that we have given such a grant in the cities and outside the assisted areas.

To deal with the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Devon, North (Mr. Speller), I should say that we have made no change to the assisted areas map because a full review of the boundaries would be very complicated and time-consuming. We estimate that a full review of all the boundaries would take up to two years to complete. Any revision of boundaries must obtain the consent of the European Community, for the legitimate reason that some countries may extend their assisted areas to take advantage of other member states in the open European market. It was not feasible for us to embark upon a review so soon after the one conducted about three years ago, and we shall not embark on one until we see how the new policies settle down.

Mr. William Powell (Corby): I understand what my right hon. and learned Friend says about the general review and the national map, but he will be aware that unemployment in the assisted area in my constituency is several percentage points lower than in any other assisted area and lower than that in many non-assisted areas. Why is it impossible to carry out a limited review which would correct an anomaly that can only increase between now and 1990?

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friend will admit that the problem arises because of the success in attracting new industry to Corby. The moment that those who take advantage of what is on offer in an assisted area are successful, anomalies develop round the borders of the map. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State considers individual cases and receives many deputations. My hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw), who used to carry out that duty, will remember people coming to see him trying to extend the boundaries of the assisted area. That is not a feasible way of handling the matter, and in due course we shall need another full review. But my hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey carried out a comprehensive review three years ago and it will be some time before we get around to another one.

Mr. Alan Williams: The House will be interested to know how small firms in the development areas will be better off under the new scheme, receiving 15 per cent. of capital costs up to a ceiling of £15,000—that is £600 a job—when under the present scheme they could also get 15 per cent. of capital costs at £3,000 a job. How can it be a better deal for them if they get one fifth as much money as now?

Mr. Clarke: The nature of the scheme is different. The 15 per cent. is a straight subsidy to capital investment. The new grants that we shall give small firms retain an element of subsidy to capital investment, but include support for introducing investment in new technology into their production. That is a feature of all our policies. It is no good measuring these things in terms of the subsidy to capital investment. Capital investment alone does not determine success. We must examine how a firm keeps up with modern technology, the quality and design of its products and its general management performance to determine how well it will succeed in the market place.

Before the debate, some hon. Members asked me what assistance is available in different areas, and it might help if I gave a resumé of what will be available under the proposals in the Bill and when our new package is put into effect in the assisted areas.

The new arrangements will mean that in development areas firms will be eligible for regional selective assistance, up to a higher maximum than in intermediate areas; for subsidised consultancy of up to two thirds of the cost, compared with up to 50 per cent. outside assisted areas; and, from April, the new innovation and investment grants which will be available to firms employing fewer than 25 people. In the intermediate areas, there will be regional selective assistance and subsidised consultancy of up to two thirds of the cost, again compared with up to 50 per cent. outside the assisted areas. In urban programme areas, there will be subsidised consultancy of up to two thirds of the cost. For non-assisted areas—the rest of the country—there will be subsidised consultancy, under the enterprise initiative, of up to 50 per cent. of the cost. That is the package. It is a sensible change, a response to changing economic circumstances now that the country is doing better and a response to the changed needs in the regions.

Many hon. Members, including the hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong), will suspend their judgment until they have heard how much we shall spend in the assisted areas after the changes have been made. I should make the position clear. We want an effective regional policy, so we shall make available the necessary resources. Our plans confirm what I have been saying during the past few months about our review. This is not part of cutting public expenditure.

The public expenditure White Paper published last Wednesday shows that our plans for spending on regional policy schemes will be higher than we planned in last year's White Paper. In England we are planning to spend about £900 million over the next three years, compared with last year's White Paper figure of about £700 million, based on the regional expenditure figure revalued in line with inflation into 1990-91.

Mr. Blair: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Clarke: The regional programmes of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales similarly show an increase over earlier published plans.

Mr. Blair: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman accept that the reason why the sums in the White Paper remain constant or rise slightly is that over the next few years considerable amounts of regional development grant will still be paid? Will he not accept that the true comparison will be made when regional development grant ceases to be paid in 1991? Will there be an increase in regional selective assistance to make that up? That is the key question.

Mr. Clarke: I have already said that the pattern of spending is affected by the overlap between commitments on RDG and the new increased spending on RSA. I agree that this coming year's spend appears artificially inflated by the overlap between the two. However, it will revert to more normal spend. Nevertheless, compared with previously published plans, the effect is an increase in DTI expenditure in each year.

For 1987-88 we are currently working on an outturn of £254 million compared with the published estimate in the White Paper of £222 million. In 1988-89, DTI spend on regional aid will increase to £330 million compared with last year's White Paper figure of £235 million. The figure for 1989-90 will be £304 million, compared with last year's published figure of £226 million. The figure for 1990-91, in response to the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), is £264 million. The figure published in last year's White Paper when inflation is taken into account is £232 million. The figures that I have given are higher than those extrapolated from last year's White Paper.

Mr. Blair *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: The figure is still £264 million compared with £254 million.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): Will my right hon. and learned Friend make it clear to all, especially to those of us who represent development areas, that provided projects are available and acceptable to his Department, the amount of money going into the development areas — the assisted areas around the country—will increase rather than decrease?

Mr. Clarke: Certainly. The White Paper figures that I have given show that the figures are rising when compared with the published and expected figures last year.

Mr. Blair: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Clarke: I will reply to one hon. Member at a time.

Once we examine the figures that I have described, it is obvious that much of the expenditure depends on the response to the programmes. We are estimating how much we shall spend on regional selective assistance and we have said what we intend to spend. We have estimated what we shall spend on the new enterprise initiative, but we have no idea of the actual take-up. We have only guesstimates about the response to the enterprise initiative in the assisted areas. Hon. Members who have time to watch television will know that we are promoting the enterprise initiative and the availability of grants to the businesses that we intend should benefit in the assisted areas.

We have stated our intention in our spending plans to spend that amount of money if economic circumstances and the response of business men are as we anticipate and if business men come forward for the grants.

Mr. Blair *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I want to make it clear that the figures that I have given cover spending on regional selective assistance, the new grants for small firms investment and innovation and regional development grant applications made on or before 31 March 1988. However, the figures that I have given do not include provision for the consultancy grant under the enterprise initiative.

Mr. Blair: Why?

Mr. Clarke: Because it is available at a higher rate in the assisted areas. There is an extra provision in those areas. If we provide a higher rate of grant, there must be a regional aspect to the spend and that must be added to any final calculation about regional spend once we know the outturn. Nor do the figures that I have given include the grant-in-aid paid to English Estates for building industrial and commercial premises in the assisted areas in England and the Scottish and Welsh equivalents.

Mr. Blair: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Clarke: I will not give way now, but I will give way in a minute.

As Opposition Members are pressing me on the figures, I should give the figures for English Estates as they are a key part of the regional policy. I will not intrude on spending in the Welsh Development Agency and the Scottish Development Agency. Those figures are extremely good and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales would gladly give the Welsh figures and similarly my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Scottish Office will address the same points with regard to Scotland when he replies later.

We are planning to spend on English Estates——

Mr. Bruce Millan (Glasgow, Govan): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Clarke: No, I do not believe that the right hon. Gentleman is the right man for me to give way to in regard to English Estates. I might have given way to him on other aspects of regional policy, but not on English Estates.

Mr. Blair *rose*——

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. Is the Minister giving way?

Mr. Clarke: No, Madam Deputy Speaker. I want to respond to questions about English spending. I will not give way to a Scottish Member before I have given all the figures.

Mr. Blair: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Clarke: No. Labour Members are trying to mount opposition to these points on a variety of grounds. They cannot complain about the instruments of policy. They are trying to complain about spending, but they will not listen to the figures.

Mr. Blair: That is irrelevant.

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman cannot claim that spending on English Estates is irrelevant to his argument. It may destroy his argument, but it is not irrelevant.

Mr. Blair: Give way.

Mr. Clarke: No, I will not give way.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The Minister has made it clear that he will not give way.

Mr. Clarke: If the hon. Member for Sedgefield will listen to me, he will understand that the reason why I wanted to refer to English Estates is that I have made it clear that the figures that I gave earlier did not include English Estates. If the hon. Gentleman wants to refer to the amount that we are going to spend in the regions, he must acknowledge the fact that we are increasing spending on English Estates as well. That increase is significant.

In 1987-88, we increased English Estates' planned programme in the assisted areas from £33·5 million to £37 million. As a result of higher asset sales, English Estates is likely to achieve a record programme this year of— *[Interruption.]* I am sorry if the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) has not heard of English Estates, but this is relevant to the main argument.

English Estates is reaching a record level of spend this year of £47 million. In 1988-89 we shall ask it to plan for a programme that is £5 million higher than the £37 million planned in 1987-88. In practice, we expect it to exceed that figure and we shall authorise it to spend up to £49 million if it can generate the necessary funds from its own resources. Longer-term spending, about which some hon. Members have expressed concern, is well covered by our revised programmes. Expenditure on regional development grants will naturally decline, as the explanatory and financial memorandum to the Bill makes clear.

Mr. Blair *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I will not give way. I have given way repeatedly throughout my speech. The hon. Member for Sedgefield would be wiser to save his interventions on spending until I have given all the figures. He would be well advised to listen to those figures before he rises to criticise them. I have given the hon. Gentleman some figures. I have said that he must take account of increased spending on English Estates, increased spending on the Welsh Development Agency——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for a Minister, recognising that one crucial figure remains, to continue to avoid answering questions at the Dispatch Box in this way? Why will he not give way about this one figure?

Madam Deputy Speaker: It is perfectly in order for the Minister to express himself as he wishes.

Mr. Clarke: I have given way about 10 times. I have given the published White Paper figures showing the increase in our planned expenditure. I have just explained the other increases in expenditure which must be taken into account. No doubt there is one figure which the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) clutches and which he believes will make his point and when he catches your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker, he will have his chance to give that figure.

As I have said, we cannot predict the extent to which our new schemes will be taken up. Take-up will obviously vary from region to region, but we have provided and planned for growing expenditure. The main point is that I do not believe that policy should be judged solely by the quantity of expenditure. It should be judged by its value. However, on quantity I believe that we are on sound ground.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside) *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Only one hon. Member on his feet at a time in the House, please.

Mr. Clarke: Does the former Secretary of State for Scotland wish to have a word, as he rose first?

Mr. Bruce Millan (Glasgow, Govan): The Minister has given a certain omnibus figure. He said that regional selective assistance is being correspondingly increased to make up for the lack of regional development grant. Will he disentangle these figures and give us specific figures for the section 7 regional selective assistance in 1987-88 and in subsequent years, because the White Paper conspicuously fails to give these figures?

Mr. Clarke: I can give the United Kingdom figures for regional selective assistance for the years in question. In 1987-88, we are providing for an outturn of £215 million, compared with a White Paper figure last year of £222 million. As the right hon. Gentleman knows, the figure is demand-led. For 1988-89, last week's White Paper shows a figure of £266 million. The previous year's White Paper provided £245 million, so, again, there is an increase in planned provision. For 1989-90, the figure in this year's White Paper is £256 million. The figure in last year's White Paper was £217 million. For 1990-91, the figure is £284 million — a continuing increase, compared with an extrapolation from last year's White Paper of £222 million.

Mr. Leon Brittan (Richmond, Yorks) *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I congratulate the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) on having got on to the point that our planned provision for RSA is greater than last year's planned provision.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: Hon. Members must allow me to make my point, as I have been led into it. The figure is higher than last year's planned provision and is a continuing higher provision year-on-year to take account of the increased demand.

Mr. Brittan: My right hon. and learned Friend gave the figures for selective regional assistance and said that they were for the United Kingdom. Will he confirm that that was an error and that they are figures for Great Britain?

Mr. Clarke: I will confirm that. I have no Northern Irish figures at all. The figures were for England, Wales and Scotland.

Mr. Blair *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Member for Sedgefield will have to make his own speech on the figures. I have given an exhaustive list of figures from this year's and last year's White Papers. The Opposition wish to scratch around for a basis on which they can oppose this sensible change in the nature, not the volume, of regional assistance. I shall listen to the hon. Gentleman's point when he is called.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I must get on. More time is now being taken up with attempts by the Opposition to find a figure on which they can base an argument than with anything else.

I accept that there is a change in the nature of regional policy. Ending regional development grant was intended as a significant change in regional policy. It ends a line of policy instruments that we can trace back to Hugh Dalton's regional policies and beyond. This Government have the courage to change the nature of regional policy because we are so much more successful than our predecessors in creating the climate for economic success. The objectives of regional policy — to reduce job disparities and to encourage modern, locally based growth — remain. In that sense, we are building on the framework set out in the Government's last major review of regional policy in 1983. That review had already signposted a move away from automatic grants towards greater selectivity and cost-effectiveness.

It is not surprising that, as some hon. Members have said, expenditure has settled down to a level much lower than it was 10 or 20 years ago because we have put these cost per job links into the grants that we now pay. However, it would be nonsense to carry on blindly with policies which cost a great deal of money when, in some parts of the country, they have manifestly not provided an effective solution to the regional problem. RDG simply no longer fits what the regions need to enhance their economic performance. They need better targeted help for those projects which make an effective and lasting contribution to local economies.

We believe that industry is behind us on these changes. The majority of industrialists in all regions who responded to a recent MORI survey agreed that the Department of Trade and Industry serves industry better when it seeks to maintain an economic climate than when it tries to give specific assistance. Firms have also expressed the strongest support for the Department's policies based on expertise rather than financial aid. The Scottish CBI has welcomed the initiative

"as a bold shift to keep incentives in line with changing industrial structures".

It believes that it creates

"a straight path for new jobs".

That is the essence of our enterprise and industrial package.

Mr. Barry Jones *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: At the moment, the economy is buoyant. Overall investment is at record levels and the outlook for investment is good. We are maintaining public resources for the regions, but we must use those resources in better ways. We believe that our new schemes and policies will be more effective than regional development grant in strengthening regional economies, in Scotland and Wales as well as in England. That is why we believe that it is a sensible measure to end the automatic RDG scheme and I ask the House to support the Bill.

5.25 pm

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield): I suppose that we should pay the Minister of Trade and Industry the compliment of thinking that he did not actually believe the speech that he has just made.

Today we are debating the abolition of regional development grants, which have accounted for almost three quarters of regional aid since 1979. That has created or saved two thirds of the 600,000 or more jobs for which, over the years, regional policy has been responsible. That is the one part of Government finance for the regions which, by being automatic, is certain. That has been shown by every one of the many reports commissioned by the Government to be critical to investment in the regions.

When the Government protest that we should accept their promise of good faith in respect of the Bill and that it is all a part of the reorganisation of resources, not of the reduction of resources, we should tell them that we find their protestations hollow and incredible. For four years, since they found their regional aid budget difficult to cut, precisely because of regional development grant, they told us that with each change, all they were doing was obtaining better use of the same money. Every time they have made such a promise, they have broken it. Now they make it again and expect to be believed.

Whatever the Government say, we have no doubt that the issue today is not some academic or administrative argument about the different forms of regional assistance, not an assessment of how we achieve greater efficiency in the use of money, but whether the concealed agenda of this Bill is not rather a massive reduction of resources to the hard-pressed regions. Indeed, the only frank statement that has been made about regional development grant in recent days is the title given to the Bill—the Regional Development Grants (Termination) Bill. That is the Government's response to the divisions of this country.

It is not easy to piece together all the various figures that come from the White Paper on public expenditure, where England, Scotland and Wales are all differently treated, and where, if the purpose of the White Paper is not to obfuscate, certainly its effect is to make it extremely difficult to know where the various functions fit in and where the various figures given by the Minister in the statement relate. Some appear to relate to England and some relate to Great Britain as a whole.

However, we should begin, when we test the Government's good faith, to recognise that they do not come to this topic with an innocent past. They have a record, with respect, as guilty and as long as their term of office. Let us consider regional preferential assistance from 1979 onwards. In 1979, it stood at almost £1,200 million for Great Britain. By 1986-87, it was down to £726 million and in 1987-88 we expect a further cut of some £300 million. Therefore, whereas the north received over £300 million in 1979, last year it received £135 million. This year it will receive only about £80 million or £90 million. The position is almost exactly the same for the north-west.

Yorkshire and Humberside will see their budgets cut. In 1979, Scotland received £280 million. Last year the figure was down to £241 million. This year already, before the changes, it is down to £123 million. In 1979, the figure for Wales was £207 million. Last year, it was down to £144 million. It is now down to about £88 million. Indeed, since 1979, before the changes have taken effect, about £2·5 billion has been taken out in regional aid. In other words, it is now less than one third of what it was when the Government came to office.

That is the context in which we examine the Government's promise today that the changes in the Bill are designed simply to reorganise existing resources, that it is just an organisational change and that it is all about better value for money.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): Would it not be right to say that, in 1979, when the Government came to power, about £1 million a day was being poured into British Steel, partly through regional development grants, and that, as British Steel is now a profitable company and does not need that subsidy, there is no need for the payment to continue?

Mr. Blair: The money that is going into the hon. Gentleman's region — quite apart from support to industry — by way of the grant, the abolition of which we shall determine today, has been slashed to a third of what it amounted to before. *[Interruption.]* With great respect, that is the figure. This year, in regional preferential assistance, Wales will receive less than half what it received under the same provisions in 1979.

When he announced these changes in the House, the right hon. and learned Gentleman said:

"Let me make it clear that we are not proposing any reduction in the Government's total regional spending, but we believe that existing resources can be spent more effectively than hitherto." — [*Official Report*, 12 January 1988; Vol. 1433, c. 147.]

It is against that background that we examine the Government's claim. When he introduced the White Paper, the right hon. and learned Gentleman said that there would be no overall cut in regional spending in the Government's regional aid budget over the next few years. Interestingly, the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) put a specific question to him. He asked whether the Government realised that, above all, they would

"have to satisfy the country that when all the proposals have been implemented the amount of money being spent on regional policy in real terms is at least as much as it is today?" —[*Official Report*, 12 January 1988; Vol. 1433, c. 151.]

The key to understanding what the Government have done is that they are not comparing like with like when they give their figures for the next few years. It is true that the White Paper figures on public spending show that the budget will remain constant and will then fall only a little, but that is precisely because the Government are not comparing like with like. Built into the White Paper public expenditure figures is a whole section that concerns regional development grants, although, of course, the purpose of the Bill is to abolish them. We are told in the preamble to the Bill that regional development grant, although it cannot be applied for after 31 March 1988, will still continue to be paid right up to 1990-91. Therefore, the true comparison is between the system that exists now and the system that will exist when regional development grant is no longer paid.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I assume that the hon. Gentleman will concede that, when he went into the history, he did not compare like with like in comparing RDG2 now with RDG1 back in 1979. A change in policy was made. It appears to have been wholly beneficial to regional economies and has done them no damage at all. In his last sentences, describing the next three years, does he deny that the total level of resources planned to go into the regions is greater than was planned in last year's White Paper? He cannot deny that, yet he is trying to find convoluted ways of taking it apart.

Mr. Blair: The right hon. and learned Gentleman's case is that the abolition of regional development grants will not affect the overall level of regional spending, and that that is proved by the White Paper. But the White Paper includes a whole section of transitional money that will be paid in regional development grants.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): That RDG money is gone, it is committed. New firms cannot apply for any of that.

Mr. Blair: Exactly.

The true comparison is not between the system as it is now and will be over the next few years, because we are still receiving regional development grants. The true comparison relates to when regional development grant ceases to be paid. The question is whether the right hon. and learned Gentleman's protestation that regional selective assistance will grow to meet the shortfall of regional development grant is correct. He is treating as permanent what is in fact the transitional working through the system of regional development grants being paid now.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: That is exactly what the total figures that I kept reciting demonstrated. That is the hon. Gentleman's point. I trust that he is not seeking to claim that, in talking about the total regional spend, which he makes the main point of his argument, we should ignore continued expenditure on commitments and RDG. *[Interruption.]* Yes, of course it is. It is being spent on industry under regional development grant.

If the hon. Gentleman is saying that, over the three White Paper years, we should ignore for Great Britain figures of £279 million, £209 million and £125 million, of course he will show a cut. It is rather daft arithmetic to ignore a total of about £700 million that will be spent in the regions during the year.

Mr. Blair: With great respect, the right hon. and learned Gentleman has forgotten that the purpose of the Bill is to abolish regional development grant. Therefore, it is ludicrous to compare the system as it obtains at the moment, under which regional development grant is still being paid, with the system that will obtain when the money has worked its way through the system and is no longer available. In other words, the true comparison is between the time when regional development grant is no longer paid and the system that exists at present.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *rose*——

Mr. Blair: The right hon. and learned Gentleman would not give way to me, but I shall be extremely generous and give way to him. Perhaps he will answer my question. Does he say that, when regional development grant ceases to be paid — in other words, when the transitional provisions come to an end — the same amount of money that currently finds its way into the Budget in regional development grant will be spent in regional selective assistance?

Mr. Clarke: Do I gather that the hon. Gentleman's case that, somehow, we are cutting planned regional provision involves my making a guess at this stage about what spending should be in 1992-94? That appears to be the burden of his case. I have never known any Minister in any Government to make such a guess. We have a three-year White Paper that shows that the hon. Gentleman's case is wrong.

Mr. Blair: With great respect, it is becoming clear that the Minister himself does not believe that, when he abolishes regional development grant, regional selective

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assistance will fill the gap. When he announced his White Paper, he told us that funding was remaining level. Now he is saying that it will stay level for three years, will drop and then will be cut. That is the truth.

There are only two sources of money that allow the right hon. and learned Gentleman to say that money which will no longer go to industry through regional development grant will be provided in the regional aid budget. The sources are regional selective assistance or the new initiatives.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): In all the bantering so far, no one has mentioned the many millions of pounds that go to Teesside and Tyneside and the urban development corporations. It is regional aid from another Department, but it is far more money for the north of England.

Mr. Blair: It has been put to the hon. Gentleman on many occasions that the money going to urban development corporations barely matches a fraction of what is being taken out in rate support grant and other matters.

Let me deal with the new initiatives that the Government have launched. I refer to consultancy services. Remember that the Government say that the business development initiative, of which the consultancy service is a part, will mean that new resources go to the regions. They say that £250 million will be spent over the next three years in the business development initiative. I assume that I am right in thinking that the business development initiative comes straight out of the Department of Trade and Industry and is a nationwide scheme covering the whole country; in other words, that that funding includes the funding—this is important—for Scotland and Wales too. We know already that some £25 million a year is already being spent on consultancy services, so we can knock off £75 million over three years straight away.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Can the hon. Gentleman say why?

Mr. Blair: Because the Minister is saying that this is money over and above what has already been spent, so it is right to subtract what is being spent at present.

The first and critical thing to remember about the consultancy services is that they are to be available over the whole country. In other words, there is no guarantee at all that any proportion of this money will find its way into the development areas or the assisted areas. There is a higher level of grant, but it is fairly marginal.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn) managed to be put on the mailing list of a particular director from the south-east regional office of the Department of Trade and Industry. I want to put this point to the Minister specifically, and I will give way to him if he is prepared to deny it. This is what the director of the south-east regional office said about the consultancy services—the main part of the Government's business development initiative:

"An important part"—

this is, of the enhanced role of the DTI—

"will be a single advisory service delivered regionally, and we in the south east regional office are to be responsible for some 40 per cent. of this consultancy scheme."

In other words, 40 per cent. of the business development initiative is to go to the south east alone, not even counting East Anglia and the south west. How much will actually go to the north, to Scotland, to Wales and to the midlands? The truth of the matter is that it is unlikely that anything other than a small fraction of this money will find its way into the depressed regions of the country.

As to the other grants that the Government are giving, it is all very well to say that in the development areas these small firms will have a regional investment grant available to them—they have it available to them at the moment, under the automatic development grant. The greatest amount of money, even on the Government's own figures, in three years' time that will be spent on this is about £50 million.

If we take the amount of money through the business development initiative——

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Where does the hon. Member get his figures from?

Mr. Blair: Those are the figures in the White Paper, with respect. It is £14 million next year, rising to £55 million in 1990-91. That is in regional investment grant and innovation grant——

Mr. Clarke: That is not what we are talking about. We are talking about £250 million which, if 40 per cent. goes to the south-east — if the regional director has his ambitions to realise—still leaves a substantial amount of money going to the rest. The DTI south-eastern region does not cover just a little corner south of London; it is a huge tract of the country, including all of London and substantial areas to the north and south of it.

Mr. Blair: If 40 per cent. goes to the south-east, that is wholly disproportionate. The Minister's case is that this money is in some way in substitution for regional development grant, but the truth is that the bulk of it will go nowhere near where regional development grant goes now.

What I had moved on to was regional investment grant and innovation grant. I want to point out to the Minister that, even at its highest, in three years' time, it amounts to just over £50 million. The figures that he has given today for regional selective assistance indicate that some £215 million is going now in regional selective assistance, rising to £284 million in 1990-91. That is a real rise of about £50 million or £60 million.

There is no conceivable way that the money available under the business development initiative, under the small firms grant or under the extended regional selective assistance, even on the Government's own figures, will anywhere near compensate for the abolition of regional development grant. In fact, there is a substantial cut, which will be running after the transitional period of regional development grant, of about £150 million to £200 million each year.

In justifying this, the Government have attempted rather half-heartedly to disparage regional development grants, to claim that they are paying out when it is not really necessary—even Sullom Voe was wheeled out last time before our eyes.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: It is a good example.

Mr. Blair: It may be a good example of what was happening four years ago, but the Government changed the regional development grant system in 1984 and said that they had cured all that. When they changed the scheme in 1984, they told us at the very same time that it

was the final change that would need to be made and that the automatic system of regional development grant was a help to the regions. It would have been difficult for them to say otherwise, because the DTI has commissioned no fewer than three major reports on regional development grant and regional incentives.

The first report was called "The effects of Government's regional economic policy", which had this to say:

"The conclusion that regional policy generated some 450,000 manufacturing jobs in the Development Areas which were still in existence in 1981 leaves out of account any secondary or multiplier effects . . . this project has not been directly concerned with these multiplier effects but, using a conventional medium term regional multiplier of 1·4, the 450,000 manufacturing jobs would generate a further 180,000 jobs in service industries, making a grand total of surviving regional policy jobs of 630,000 at 1981. This is a real and substantial achievement."

Two thirds of those jobs came in with the regional development grant.

Mr. Philip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): The gist of the hon. Gentleman's argument seems to be that the fact that we might supposedly cut the total amount going to the regions is necessarily a bad thing. Does he not accept that it is not just how much one spends but also the cause on which one spends? Does he not also accept that there are some best estimates that the cost per job created by regional aid in the 1960s and 1970s was £50,000 in today's money? Does he not also accept that, however well intentioned, much of the regional aid led to totally unsustainable factories—for example, Speke, Bathgate and Linwood—which were well intentioned but which could not be sustained and did tremendous damage to the car industry in the midlands?

Mr. Blair: It is correct that one must take a general view when assessing the overall impact of regional development grant. The overwhelming conclusion of the Government's own report, however, is that, whatever the individual cases where grant could be said to have been misused—for example, Sullom Voe—overall and in general terms, which is the sensible way to look at it, the writers of the report found a real and substantial achievement. The criticisms that were most frequently made of the regional development grant system could be most easily applied to the regional development grant system prior to 1984—but what we are talking about now is abolishing even the scheme as it exists at present.

The second report commissioned by the DTI, "Regional incentives and the investment decision of the firm", was by a group of Scottish economists and is even more surprising in what it says about regional development grant:

"One of the most frequent criticisms of RDG is that, because of its automatic nature, it is awarded in many cases where it is quite unnecessary and can have no influence on the company's investment decision. The evidence of our study suggests that only a minority of companies in general, and a tiny minority of small companies, rate RDG as having no influence on the decision to invest in the project under consideration and over half of the companies rated RDG as important or crucial to the decision. . . In short, our evidence shows that a mixture of automatic and selective assistance, taken together, provides a powerful package.".

That also was a Government report.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): Is it not the case that most of these projects needed the investment to go ahead, as that report apparently claims, so that those projects would in future be able to qualify for regional selective assistance as the Government propose?

Mr. Blair: I do not think so. Regional selective assistance does not operate under the same criteria as regional development grant. In addition—this was found in the report to which I shall turn in a minute—the automatic nature of the regional development grant had a crucial effect on a company's decision to invest. The report that showed that was again commissioned by the DTI, I am dealing only with reports that it has commissioned.

The report on industry's early reaction to the new regional development grant was carried out by PIEDA, the planning and economic consultants. It said:

"The new RDG is an important factor in the investment decision-making process. One-third of those interviewed identified RDG as a critical factor in their project appraisal and investment decision. For many more the grant was an important, but not critical factor. Less than one-quarter of the companies surveyed said that the RDG had no influence on their investment decisions."

Even the White Paper said that the cost per job of RDG under the second scheme was more cost-effective than regional selective assistance. We know that RDG has created jobs; we know that it is cost-effective; we know that it is a vital component in investment decisions; and we know that it is at its most effective when there is a mix of RDG and selective assistance. Therefore, I ask the Government, on what evidence do they base their assertion that it has no further use?

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The hon. Gentleman ducked the point that my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) made, then gave my hon. Friend the case that he was making. The figures quoted by the hon. Gentleman show that one quarter of RDG recipients said that it made no difference to their decision. Only one third said that it made a critical difference to their decision. My hon. Friend was correct to say that that one third will now presumably apply for regional selective assistance. The one third that weighed the critical difference will still be eligible for grant. The hon. Gentleman is happy to contemplate one quarter or more of the expenditure being wasted and having no impact on investment decisions to maintain public expenditure at levels that he would like.

Mr. Blair: It is nonsense, even for the 25 per cent. of firms that would have taken investment decisions anyway, to argue that that investment has no beneficial effect on the regions. The Minister is saying that those firms that would have applied for regional development grant will now receive regional selective assistance, but the other conclusion that the report came to is that many firms applied for both. But there were many circumstances in which they would have been eligible for automatic regional development grant but not eligible for regional selective assistance.

If it were the case that all those firms that were in receipt of regional development grant will now receive regional selective assistance, one would expect a huge burgeoning increase in regional selective assistance expenditure. The figures that the Minister gave do not show that.

I do not know whether the Minister is aware of the numbers of applications this year for regional development grant and regional selective assistance, but in 1987-88, in England, there were 1,600 applications for

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regional selective assistance and over 6,000 for RDG2 alone. In Scotland, there were 190 applications for selective assistance and 3,050 for regional development grant. In Wales, there were 152 applications for selective assistance and 1,508 for regional development grant. The likelihood of those applications being fed through regional selective assistance is extremely unlikely, and nothing in any of the Government reports suggests that it is likely.

I return to the point that the Minister made earlier—that the automatic nature of regional development grant is no longer necessary. It is extraordinary that every report the Government have commissioned has been unable to justify the abolition of grants because they are no longer needed. There is nothing in any of the White Papers, the glossy brochures or the logos and slogans that decorate the walls of the DTI to re-educate civil servants in the ways of the master, that provides sufficient help to the regions to make up for the abolition of regional grant.

One of the more curious elements of the noble Lord, Lord Young's programme is that he has no doubts as to the massive importance and portentous nature of it. In the *Financial Times* of 16 January he gave an interview, which says:

"Last October, Lord Young set out a series of policy objectives for the DTI, which he compared bizarrely to Mein Kampf.—'No one can say that they did not know what was coming.'"

A more eccentric example of how the noble Lord sees his programme would be hard to find.

Overall, the White Paper, apart from the cut in regional development grant, does not merit any comparison that would exaggerate its significance. The truth is that there is more of the salesman's patter than any substance in the White Paper. It is the language not of industrialists but of advertising executives.

I asked for a copy of "The New Regional Initiative", the guide to regional selective assistance. As you will see, Madam Deputy Speaker, it is a very glossy brochure. I asked for the previous regional selective brochure and I tried to discover, apart from obvious differences and various minor changes that have been made, what the difference was between the two. If hon. Members look at them they will see that the difference between the two is in the covers.

The notion that in this White Paper we have engaged in an awakening of the spirit of enterprise in Britain is fatuous—a piece of classic hype. In his White Papers, Lord Young is becoming increasingly like Jeffrey Archer in his novels—the promotion is infinitely better than the writing.

I should deal with a further point that the Minister made. It was presaged by a rare trip that the Prime Minister made to the northern region. This is the idea that we no longer need the regional development grant, because we are doing so well. In *The Independent* of 5 January 1988, the Prime Minister was quoted as saying:

"I notice that people who go to look at the north and north-east go up thinking there are dark satanic mills and it is all grey and unwelcome. They come back saying, 'Do you know what it is really like? The countryside is fabulous, the people are marvellous, there are thriving industries and shopping centres.'"

We might have known that when the Prime Minister praised us on 5 January she intended to bury us on 12 January.

The idea that we are victims of our own success is so absurd that it beggars belief. Only this Government would have the priceless audacity to present a cut in regional assistance as a compliment to our self-reliance.

The north-south gap, as every objective indicator shows, is not narrowing but widening. In November, the Low Pay Unit showed that incomes in the south were, on average, 50 per cent. higher. With regard to low pay, almost one third of those in the north were on wages below the decency threshold of the Council of Europe. In December, the Central Statistical Office's regional accounts showed that the south-east was 13 per cent. better off than elsewhere and that only two areas—the south-east and East Anglia—enjoyed above-average wealth.

On 6 January, a survey quoted in the *Financial Times* said:

"A disparity between the north and south of Britain is confirmed in a survey to be presented at a conference today. The top 35 areas in a league combining 10 economic indicators all lie south-east of a line from the Severn Estuary to Lincolnshire. Towns in north England, Wales and Scotland are concentrated towards the bottom."

Social Trends, published more recently still, shows that the north has the highest proportion of children receiving free school meals and the highest proportion of income derived from social security, followed by Wales, the north-west, Scotland, the west midlands, Yorkshire and Humberside. The mortality rate of the north is 20 to 25 per cent. above average. It has the largest percentage of permanently sick, the largest percentage of infant mortality and the largest population loss. It is ludicrous to say that the problems of the north have disappeared and that we do not need the regional assistance that we were receiving before.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman said that, because unemployment is falling, we no longer need an automatic regional development grant, but unemployment is still double what it was in 1979, when four times the amount of money was coming in in regional aid. As for investment, it is still 20 or 30 per cent. below what it was. Therefore, it is again absurd to suggest that regional aid should be cut because we are doing so well.

The truth is that, after four decades of cross-party agreement as to the essential importance of regional policy, we have today to make the case for it anew. This debate is not about value for money or efficiency. It is the culmination of a Government process of disinvestment in our regions. We need regional policy, not just socially but economically, because our regions are our manufacturing base, and in our manufacturing base lies our capacity to create wealth. It is no coincidence that, as manufacturing output and investment declined, so did our regions.

We know, too, that regional policy is necessary just to restore some of the equity in the use of natural resources. It is a common misconception that the south subsidises the north. For example, if we look at where defence contracts go or at the proportion of aid for research and development for fibre optics, or for any of the other Department of Trade and Industry programmes, we see that a disproportionate amount goes to the south. If we look at where the tax perks in the business expansion scheme, or any of the other myriad schemes available under fiscal policy, go, we see that they go to the south. In a real sense, on any rational basis, regional policy is necessary to redress the balance of Government economic policy.

But at the heart of this issue lies a recognition of the importance of maintaining the integrity of this country. It

is absurd that, on the one hand, we have falling house prices, migration, acres of empty factory space, land that could be built upon should anyone want to do so, people still fighting for jobs, even on low pay and prospects, in the north; while on the other hand, we have house prices increasing by 30 per cent. or more in a year, congestion, pressure on the environment, skill shortages and rocketing factory rents in the south. A narrowing of the gap between the north and the south is in the interests not only of the north but of the south. It is part of the interests of the whole country. That is why we have to make this case again.

For four decades there was a consensus, not as to the means—it is not a case of being wedded to the old-fashioned traditional ways of doing it and we are perfectly able to take on board and realise the need to change the means of industrial assistance—but as to the end, which was always sacrosanct. That was the notion that it was a critical responsibility of Government to ensure the cohesion of the country or, in other words, the belief that it was a necessary part of our democracy that our living standards and our life experiences were the same. It is to the shame of the modern Conservative party that that consensus has now been broken. It is the Labour party that will rebuild it.

6.2 pm

Mr. Leon Brittan (Richmond, Yorks): In the concluding part of his speech, the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) stressed the importance of regional policy. I entirely agree with him and have consistently argued the case for such a policy. Where I disagree with him is in his suggestion, express or implied, that the Government do not support an effective and vigorous regional policy. He may disagree with my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, but, as one who has worked with and known him for a generation, I know that my right hon. and learned Friend's interest in, and support for, regional policy is not skin-deep or short-lived. He would not be party to a policy which he thought repudiated the regional policy that the hon. Member for Sedgefield is right to say is crucial for this country.

Nor do I believe that the hon. Member for Sedgefield does justice to his case by talking simply about disparities between the different regions. Those disparities exist, but the suggestion that the Government have, in some blithe or heedless way, ignored that or do not care about it is quite wrong. The hon. Gentleman must ask himself not just whether there are disparities, but what will most help to end those disparities or at least reduce them substantially. He has to ask himself what is happening in the regions, what is the trend, and what is going on.

The hon. Gentleman's constituency is in Durham, which is very near the county of Cleveland. He will know that the *Evening Gazette*, a newspaper published in Middlesbrough, has not been slow during the years of recession to criticise this Government and point out the ills—industrial, social and moral—of unemployment in Cleveland, which was the highest for any English county. Last week, the *Evening Gazette* published a special business supplement, which was headed:

"We are on our way. Cleveland goes from strength to strength."

If that is thought to be just advertising hype, one can read an article by Mr. Michael Morrissey, and those who know him appreciate that he is not always the most cheerful of people as far as business prospects are concerned. It says:

"We are riding on a tide of optimism. The sweet smell of success is in the air."

On the other side, it says:

"The infectious joy of big ideas. Something seems to be happening."

Mr. Morgan *rose*——

Mr. Brittan: No, I will not give way, because I would like to develop my speech.

The hon. Member for Sedgefield might know that the principal cause for that is the development corporation on Teesside. Although he can quote figures showing that comparatively small sums of money are being spent, he will also note that the whole point of the development corporation is the gearing effect and the private money that it brings in on a massive scale. If he were to read the *Evening Gazette*, which, although published in Cleveland, almost certainly circulates in his part of Durham, he would know full well that hardly a day passes without report of some further project that has been engendered by the development corporation.

The Government's policy, as announced in the Bill, has to be seen in the context of the White Paper, "DTI—the Department for Enterprise" which the Government put forward as a whole and which will be particularly beneficial to the region. The idea of bringing education and industry closer together with work experience for both teachers and pupils is valuable. The extra Department of Trade and Industry support for computer-aided design is also valuable, and those who have seen the design department at Teesside polytechnic will appreciate just how valuable that can be.

The concept of business development initiatives with the use of outside consultants for design, marketing, quality management and manufacturing systems is all to the good. I am glad that the quality initiative is to be broadened to advise businesses of what is known as the total quality approach, which has been so successfully adopted by leading companies, and in particular by ICI.

It is against that pattern, which shows the Government's commitment to effective regional policy, that one has to look at the proposal for regional assistance. I readily accept that the existing pattern is not sacrosanct. Changes are certainly worth considering. When I went to the Department of Trade and Industry in 1985, I was suspicious of the changes that had been made in 1984 and wondered whether they were consistent with an effective regional policy. However, I was persuaded that those changes resulted not only in a saving of money but in regional assistance being much more closely related to jobs and were therefore fully justified.

However, I cannot say that I am persuaded of the benefit of the proposal to drop the regional development grant. I think that the comparative advantages of certainty and automaticity are real. There always has to be a balance. My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster is, of course, right to say that regional selective assistance is not new and that there are other discretionary schemes. Discretionary schemes can and do exist, but the criticism that I make of the proposals in the present legislation is not that they retain a selective element, but that they move over to a totally selective concept, and that is a very different matter.

[Mr. Brittan]

There are real advantages in grants available as of right. Imagine a company that has to consider whether or not to proceed with a project, particularly in an assisted area. If that company is faced with a proposal from the director who is arguing for the development, the costs will be sought and the finance director in particular will cast a beady eye on them. He will know from the plan put forward by the director advocating the scheme that the costs will definitely be reduced to reflect the 15 per cent. regional development grant. It will be a certainty, and the decision whether to spend scarce resources in that direction or in some other will be made on that footing.

How different it will be when a director, putting forward a project for a development in an assisted area, comes to the board and says, "This is what it will cost and this is what we hope to get out of it, but, in reflecting on whether it is a good or bad prospect, I cannot subtract 15 per cent. for regional assistance. I can only tell you that if we go to the DTI, we may be also to persuade it, after some months, to give us regional selective assistance. Such assistance is discretionary and I cannot tell the board where we shall get it. We have to surmount certain hurdles and show that the project is viable. It is not enough that the board may think that it is viable; we have to satisfy the DTI. Furthermore, to get the money, I have to convince the DTI that we would not otherwise undertake the project — here or anywhere else. God alone knows what questions I shall have to answer to satisfy officials at the DTI that we would not otherwise carry out the project. If the board asks whether we shall get selective regional assistance, I can only say that I hope so." It would not take a beady-eyed financial director to say, "Exclude that from our considerations." The effect is sure to be that a project that would have gone ahead on the basis of regional development grant will not go ahead if it is submitted to the uncertainties and delays inherent in the regional selective assistance process. That is the reality, and the Minister is unwise to ignore it.

In answer to such arguments, my right hon. and learned Friend says that much money is wasted because, under the present system, developments go ahead that would go ahead in any event and that they are getting public money unnecessarily. As Chief Secretary to the Treasury, I was never accused of being anxious to spend public money unnecessarily. However, the argument does not really stand up, because large sums of public money are spent in the certain knowledge that a proportion will go to encourage people to do something that they would do in any event.

Let us consider the question of tax reductions. I look forward to the time when, as a result of prudent management of the economy, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer can announce tax reductions in the Budget. Opposition Members will argue against that, but the case that Conservative Members will mount in favour of tax reductions is that they act as an incentive and that, if they have less tax to pay, people will do things that they would not otherwise have done. Although that is profoundly true and more than an adequate justification for tax reductions, one cannot say that everyone will do something that they would not otherwise have done, because of the tax reductions; some people would do those things in any event.

If that argument is too broad and general to persuade the House, I give as an example the business expansion scheme, which involves not public expenditure but a specific tax concession geared to investment. Are we asked to argue against that because we cannot prove that the investment would not otherwise have taken place? No one has suggested that or argued that there should be a change in the business expansion scheme. We need an element of automaticity to achieve the full incentive effect. Although I would not cast aspersions on the intentions or motives of my right hon. and learned Friend, I am bound to question the wisdom of completely removing regional development grant and relying on selective and discretionary assistance.

I have confidence in the Government's regional development policy, because I know my right hon. and learned Friend and I know that his intentions are sincere. However, it is important that this new policy should carry conviction in the regions among those who do not automatically take what Ministers say on trust and in places where it is the business of the hon. Member for Sedgefield to go around explaining why it should not be taken on trust.

When it comes to persuading those in the regions, money counts. My right hon. and learned Friend did the Government's cause no great service by not answering the specific question about cash that I put to him when we debated the statement. The Government generally are not assisted by the obfuscation in the public expenditure White Paper, which puts regional and general assistance together in a single line. The Government are not assisted by taking three years together and presenting that total. Those are tricks that I learned at the Treasury, and I am glad to see that the right hand has not lost its cunning. They will do for a day, but they will hardly do for a week. They will certainly not do for a month, and beyond that they carry no conviction at all.

The reality is simple. My right hon. and learned Friend is right in saying that the figures that he has announced amount to an increase over and above the plans. However, the plans did not fully take account of the expansion in regional development grants as a result of the effectiveness of the efforts of the Department's regional offices in drumming up business instead of waiting for people to apply for grants—a policy that I applaud. One needs to consider not only whether the Government are spending more money year by year than they thought last year that they would be spending, because the expenditures are demand-related, not cash-limited. The real question concerns the expenditure at the end of the transitional period.

We need to consider what the expenditure will be when we have moved over from the present to the new system. There is no mystery about that. For Great Britain—this is why I checked my right hon. Friend when he inadvertently referred to the United Kingdom — it is expected that the outturn for regional expenditure—in regional development grants, selective regional assistance and the new investment and innovation grants—will be £478 million in 1987-88. The figure for 1988-89 is expected to be £560 million; for 1989-90, £513 million; and for 1990-91, £470 million. A comparison of this year with the last year for which figures are published shows a move from £478 million to £470 million. That is above the

planned figure, but if regional development grants had continued, the planned figure would have risen substantially.

The gap between expenditure today and the expenditure expected in 1990-91 is not large. If my right hon. and learned Friend wants people in the regions to believe that the changes are genuinely designed to replace one kind of help with another and not to save money, in his discussions with the Treasury later this year he must say that if the new policy is to achieve credibility in the region, a change is needed in the figures for those last years so that they at least correspond with the sum that is now being spent on regional assistance in real terms. I am sure that my right hon. and learned Friend will pay that visit to the Treasury, and I wish him luck.

6.19 pm

Mr. Bruce Millan (Glasgow, Govan): I am not as confident about the last point made by the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) as he obviously was. However, I agree with the bulk of his speech, and especially with what he said about the importance of having an automatic system of grants, whatever the accompanying system of selective assistance. I am also at one with him about the public expenditure White Paper, because the passages dealing with the Department of Trade and Industry are a disgrace. They deliberately obscure the reality of the situation.

First, I should like to set regional policy in a wider context in relation to one issue of considerable importance to Scotland at present. I shall come to regional development grants in a minute or two. The Minister said that that was still part of general policy and that the Government were still generally committed to the regions. One matter that has always been considered of tremendous importance to Scotland — I dare say that the same is true in Wales and in the regions of England — is the need to have real centres of decision-making in the industrial sphere in Scotland, Wales and the regions.

In that context, I want to say something about Britoil, which is an independent oil company. It is the biggest independent oil company operating in the North sea — or, indeed, elsewhere. Previously it was the British National Oil Corporation, but it is now Britoil. Britoil moved to Glasgow and located its head office there. It did so as a deliberate decision of the Labour Government. I should say that those who were involved in the industry did not want to go to Scotland and, more especially, to Glasgow. However, Ministers insisted that they move to Glasgow, and the company has been a great success there. The oil company has a fine and splendid new building as its head office in Glasgow, and that has also been a tremendous success.

Britoil is now so valued and valuable that BP is desperate to take it over. However, if BP does take over Britoil, those important corporate headquarters will no longer be in Scotland. At best, Britoil will simply be a division of BP, and there will be only divisional headquarters in Glasgow instead of an important centre of decision making, employing many highly qualified people, as at present.

The Government can prevent that result through the golden share. Indeed, when the golden share was originally introduced, the Secretary of State for Energy, now the Chancellor of the Exchequer, gave specific pledges that the golden share would be used to prevent an unwelcome acquisition of Britoil. This would be an unwelcome acquisition of Britoil. It would be unwelcome to the staff who work there and to the senior management. I am glad that the senior management have consistently and determinedly expressed their opposition to the takeover. I congratulate Mr. Walker and his colleagues on having done so in circumstances in which, in many cases, senior management would unfortunately have caved in.

The Chancellor's statement on 11 January 1988, in which he said that the Government would use the golden share, was hedged with all sorts of qualifications. He said that they would use it "in present circumstances" and "so long as it is in the national interest to do so." — [*Official Report*, 11 January 1988; Vol. 125, c. 13.]

If that was intended to scare off BP, it obviously has not done so. Although there may have been other possible bidders for the company, at the moment the chances are — I hope that it does not happen — that unless the Government take steps now to make it absolutely clear that they will use the golden share to the fullest extent and not allow anybody, specifically BP, to control the company in real terms, BP will not only have control of the company in terms of shareholding but, ultimately, in terms of full decision making. I refer not only to normal commercial decisions but to decisions about corporate headquarters and so on. It would be an absolute scandal if that was allowed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I am finding it a little difficult to relate what the right hon. Gentleman is now saying to the Bill. I am sure that he can relate it to the Bill.

Mr. Millan: I made the point at the beginning that I was dealing with regional policy generally and it is an important part of regional policy that we should have such important headquarters in the regions, rather than in London, which is what will happen if Britoil is taken over by BP.

There are other aspects to be considered, such as monopoly in the North sea and the Kuwaiti shareholding in BP, but I am speaking specifically of the Scottish interest and of the interest of the staff who are extremely worried about the present position. The Chancellor of the Exchequer is deliberately allowing the position to drift, and, far from discouraging BP, he is encouraging that company not only to go ahead with its bid for Britoil but to believe that, once it has control of the shareholding, the golden share will not be used in any effective way and it will ultimately obtain full control of all the company's operations, including the board of directors. If he does not intend that, he should make that absolutely clear now. I advise the Minister who is to reply to the debate that at present there is no more important question of regional policy in Scotland than the threatened takeover of Britoil. The Government can stop that happening in the way in which it appears to be happening at present.

Turning to the Bill, there is no need for Opposition Members to argue the importance of regional development grants because the last annual report issued by the Department of Trade and Industry under the Industrial Development Act 1982, dealing with regional policy, mentions the results of a survey which was commissioned by the Department in February 1987. It states:

"the Scheme is an important factor in companies' investment decisions."

[Mr. Millan]

The "scheme" refers to the RDG scheme. The annual report continued:

"The take-up of the new Scheme by firms with 200 employees or less has been particularly encouraging".

We understood that the Government were especially interested in helping small firms. The annual report states that the take-up by small firms in 1986-87 amounted to "about 80 per cent. of the total grant."

However, under the Bill the Government are abolishing regional development grants completely. That does not make sense, if there is any real commitment to the regions or, for that matter, to small firms in this country.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) said in his extremely effective speech, there are always transitional arrangements when such changes are made. It is only when one considers later what has happened that one can understand the full impact of the changes. That is true of the 1984 changes in regional development grant. They did not look too bad to industry to start with. The Government gave all sorts of assurances about them not being particularly bad news for the regions.

However, looking at what happened, and remembering, incidentally, that the 1984 figures were considerably smaller than the figures that the Government inherited in 1979 because of earlier reductions in regional assistance, we find, in a written answer on 12 May 1987 to my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), the overall figure for RDG for 1986-87 was £512 million and the figure for 1987-88 was expected to be only £211 million — a reduction of £311 million in one year, because that was the year for which almost the full impact of the 1984 changes began to be effective. Transitional arrangements had applied in earlier years.

The figure for Scotland for 1986-87 was £170 million and for 1987-88 it was expected to be £69 million. Therefore, in Scotland alone there was a reduction of £100 million in a single year. Again, that arose because of the 1984 changes. Therefore, when the Minister says, "Do not worry, because the figures in the future will not be worse than the figures now," we must set that against the background that the figures have now been savagely reduced because of the changes made in 1984.

Of course, it is very difficult — even if the Government were being honest about the figures they present in the White Paper on public expenditure — to disentangle all the various figures and the effect of the changes with RDG1, the system before 29 November 1984, and RDG2, the system from 29 November 1984, and the rest, changes made in 1984, which were modified with regard to small firms with fewer than 200 employees.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield pointed out, it will happen again. The transitional arrangements will take us to 1990, or whatever, and it is only then that we shall have the full effect of the changes being made in the Bill.

I therefore turn to the Minister's idea, suggestion, or assertion, that we need not worry about that, because the figures may have been reduced — they are already savagely reduced—but at least they will not be reduced any further and the Government have planned expenditure in the regions which will show an increase.

First, I am extremely suspicious of Ministers when they say that it is not a real increase; the figures are different from what they were in the previous year's White Paper. That does not mean a great deal. It is the reality of the expenditure, of the outturn in the current year and what will happen in the future, that we really have to look at.

The Government are really making the claim about the figures coming down no further on two bases. The first is the new business initiative, or whatever the scheme is now being called—in particular, for firms in the regions with fewer than 25 employees. A new incentive is being introduced for them. That is actually less of an incentive than the existing RDG2, gives for firms with up to 200 employees. The incentive for firms with up to 25 employees, even if it works for them, as I hope it will, will do nothing for them that they could not obtain under the present system. For firms with from 25 to 200 employees it disappears completely, because they are not covered by this scheme at all.

Then there is the whole question of what will happen to regional selective assistance. That, of course, was not dealt with at all. I was going to say that it was treated with obscurity in the public expenditure White Paper, but no figures are given for section 7 in recent years. We have the projected figures only because I asked the Minister during his speech to give them to us.

Let us take those figures at their face value, taking 1988-89. As I understood the right hon. and learned Gentleman — we shall check the details in *Hansard* tomorrow — section 7 regional selective assistance was estimated in the White Paper published a year ago to be £245 million for 1988-89. That was before any changes were made. In 1988-89, after these massive changes, it is going up to £266 million, a net increase of £21 million in one year, which is supposed to compensate for these vast reductions in regional development grants. It does not make sense.

There are other figures for some of these schemes, for business advisory services and the rest. In my opinion—we shall wait and see what happens—these figures are grossly overestimated. I do not believe for one moment that the kind of figures that the Government have put in the White Paper for some of the schemes will ever be spent. I am not sure that it would be a good idea if they were, because there is a limit to the amount of money one should be spending on consultancy services. Members of the accountancy profession will be delighted at this increasing emphasis on consultancy. It is a very profitable part of their work.

Miss Majorie Mowlam (Redcar): Does not my right hon. Friend agree that it would be useful to ask the Minister to clarify whether those consultants will be employed in London or whether, in line with policy, they will be based in the regions and will be paid, in relation to delivering jobs, with a deal whereby money will be paid for the number of jobs created?

Mr. Millan: I do not want to say too much about consultancy reports. They vary in quality from the good to what in some cases cannot even be called indifferent, depending on the consultants and on the questions asked. What I am saying is that the figures in the White Paper seem to me to be unlikely to be achieved in reality. Even if they are achieved, those figures together cannot possibly make up for the reductions in regional development grants in places such as Scotland. Selective assistance in Scotland is running at about £40 million a year. In 1986-87 it was

£36 million. In Scotland, regional development grants were worth £170 million in 1986-87, compared with £36 million for selective assistance. Even with the reduction to £69 million in 1987-88, it is still a more important part of regional assistance than anything that can be done under selective assistance.

There is another consideration with regard to selective assistance. My hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield gave some figures for the numbers of applications. I do not believe for one minute that the Department of Trade and Industry, the Scottish Office or whoever will handle these matters can deal with anything like that number of claims for selective assistance. Again, I refer to the Scottish figures that my hon. Friend gave: 190 claims for selective assistance; over 3,000 for regional development grants. Is it seriously suggested that the same civil servants can handle over 3,000 claims for selective assistance in Scotland and give them the care and attention, with references to the Industrial Advisory Board and all the rest, at present given to selective assistance? It is absolutely ludicrous. Either some of the claims will go through the early stages just to make the figures look better, or, more likely, many firms at present applying for automatic assistance will, as the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks made clear, not apply for the new forms of assistance, or will not take the investment decisions that would have enabled them to apply for regional development grants.

The Bill is extremely bad news for Scotland, Wales and all the regions in England. I find it depressing that the Minister can say that the CBI in Scotland is largely in favour of what is happening there. That is a less robust attitude even than it took with regard to the 1984 changes. At least it was unhappy about them. If it is happy about these changes, all I can say is that it is a very poor indication of its real concern for industry in Scotland, and it is serving Scottish industry very badly, as the Government are and as the House will do if we pass the Bill.

6.38 pm

Sir Giles Shaw (Pudsey): My hon. Friend the Member for South Ribble (Mr. Atkins), who is the Minister on the Front Bench at present, will not necessarily find that my remarks will give him the cheer that he has been waiting to hear. My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister of Trade and Industry has wisely decided to remove himself for the time being, and I can understand that.

Those of us—I include my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary — who have been involved in regional development policy, whether offering grants or receiving delegations, will know that there are few more important areas of ministerial life in which the incapacity to satisfy customers is at its greatest, and it is therefore not surprising that my right hon. and learned Friend—not one who is short of energy, determination and clout—should have decided that he wants to get shot of part of this operation by the quickest possible means, and therefore proposes to abolish the regional development grant.

I must echo the general view that if we are to have a policy for the regions at all it must, first, be seen to be creative and designed to correct the imbalances so widely recognised to exist between areas which have had a historic decline of basic industries and areas which have not. Secondly, the policy should be attractive. It must seek to attract new types of industry which have not been able, so far, to obtain a footing in the area concerned. Thirdly, it should be competitive.

I welcome a large proportion of the contents of the White Paper "DTI — the department for Enterprise" which my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry laid before the House earlier this month. But it is odd that, in the handsome document which has been handed down from the mount, the entry to chapter 7 on regional policy says of the DTI's objectives:

> "In all our work we will take account of the differing circumstances in the regions and of the Inner Cities to enable those who live there to help themselves".

That is an extraordinary, gratuitous observation. "We will take account" does not necessarily mean that we will do anything. The suggestion that there are "differing circumstances in the regions" is without doubt the case. There would not be regions if the areas were not different. They are different in culture, tradition, economy and many other ways.

I for one am wholly in favour of the diversity of regions. I do not entirely go along with the classic presentation of the north-south divide. I concede that many of us who are happy and proud to live in the northern areas have a different quality of life in many respects from those who live elsewhere.

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): Which parts?

Sir Giles Shaw: I understand that the hon. Gentleman does not find the balmy air of Pomfret quite as happy as the bracing air of Harrogate, and I have to concede his point.

What underlying philosophy should be the basis of our regional policy? The opening DTI objectives in chapter 7 are pretty inadequate. It says, "take account". Is that really all that is required? It says, "to enable those who live there to help themselves." Is that really all that is involved? Frankly, it is not. One of the huge problems of regional decay is not the fact of the people living there not being able to help themselves, but the fact that people have left the area, that investment has been dissipated and has departed and that the age and condition of the basic economy have changed because the markets and customers have gone. Above all else, the regions need implantation — not the people who live there to help themselves but new people to come there with new ideas and activities and, we hope, to be a catalyst in trying to grow a new regional economy.

I am persuaded—I think that I carry my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan), who is practically a neighbour, with me—that a regional policy is but a small part of the national policy. National economic management is the crucial determinant of regional success. Hon. Members delude themselves if they believe any other general tenet of economics. Even so, we need an understanding of the fact that the parts of the country furthest from the centre of economic generation will be the slowest to respond. Equally, we must take account of the fact that persuading capital to move into those parts furthest from the centre of economic generation is a major and competitive task.

I understand that abolition of the development grant helps to get rid of the appalling problem of having each

[Sir Giles Shaw]

time to go to the Treasury cap in hand and say, "We have overspent yet again because the applications have come in faster than we expected or have not been triggered in the time we expected." There is a bunching of payments and the DTI goes hairless in relation to its budget controls, so we have that wonderful Roman motto, "Per ardua ad moratorium." In it comes and first we have six months, then another six months, and so on. It is a mess and I agree that there should be reforms in handling it.

The essential objective of regional development grant is to provide to those likely to invest — investing companies—a clear statement of benefit, well in advance of the decision which they seek to make on whether to take investment to the location. Without that, the United Kingdom will be singularly naked when it comes to competing with other Governments for mobile investments within the European Economic Community. Are we to believe that, for example, the Irish are dropping their standard "Give all and take all and we will pay all"? Are we to believe that the French are dropping the way in which they attract investments by making massive grants available not just to new companies but to well-established companies which seek international orders?

If we try to rewrite history, I very much doubt that the Nissan motor company would have come to the north-east on the basis of the absence of regional development grant. I doubt whether Nissan would have taken kindly to being asked to show for the benefit of the DTI officials whether the project was sufficiently viable and whether it would have gone ahead without the Government grant that the company sought.

I believe that the Germans, the French, the Italians and, frankly, practically every other industrial part of Europe would be knocking on the doors of Nissan headquarters in Japan to demonstrate that in other markets they do not offer such restrictive rules. It may be that Nissan represented the last of the giant mobile investments, but equally there have been others, which I well recall from my time at the DTI, which have come to Telford and other places — other large Japanese investments in new technology that cost substantial amounts of capital.

Losing our competitiveness overseas to attract the big mobile investment is a major disadvantage. I do not believe that that is replaced in the present proposals by regional selective assistance. I accept that paragraph 7.10 of the White Paper says:

"Internationally mobile investment projects will by their nature frequently meet these criteria."

But "by their nature" frequently they will not. They will not take kindly to the view that in the United Kingdom one must go through an enormously difficult and complicated procedure compared with the procedure in other parts of Europe. The speed and clarity of decision and the commitment which the United Kingdom Government can show in providing international investment will be seriously damaged by the current proposals.

I welcome many other aspects in the White Paper, which, of course, are not the subject of the Bill but relate to the way in which we must judge it. I look for a catalytic activity for regional investments. That is why I lay stress on competing for new industries, skills, types of people and management to come to an area rather than concentrating purely on the self-help issue for those who live in the regions—crucial though it is that everything is designed to improve the lot of those who live there. Our regional policy should be designed essentially to be outward-looking. I do not think that the decision reached on this measure has come from an outward-looking view of how our regional policy should be developed.

I am especially interested in the fact that the business improvement services schemes are to be expanded and that consultancy schemes for various smaller companies are to be introduced. The White Paper contains much for the smaller developer, the smaller industrialist, and must do more if the enterprise culture is to be transplanted into the regions. I should like a single Government office to represent the whole spectrum of Government assistance and development within the regions. Why is a part of our businesses allocated to the Department of Employment, such as tourism, and a part to the Department of the Environment, such as the urban development corporations and small businesses? Why have we allowed that to happen yet are still required by the Department of Trade and Industry to believe that that Department and it alone is the source of the enterprise culture? It is a great weakness that the DTI does not have within its competence all those other forms of what are clearly investment potential and new activity. If those elements cannot be within the same Department, why cannot the three Departments be represented in one regional office under the same roof, so that there is a shop to deal with all the aspects that make a development project get off the ground?

Why can we not back the smallest of the entrepreneurs by providing regional directors of the DTI with a sum for which they could account entirely themselves, to show that they can provide small portions of capital for those who knock at their doors? It is easier in this country to borrow half a million pounds than to borrow £5,000. If we said to our regional directorate that we were able to provide it with such an incentive, much more could be done much more quickly.

Will someone explain whether the 27 new offices of the DTI are satellites running from the bigger regional offices, or new centres of advice and effort in themselves? I hope that the latter is the case, and that they will all be able to offer a service that will help to stimulate local activity in the towns and cities where they are set up.

It is never a good time to abolish a grant. I am certain that no one would willingly put up his hand and say, "Splendid. Do let us get rid of that portion of Government assistance." I believe, on the other hand, that it is sad that my right hon. and noble Friend and my right hon. and learned Friend have decided that the assisted area map should remain intact for the remainder of this Parliament.

My hon. Friend the Member for Corby (Mr. Powell) made an irrefutable point: when the objectives have been achieved of providing a development area with new industry and a new economy, and the position has become reasonably secure, why should not regional grant and regional selective assistance still be available? The answer is that the area has passed the point at which it is tied to the apron strings of Government assistance.

As I recall from my experience in the Department of Industry, two or three other areas in the United Kingdom are very close to being qualified for regional assistance and grants. Is my right hon. and noble Friend saying that this is for the remainder of this Parliament? It is sad if regional selective assistance is now to be the main generator of new

activity, apart from the new consultancy and advisory programmes, and that that too will be limited to the areas now defined. The business improvement schemes, perhaps above all else, have more application to small areas. I am thinking of such areas as Skegness and Thanet, which could be brought into some kind of net to provide some inducement for activity.

I am not entirely persuaded that the measure is a positive demonstration of the new enterprise culture at work, or that those of us who represent regional interests are yet of the opinion that the new policy will bring better results than the old. Secondly, there must be a cash equivalent of what has already been spent on regional development grant before we can be persuaded that the Government are being truly fair.

Let me say without doubt, however, that the political commitment to an effective regional policy is something that I wish the Government Front Bench to reiterate. It is no use looking at it on a haphazard, Treasury-required basis. A regional policy is a policy that brings commitment and important development prospects to most parts of the country—in the north, the midlands, Scotland, Wales and, indeed, Northern Ireland. Surely, therefore, it deserves proper backing to ensure that the resources are available to create new life where there was old.

6.53 pm

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): The debate has taken a somewhat interesting turn after the opening speeches. Two speeches from Conservative Back Benchers have made it absolutely clear that support is lacking for the Bill, and for the measures behind it. The hon. Member for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw) and the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) have made their views known. But, when the statement was made, the right hon. Members for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) and for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) also expressed considerable reservations. I therefore believe that the Government will have to take up very seriously the points raised in the debate.

Some hon. Members may know that, some years ago, I worked for the North-East Scotland development authority, and was therefore involved in trying to attract industry to my area. I can confirm without question that automatic availability of grant, which we then had in our area, was an essential component of even beginning a sensible dialogue with a potential investor. Inability to hold such a discussion will considerably undermine the possibility, first, in some cases of creating a new investment at all, and secondly—this is the point of regional policy—of ensuring that it goes to a specific location.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster made it clear there was an element of cost containment behind the proposals. He said that, as the economy recovers and investment takes off, the availability of automatic grants leaves us with the possibility of an unconfirmable expansion of DTI expenditure. If that is really the Government's concern, would it not have been more appropriate simply to change, for example, the cost-per-job grant, while retaining the automatic guarantee, rather than bringing forward legislation to do away with those grants altogether?

A Scottish Minister is to reply to the debate. Is it not true that one of the major consequences of this supposed regional policy has been to dilute the ability of the regions to promote their own economies, and give more power to Central Government officials in the DTI? Having been involved in industrial development promotion, I can tell the House that there is plenty of reason to be suspicious of how those officials might behave. I am not speaking of improper behaviour; I am referring to what might be termed political judgment.

For example, if a development authority or agency identifies a potential investor, it must almost immediately refer that investor, under the new rules, to the DTI. If the DTI likes the look of the investment, but feels that another region might be more appropriate, it immediately takes the chance to try to tempt the investment away. If that happens, it will understandably cause considerable resentment to the initial contact.

I do not believe that the Government, or any Conservative Members, ever supported the industrial development certificates, or would wish them to be reintroduced. Ironically, however, the Government are effectively creating a mechanism that could, in a sense, give the officials just that kind of power. I do not question the sincerity of the Labour party's criticism of the proposals being introduced at this time, but it is nevertheless Labour party policy—developing policy, at any rate—to do away with automatic grants.

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): Hon. Members should not take his word for it.

Mr. Bruce: Indeed they should not. I have a copy of the *New Statesman*, which is not known as a Liberal newspaper. It states:

> "'A New Partnership, A New Britain', the keynote TUC-Labour Party statement of the last parliament, stressed that 'it will be important . . . that industrial assistance is conditional on a business plan agreed between unions and management'".

That is a condition that the Labour party may wish to impose. According to the *New Statesman*, the TUC states in its policy statement "Regional Development and Planning":

> "The amount of selective assistance . . . would be progressively increased until all assistance became selective".

In a sense, the Government are creating the mechanism, through the abolition of automatic grants, to enable a future Government of some other complexion to use the change to apply political and other qualifications to enable selective assistance to be given. That seems totally contrary to what the Government claim to be their regional policy.

The hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) and the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan), have already stated that there is substantial evidence within the DTI of the jobs that have been created in the regions because of the availability of grants since regional policy was introduced. Some of those jobs might not have been created at all without a regional policy, but many certainly would not have been in the regions where they are now located.

The recent change is the cause of the growing difference between the south-east and other regions. In the old manufacturing regions, one third of the jobs were based in manufacturing, but in the south-east, only a quarter of the jobs were based in manufacturing. The consequences of the rapid decline in manufacturing have hit particularly hard all the regions of the United Kingdom except the south-east.

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry is reported to want industry throughout the United Kingdom to play on a level pitch or field, to use his

[Mr. Bruce]

colourful analogy. However, he ignores the fact that the field is anything but level now. It slopes very sharply from north to south. By removing the regional development grant, the Bill increases the difficulty of scoring goals in the north, and inevitably will accelerate the existing distortion between the south-east of England and the rest of the United Kingdom. I acknowledge, however, that there are differences within regions; I do not accept the over-simple north-south analogy.

Having been involved in industrial development promotion, I believe that changing the rules too often deters people from taking them seriously and that it has a depressing effect on investment. The hon. Member for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw) has already drawn attention to the fact that competition for mobile international investment could lead to a serious loss to the United Kingdom, to which the Government should pay serious attention.

The argument has been proved that, effectively, the Government will be cutting the overall amount of aid. The Government have failed to satisfy the House that that is not the case. However, I am prepared to acknowledge that the amount of money spent on regional aid is by no means definitive proof that the policy is effective, or that it is reaching the right quarters. I am prepared to consider constructive ways of ensuring that the money is used effectively. However, so far, the Government have not convinced hon. Members that the Bill will achieve that aim.

The debate should be about how we can ensure that the regions take control of promoting their own economies, through regional policy. The Minister of State, Scottish Office, will be replying to the debate. As a Scottish Member, although I am not uncritical of everything done by the Scottish Development Agency, I am glad that we have such an agency and I believe that Scotland would be very much worse off without it. However, I wonder why the regions of England are denied the opportunity to have such agencies, so that, with a global budget, they could determine their own priorities and invest to tackle their regional problems. That would be more effective than DTI officials who, wherever they are located, are under the control of the Department in London. We should be moving forward in that way.

The right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) made the important point of principle that the ownership and control of businesses and location of their headquarters are crucial to the development of regional economies within the United Kingdom. The regions have suffered because corporate headquarters are concentrated in London and the south-east, to the detriment of all other regions. Indeed, 80 per cent. of investment in the regions of England is carried out by companies based outside those regions, in most cases in the south of England or abroad, to the considerable disadvantage of the regions.

Several consequences flow from that concentration, which have been acknowledged in some recently publicised cases. Scotland suffered because of the row over Guinness, but the location of the corporate headquarters was acknowledged to be an issue. Pilkington was subjected to a takeover, and nobody in St. Helen's could be persuaded that it would not be bad news for them. The shares of the company were substantially undervalued because the parochial, London-based financiers persistently undervalue the assets of companies that are based outside south-east England. We need to find a way to decentralise financial institutions so that they know what is happening in the country, and can find opportunities for backing and investment.

The case of Britoil is another example. There is clear evidence that the BP bid — although it is not undervaluing on the basis of its knowledge—certainly in fact undervalues Britoil. I agree with the right hon. Member for Govan that an important point of principle is at stake.

BP is the largest employer in my constituency. It is a good company in many ways. It is a major operator in the North sea and has brought many highly qualified people to Aberdeen. That has been good for our economy. However, BP is now in the process of transferring 300 highly qualified staff from Aberdeen to the City of London. I do not know why on earth they need so many technical people in the City of London at a cost of tens of millions of pounds to the shareholders. I have tried to persuade BP that it should be moving the other way.

The importance of the North sea in my constituency is such that it could have established an exploration and petroleum division in Aberdeen. BP tells me that it wants to take over Britoil and to move its exploration and production division to Glasgow and Aberdeen. I find that very hard to believe, especially as BP is doing the opposite now. It does not square with its practice and its attitude. I do not trust it and I will not believe a Government assurance that that is true. The Government must use their power to keep Britoil independent, because the regions need such a focus. I shall develop that point, as it is relevant to the Bill.

We have two huge national privatised utilities — British Gas and British Telecommunications. I believe that, in a sense, the chickens have come home to roost, in that the problems of those monopolies are beginning to be recognised by dissatisfied customers. British Gas and British Telecom should be regionalised. As regional corporations, they could inject into the regions of England, Scotland and Wales corporate operations that would buy in services, offer careers, help to retain talent within the regions and start to regenerate regional economies so that people would not believe that the only way to get on was to leave the regions and go to London. Until we change that idea, we will not have a vital, growing regional economy, and the whole of the United Kingdom will suffer.

The Government are wholly unconvincing. I do not wish to denigrate the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster's commitment to a regional policy, but it is on record that he thinks that the market will sort it out and that cheap labour in the north will attract investment. However, that has not been proved and we need something much stronger to ensure efficient distribution.

In a sense all hon. Members — even those who represent the south-east—represent regions, but those of us who live outside London and come here because of our duties in the House are aware that life in the south-east is not always rosy. Property is enormously expensive, travelling is a nightmare and congestion is a problem. The railway system is appalling, yet in the north many facilities are under-utilised and people are still leaving.

It seems that a more vigorous regional policy is needed for the whole of the United Kingdom. I am willing—all

hon. Members should be willing — to engage in a constructive debate to ensure that we achieve such a policy. The Bill is not achieving that, and the Government will have to think again. Even if the Bill is enacted, I suggest that the Minister should consider that if the Government go ahead with selective assistance, they should apply a simple criterion so that businesses will know quickly and fairly definitively, whether they will get aid. If the Government do not do that, the United Kingdom economy will suffer and the regions will suffer more than most. I believe that the Government should think deeply about that. This Bill is not the answer to regional problems.

7.9 pm

Mr. William Powell (Corby): You have honoured me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, by calling me as the first speaker in the debate who is not a spokesman for his party or held ministerial responsibility for these matters in the past. However, for the past five years or so I have been up to my neck and beyond in the problems of the major town in my constituency which was devastated by the closure of the industry that was directly and indirectly responsible for 73 per cent. of the employment in that town. The House will recall that the decision to close Corby steelworks was announced on 3 March 1979. The significance of that date will be lost on no hon. Member.

As I have said, for the past five years or so I have been up to my neck in the problems of recovery. It has dominated my thoughts every day of my life and I want to share some of those thoughts with right hon. and hon. Members. I want to talk about what has been involved in the recovery, and what lessons there are for regional policy in our country.

This debate is now opening out into an interesting discussion of issues that are much wider than the contents of the Bill, and that is quite right. The contents of the Bill, although important, are only one small aspect of regional policy. If our regions are to recover, thrive and prosper in the future, one has to consider the whole range of policies and not merely one small part.

Although regional development grants have played a part in the recovery of Corby, many other factors have been more significant, including other Government policies. That perspective should never be overlooked. Although I am putting the issue in a wider perspective, I do not want any hon. Member to imagine that what has happened in Corby has happened for any reason other than major Government sponsorship of the recovery. Without that central Government effort and pump-priming, very few of the things that have happened in Corby would have happened. That is a lesson that no hon. Member should be allowed to forget or ignore. It is a lesson that has to be applied in other areas that are still facing hard and difficult times.

The indicators of what has happened in Corby are awesome. When I became its Member of Parliament, Corby stood at No. 20 in the national league table of parliamentary constituencies for those unemployed and claiming benefit. No. one is the worst and No. 637 is the best. It stood at No. 20 in 1983. In February 1987, when the Library did a survey it stood at 323. By November 1987, the latest survey, it stood at 371. During the course of 1988 and beyond it will drop lower and lower, and thank goodness for that.

A modicum of prosperity — I do not want to exaggerate it — has returned to my constituents. It is returning as a consequence of Government policy, including regional development grants. However, other factors have played a part. Perhaps I may be permitted to outline one or two of those which may be more important than regional development grant policies.

First and foremost, there is not the slightest shadow of doubt that derelict land grant has played a major role. The work of the Department of the Environment in sponsoring derelict land grant is fundamental and crucial. Without that, the steelworks would not have been cleared and the land could not have been prepared for companies to come forward and apply for regional development grants, selective financial assistance or any of the other forms of assistance available. Therefore, as I have said, the role played by derelict land grants in regional policy is crucial. I hope that we will see a quickening of pace in the use of derelict land grants. There is no doubt that the urban development corporations offer a hopeful opportunity and opening in that respect.

The second feature of Corby which is of considerable importance is that everybody in the community has been involved in trying to pull things together. It had been done without any partisan rancour and without any partisan disputes. It has involved Labour people and I pay tribute to them. They have done marvels in trying to promote the industrial regeneration of Corby. It has been done by Conservative people and people of no particular political persuasion. They have made use of the fact that the Government are available and taken advantage of what the Government have had to offer. They have not wasted their time in partisan ideological disputes about whether, if other people had held responsibility, things would be done differently. There is no doubt that, if one wishes to build the reputation of one's town and community, one has to persuade the outside world. The outside world is not impressed if local people are falling over themselves to show how they disagree with one another and how they are setting up a totem pole of resistance to this, that or the other.

I have no doubt that if there had been a different Government in Whitehall, Corby district council would not have behaved in a different way. It is to its credit that it has been prepared to work enthusiastically with Ministers of a different political persuasion. If I may be allowed a modest aside, I pay tribute to the way in which it has worked with me and tried to ensure that I am fully aware of what it wants for the town and that I am prepared to help it in every way I can. If I have managed to do that, I have managed to do something for my constituents.

The record of what has happened is awesome. It is not good enough to say that we will not look at the map again. At this time, unemployment in the Corby assisted area is already several percentage points lower than in any other assisted area in the country. I make a prediction to the House that it will get still lower. In the 1990s, Corby may still be an assisted area and still be able to take advantage of high unemployment when, in reality, it has low unemployment and other areas with high unemployment may have no Government assistance other than the 50 per cent. grant for firms with under 25 employees.

I welcome that grant and I am not criticising it. I am merely saying — I make this point about no other constituency because other hon. Members can make their own points — that people will point to the anomaly of

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special sponsorship and special incentives available to a place which on any criteria does not need them. The people of Corby agree that. I am not making any point against my constituents. They are grateful for what they have received and they understand that it is no longer necessary for them to receive it. So great and powerful is the economic locomotive that is now gathering speed that it is unnecessary to have Government assistance.

The problem we will face in the future is not that of unemployment but of not having enough people for all the jobs. There is a danger that the problems of surplus jobs will be aggravated by policies that encourage people to set up businesses but then do too little to encourage people to move into the area to meet the jobs on offer. We are not facing that crisis yet, but we will before the end of this Parliament: of that there is no doubt. In 1983, 7,000 people were out of work and claiming benefit. The figure is now down to 2,600 and in all likelihood it will be comfortably under 2,000 by the end of this calendar year.

But of course there are problems for those who remain out of work, and regional policy must concentrate funds on those who have been unemployed for a year or more. A significant number of my constituents have been unemployed for a long time. Indeed, they were unemployed even when the steelworks was going like the clappers, and getting them into work so that they can support their families and have all the things that we naturally wish for them will require considerable investment in training.

I welcome the passages on training in the White Paper, but I add a word of caution to my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and to my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State. They must beware reinventing the wheel with all their schemes. Many schemes which have already been working on the side could be developed into fine instruments to helping training and development. The actions of the Department of Employment, the Department of Trade and Industry and the Manpower Services Commission too frequently give those involved on the ground the impression that the wheel is in danger of being reinvented several times each day. It will be necessary to inject some regional and local experience into the natural enthusiasm of central Government policy-makers and planners.

Since 1981, the assisted area of Corby has received £58 million in regional development grant, and we are grateful for all of it. But it is not enough to say that all the £58 million has helped. Much of it has helped, but if one analyses, as I have, the companies which have received more than £5,000 in regional development grant and selective financial assistance since 1980 — the Department's monthly gazette gives all the figures—one sees some interesting facts.

The three biggest recipients of regional development grant and selective financial assistance have been, first, a nationalised industry — British Steel — which was responsible for the job losses in the first place. That delicate irony never ceases to amuse me. Secondly, two international companies with British headquarters but with enormous assets abroad, neither of which is believed to be short of money, have set up plants in Corby which the taxpayer has subsidised heavily. They are magnificent plants. They are welcome, but they are employing only a few people. It is not enough to ladle out money for capital projects which firms could afford in any event. We must keep our feet on the ground and realise that our policies should be aimed at areas of high unemployment.

Fortunately, in 1984, the Government made a change. If one analyses grants that are made now, one notices the sea change. At first, grants were given to firms of high international profile, such as British Steel, and to other less high-profile companies. The burial ground for the latter is a devastating spectacle. But since 1984 there has been hardly a single failure, because the grant has been so tightly tied to the creation of jobs.

No company which comes to Corby now does so because of a grant. That used not to be the case. They come to Corby because it is a good location with an improving reputation and improving local infrastructure and because some—but by no means all—of their bills are paid for them. That is as it should be, but when the Government hand out too much money to companies, failures will occur because companies will then come for the money rather than to improve their business. If they come when it makes sense in their business to do so, that will improve the regions. But even that must be qualified by several factors.

The right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) made a powerful point about the headquarters of Britoil, and I was with him every inch of the way when he talked about that. The point was also made by the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce). What has gone so badly wrong during the past generation—not only in the past few years, but since the second world war — is the decline of regional influence. Two aspects of our national policy, which must be corrected, have caused the decline more than anything else. The first was nationalisation. It centralised in London and destroyed many regional companies. It was disastrous in terms of decision-making for the regions. Nothing could cause more damage than more nationalisation. It would undermine completely any effective regional decision-making because all the decisions would be made in London, usually by Ministers.

The second factor is capital taxation. There is no escaping the damage caused to regional infrastructure by our system of capital taxation, which means that family companies are one-generation companies. They can fund the inheritance tax, or capital transfer tax as it used to be called, only out of the active assets of the company, and they automatically become extremely vulnerable to takeovers. They have been taken over one after another. Pilkington is the only major company with its headquarters in the north-west, because the structure of capital taxation has destroyed all the others.

If there is one point which I hope my hon. Friend the Minister will pass on to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, it is that, if the Government are serious about a regional policy, the sooner that businesses are relieved of having to pay inheritance tax the better.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) has often said, rightly, that not only does capital taxation destroy family businesses but, worse, the companies which take them over are subsidised by rollover relief from corporation tax. Those companies are destroyed by capital taxation and the people who take them over are subsidised. Unless those two factors are faced—they are central to regional policy—all the other matters will be at the margin.

The Bill must be put in context. The system of regional development grant improved after the changes made in

1984, which I warmly supported. I share the scepticism and anxiety expressed by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) and my hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw) about the future. Although selective regional assistance is a valuable weapon—it was certainly a valuable tool used by the Government in transforming my constituency—unless it absorbs all the money that is being spent on regional development grant, there will be difficulties in the 1990s.

Opposition Members like to play a game about what the sums will be in the 1990s. They know perfectly well that neither this Government nor any Labour Government have been able to project that far ahead. In the next public expenditure review and thereafter, my right hon. and learned Friend and his colleagues will have to press to ensure that the level of assistance available to the regions remains buoyant because there is a vital gearing and pump-priming role that only the Government can play. If we run away from that, we will make it more difficult for the regions to develop again the kind of prosperity that so many regions had in the past.

7.30 pm

Mr. Stan Crowther (Rotherham): I must tell the hon. Member for Corby (Mr. Powell) that the steel industry has got rid of far more jobs in my constituency than in his. The difference is that the jobs in my constituency did not all go at the same time. They went over a longer period, so those job losses did not cause the Government to leap into action. In that respect, Corby was far more fortunate than Rotherham.

In opposing the Bill, I do not want to give the impression that I believe that everything is fine so long as we keep regional development grants. It is not. The blunt truth is that no Government have yet managed to produce a really effective regional policy. I said in my maiden speech nearly 12 years ago—I have said this on many occasions both before and since—that the great need is for massive public sector intervention involving many Government Departments, local authorities and the establishment of regional enterprise boards and development agencies with adequate resources to ensure that they can initiate investment on a very large scale. The important point is the initiative role. While the Government and their agencies have no more than an essentially reactive role, we shall never solve the problem.

I appreciate that this is anathema to Conservative Members, but free market forces have created the problem. It is daft to imagine that free market forces can solve the problem, however much we may tinker around the edge with financial incentives, here and there. That will not produce a solution. The carrots have not worked, and no one wants to use the stick. The Government are offering a change of carrot today, but I suggest that we really need a change of donkey.

The position, after many years of so-called regional policy, is that the regional imbalance that the policy was supposed to correct is worse today than it has ever been in terms of employment opportunities, income levels and —very importantly—investment in the modern sunrise industries to which the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister of Trade and Industry referred. The gap is wider than ever after all these years of what have been called regional policies, but were not.

There is a fundamental difference between this Government and their predecessors. In the 1960s and 1970s Labour and Conservative Governments at least made a genuine effort to reduce the differences in the levels of economic activity between different parts of the country. I accept entirely that without those efforts the position would have been much worse. My hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) referred to the 600,000 jobs created or saved as a result of regional development grants. That is a very important fact for us to bear in mind.

However, those 600,000 jobs are nothing like enough to close the gap to remove the enormous imbalance. For the first time, the Government are moving in precisely the opposite direction through their economic, energy, transport and local government finance policies. They are widening the gap year by year. I can only assume that they are doing that deliberately. They could change their policies if they wanted to do so. Even in the limited area covered by the Bill, including the regional development grant and regional selective assistance, the amount of cash available has been reduced dramatically, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) said.

In my region of Yorkshire and Humberside, in the last financial year, the total amount of cash available for grant purposes was £37·1 million, compared with £54·2 million only five years before. Allowing for inflation, that means that the figure has been cut by at least 50 per cent. Yet that region has enormous potential for development. The region is working hard through the local authorities and regional development association to help itself and it has had some notable successes. It deserves more recognition from the Government, and it needs more Government support. We are not a begging bowl region. We are not asking for handouts. We are asking for investment, and the Government are failing to provide it.

Ministers tell us ad nauseam how marvellously strong the economy is now. We hear that every week from the Government Front Bench. Only today the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster used the phrase "the rising prosperity of the nation". Perhaps some people are doing very well. Indeed, when I see fairly ordinary houses offered for sale in London and parts of the south-east at £500,000 or one-bedroom flats at £120,000, I am bound to conclude that somebody must be doing quite nicely, thank you. If all this prosperity exists and if the economy is so strong, why have the benefits not filtered through to south Yorkshire, west Yorkshire and other areas that have suffered such pain and anguish as a result of the collapse of our manufacturing industries under this Government's reign?

Ministers should remember that they have a responsibility for the whole country, not just for those areas that loyally return Conservative Members after every general election to ensure that some people can continue to pay £500,000 for a house while others cannot get one at all. My constituents are not asking for the moon. They are asking for the right to earn an honest living. They are asking for the opportunity to do a proper job. All that the young people want is real jobs with a future. They do not want a cosmetic scheme that keeps them involved in some activity for two years and then throws them on to the dole. Like many of the Yorkshire constituencies, represented by my hon. Friends, mine contains areas in

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which more than half the people available for work are registered unemployed or actually unemployed but not included in the Government's highly manipulated figures.

The Rotherham and Mexborough travel-to-work area has an official unemployment level of 19 per cent. That is a reduction over the past three years from 21 per cent. However, 19 per cent. is an appalling figure. Will the Bill do anything about that? Will it provide jobs for those people who desperately need them? I cannot see how it will do that. In fact, the position is about to get worse. More jobs will be lost in the steel and coal industries. In the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) a long-established glass works is about to close, with the loss of more than 400 jobs.

Of course there have been good developments. A number of new, small, well-run businesses have been established, and we welcome them. They have had a lot of assistance from the local authority and the Rotherham enterprise agency. They have also been assisted greatly by the availability of regional development grants. Those grants have played a crucial part in creating what is admittedly a comparatively small number of new jobs, but at least they are new jobs. The Minister assures us that selective assistance will increase to make up for the loss of RDG, but it still means that a company which is thinking about setting up in an assisted area no longer has any assurance that Government aid will be available.

Mr. Terry Patchett (Barnsley, East): Does my hon. Friend agree that the Bill simply shows that, because the Government could not win those regions at the ballot box, they are abandoning them? They could not win the metropolitan counties, so they destroyed them. They cannot win at the ballot box regions which desperately need this grant, and the Bill handicaps any future prospects for those areas.

Mr. Crowther: There is a great deal of merit in what my hon. Friend says. It is no accident that most of the areas which so desperately need public sector backing to bring them up to something approaching the level of prosperity of the south-east, send Labour Members to this House. I do not think that the Government could care less, so long as they are able to keep a large majority without the aid of many people in Scotland and the north of England.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): Any reduction of grant to the areas represented by myself and my hon. Friend will be measured by the number of jobs available to 16-year-old school leavers. I am sure that my hon. Friend is aware that 80 per cent. of those who left school in July in our areas have been unable to find work.

Mr. Crowther: My hon. Friend is right. I referred to that point a few minutes ago. That will be the crucial test. The Bill will do nothing for those thousands of young people who desperately need proper jobs with a future.

I mentioned the difficulty that will be created by uncertainty about the availability of grants. It has always been in the power of Governments to change the criteria. All Governments have changed their criteria from time to time. When a company was able to meet the criteria, it was guaranteed that the cash would be there. That will no longer be the case. The Government are moving the goal posts and saying, "Even if you get the ball between the posts, there is no guarantee that you have scored a goal." That will cause immense problems. It should be borne in mind that automatic grants will continue in assisted areas of France, West Germany and the Netherlands, which compete with us for inward investment from Japan, the United States and elsewhere.

Perhaps the Government have not attended to that point properly. The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister of Trade and Industry told us that, in such cases, regional development grants are not important in making decisions. I do not believe that. The evidence points the other way. Regional development organisations, such as the Yorkshire and Humberside Development Association which I helped to set up almost 16 years ago, will now face even more difficult circumstances in competing with people from other parts of the Common Market. They are already operating in a highly competitive international environment. Ministers do not appreciate how competitive it is. The Bill will certainly not help those people. It will make life far more difficult for them. It will do nothing to help those areas which are short of jobs and which need new industry. It is a thoroughly bad Bill and it should be defeated.

7.43 pm

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): There is a marked contrast between the constituency of the hon. Member for Rotherham (Mr. Crowther) and my constituency of Beaconsfield. Given that there is 19 per cent. unemployment in the Rotherham travel-to-work area and that unemployment in my constituency is so low that it does not pose a real problem—we have a shortage of labour — what is the most effective way of tackling this problem? What can the Government most effectively do to help?

Mr. Patchett: Give us jobs.

Mr. Smith: In response to the hon. Gentleman, the Government cannot create jobs.

Ms. Armstrong: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Smith: I am responding to the hon. Gentleman's sedentary intervention. The Government cannot create jobs, but they can create the conditions in which jobs are more likely to be created.

Ms. Armstrong: I am grateful to you for giving way.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am not giving way.

Ms. Armstrong: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. The Government create many jobs by the direct aid that they give in such matters as defence contracts and research and development grants. That is one of the main ways in which the Government have been aiding the boom in the south-east and making sure that the north does not get its requisite amount of money. For example, in the past two years, 50 per cent. of Government money for research and development went to the south-east and 3 per cent. to the north.

Mr. Smith: Of course, that may be the case, but the Government can spend money on defence only if the wealth is created in the first place and taxes are raised to pay for the defence contracts. We are discussing the wealth creation process, how we can create the wealth which will create the jobs that we all want.

I have listened to today's speeches with great care. The hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) appeared to be

saying that the acid test is the quantity of spending, not the quality. The success of Government policies should be assessed not by how much money is spent, but by the success of the policy in practice, and whether it proves cost-effective.

The extracts quoted by the hon. Member for Sedgefield from three Department of Trade and Industry reports, particularly the second extract, could equally well have been used to support the policy promoted by the Government in the Bill. If I remember the figures correctly, one of the reports stated that 25 per cent. of the investment projects under RDG would have gone ahead anyway. That is precisely the point—a large proportion would have gone ahead anyway. Selective assistance will ensure that only those projects which would not otherwise have gone ahead will go ahead with the support of taxpayers' money.

In an editorial of 13 January, *The Independent* stated:

"The existing system of automatic regional aid has not been notably successful: it has been exploited by large companies to subsidise investment that would anyway have taken place."

Those are not my words. They are the words of *The Independent*, a newspaper not always noted for supporting Government policies.

I welcome this Bill as part of a package of measures which ensures that regional assistance will, in future, be selective and directed to those projects in most need of it. Applicants for regional selective assistance will have to show that assistance from public funds is needed for a project to go ahead. In other words, the taxpayer will not in future be supporting investment projects that would have gone ahead anyway, without his support.

The National Audit Office has recently conducted a review of regional support. It is unfortunate that that report is not yet available to inform our debate, but I should be surprised if the Comptroller and Auditor General does not question the cost-effectiveness of automatic RDG.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the academic report carried out by the Department of Trade acknowledged that many of those projects would not have gone ahead in assisted areas without the grant? How does he respond to that?

Mr. Smith: That may be the case, but my understanding of regional selective assistance is that, if it can be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Department of Trade and Industry that, if assistance is not given, the project will not go to the regions, regional selective assistance will be available. I may have got that wrong, but it is my understanding that, in those cases, assistance will still be available. That is the point of regional policy—to direct investment to the regions.

Mr. Hind: Is there not some misunderstanding on the part of many Opposition Members about the nature of regional selective assistance? My local council and I are helping to obtain a major investment in our area, which is being considered by the Department. About £1·75 million of that investment is RDG, and £14 million of it is regional assistance. Surely there is a clear message to Opposition Members that the majority of effective aid that is required for major development areas must be regional selective assistance.

Mr. Smith: My hon. Friend obviously has more experience of such matters than I have. He is right. We must consider the most cost-effective way of combating unemployment in the regions. As I said, there is virtually no unemployment in my constituency today. That is true of many constituencies in the south-east. The latest quarterly survey from the East and South Buckinghamshire chamber of commerce tells me that home and export orders are moving ahead well, businesses are profitable and expanding, and cash flow is positive. The main restraint on growth is a shortage of labour.

To a limited extent in the south-east, it is possible to employ people from areas of high unemployment. The jobcentre network advertises vacancies nationally. The South Buckinghamshire district council can employ a lorry driver from the north because it can offer him a house to go with the job. Some employers offer mortgage subsidies to people from the north whom they particularly want, to combat our high house prices. But, for most people, the lack of reasonably priced housing is an insuperable obstacle. Furthermore, I am constantly pressed by my constituents to support — indeed I do support it — a restrictive planning policy that will preserve the green belt and ensure that we do not become overdeveloped.

We will not solve the problem of regional unemployment in the north by recruiting in the south. Instead, we must make it more attractive for employers who are restrained by a shortage of labour to relocate in their entirety in the regions or invest in new capacity in the regions. We must create a new business climate in inner cities—a climate that is friendly rather than hostile to wealth producers; a climate of incentives rather than disincentives.

We need systematically to look at each of the costs of running a business, over which costs the Government have some influency or control. The two most obvious costs are rates and national insurance contributions. The uniform business rate that is proposed in the Local Government Finance Bill 1987 will have precisely the desired effect of substantially reducing business rates in inner-city areas of the north and increasing them by a corresponding proportion in many areas of the south.

Wage rates are already lower in the north than in the south, but the Chancellor of the Exchequer may wish carefully to examine the proposals that have been made for lower national insurance contribution rates in assisted areas.

There are also the costs that businesses should carry if they are satisfactorily to grow and develop. But such costs may be perceived by small and medium-sized firms as too expensive and just not worth it. Such costs are to be subsidised by the enterprise initiative. They include the costs associated with achieving better design, improved marketing, superior quality of management and high-tech manufacturing systems. It is right that the enterprise initiative should discriminate in favour of assisted areas and urban programme areas by offering higher rates of grant to businesses that take consultancy advice.

Because the general level of economic activity is lower in the regions than in the south, starting a business from scratch is less easy. Yet, given the traditional dependence of some regions on a few large businesses, the growth of the independent business sector is urgently required. Only then is economic growth more likely to become naturally self-generating. For that reason, the White Paper proposal to offer grants to firms in development areas that employ fewer than 25 employees is especially welcome.

[Mr. Smith]

Investment grants for investments and fixed assets of £100,000 or less and innovation grants for investments in product and process developments of £50,000 or less will be a major incentive for small firms. All such measures will be far more cost-effective in stimulating enterprise in the regions than the scatter-gun approach of regional development grants.

Some have said that at least RDG involved an element of certainty and that it is unfair to impose on officials such a subjective decision-making process as is involved in administering selective regional assistance. The RSA scheme is not new. Objective published criteria are already built into it to determine whether public funds are needed for a project to go ahead. Such decisions need to be taken at a local level and with some private sector input. That is precisely what happens at present through the Industrial Development Advisory Board. The Scottish Development Agency, the Welsh Development Agency and the expanded network of local DTI offices in England will be best placed to do that work against the background of nationally set criteria.

Regional selective assistance will be particularly effective in ensuring that the United Kingdom continues to attract mobile inward investment and to qualify for help from the European regional fund. There is no reason to mourn the loss of RGD. Therefore, I commend the Bill to the House.

7.55 pm

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): After reading the White Paper, hearing Lord Young in another place, hearing the Minister and the hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith), Opposition Members must make anew the case in principle for regional policy. Put in its simplest terms, the case for regional policy is that unbridled market forces accentuate rather than decrease disparities and differences between regions, particularly between north and south.

According to classical theorists, the existence of unemployment in depressed regions is meant to force down wages. I have often heard the Minister saying things that demonstrate that he would support that idea. Apparently, that will induce employers to hire more workers. The theory is that at the same time as new factories open in depressed regions to take advantage of lower labour costs, workers in the north will migrate south in pursuit of higher wages. In that way, so it is argued, disparities will be ironed out. That is the classical theory, but it is not in fact what happens. Reality does not correspond to the simple market model.

There is a lack of adequate housing in the south—we heard about that from the hon. Member for Beaconsfield —and a lack of so-called job opportunities. I am glad that wages are kept relatively high in the regions by national and multi-plant bargaining. Theoretical economists forget that a fall in wages will mean reduced regional purchasing power, which will mean reduced income and, therefore, reduced employment in depressed regions.

There is the further point that reliance on labour-intensive industry alone, as in the classical model, does not produce the balanced growth that is required in the regions. Of course, more fundamentally, a simple market model ignores some of the underlying causes of regional differences and disparities, such as the crucial geographical distance between the centre and the periphery, which is the key to regional imbalance, the concentration of headquarters and research and development in the south, and the different structures of regional economies and markets. Most important of all, it ignores social needs and overall national economic requirements.

We simply cannot afford to consign any region to the scrapheap. Because Governments, Conservative and Labour, have recognised that simple point, they have supported regional policy. Indeed, a Conservative Government first introduced regional assistance—albeit on a limited basis — in 1934. In the early 1960s, Macmillan's Government first recognised the north-south divide in its modern form. The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), the architect of the Industry Act 1972, first introduced regional development grants in their present form.

Hon. Members on the Government Benches forget or ignore what my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) has told them: that regional policies have been effective. Department of Trade and Industry economists have shown that, because of regional policies, there had been an increase of between 350,000 and 630,000 jobs by 1981 in the assisted areas, a large number of which were created by regional development grant. Without a regional policy, therefore, the situation would have been far worse than it is.

The truth is, however, that the case for regional policy is even stronger in present conditions—hon. Members representing the north know that the north-south divide exists—because there is no better time to have a strong regional policy than when the economy is expanding. It is precisely when the national economy is expanding generally that firms are more easily encouraged to expand in assisted areas; and, if we want the national economy to go on expanding, we have to prevent the south from overheating. Regional policy which seeks to spread expansion will help not only the north but the south, and so keep national expansion going generally. So it is a very good time to have a strong and active regional policy, but a very bad time to get rid of automatic grants.

The Department of Trade and Industry report has shown that RDG saves and creates jobs, yet in this Bill we are moving right away from automatic grants, and neither we nor the Minister can be certain that selective grants will be as effective in saving or creating jobs, particularly when other countries are continuing to use automatic grant.

We have heard about the problems for larger firms. The right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan), a former Secretary of State, made the point very effectively when he intervened with a question on the statement two weeks ago. He said:

"there were real advantages in a system where a business man was aware that, if he satisfied a published criterion he was entitled as of right to regional assistance instead of having to go cap in hand to civil servants". — [*Official Report*, 12 January 1988; Vol. 125, c. 151.]

The right hon. and learned Gentleman might also have pointed out that in that case the business man would not have had to pay tax on automatic grants.

Today, only one third of the money is under the direct control of civil servants; in future, all the power will be in their hands. I do not criticise civil servants. On the whole, I believe that they do a good job, particularly in the northern region. But this Bill represents a major increase in Civil Service power, with all the temptations and

possible abuse that that can bring, quite apart from the fact that civil servants will now be able to delay, turn away and squeeze the overall budget as Ministers in Whitehall dictate.

What about small firms? We have heard from the Minister that his scheme will prevent the bad impact of removing automatic grants, but I know from my own constituency experience that small firms do not have the know-how, the time or the back-up to apply for selective grants. The scheme that the Minister is introducing will not be automatic, and he has not said that it would be, despite questions from hon. Members. In any case, it applies only to firms employing 25 people, or fewer, and not to firms which employ 26 or 30, 50 or 60. The fact is that small firms will be hit by the move to selective grants.

It is true that in the White Paper the Minister makes much of the regional aspect of the business development initiative and the fact that there will be help for small firms in the regions, but my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield has shown that much of that assistance will be spent in the south. In any case, I am extremely sceptical about the utility of such large resources going to such a scheme. I can see that it is very nice for consultants. Money will pour into the coffers of consultancy firms, and it will pour in irrespective of any ultimate utility or positive achievement. It is not payment by results at all, and it is certainly a bonanza for consultants. I cannot believe that such an expensive scheme will show a good return to the regions.

I am deeply sceptical about the Government's commitment to continue to spend money and resources in the same way as now. The Government invite us to look into the crystal ball, but, to quote a famous Socialist, one does not need to look into the crystal ball when one can read the book. The book says that the Government cut regional aid by £300 million between 1979 and 1986, that they will cut regional aid by £300 million this year and that regional expenditure in the north is only 43 per cent. of what it was in 1978-79. With that kind of record, we are bound to be very sceptical about promises for the future, particularly when the Minister actually showed during his speech—and when he refused to answer the questions from my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield—that he has tried to fudge the White Paper figures.

The tragedy is that the present economic expansion could provide an excellent background for an effective, sustained and adequately financed regional policy which would be a real partnership between central Government, local government and industry, a partnership to revitalise the regions.

Mr. Dennis Turner (Wolverhampton, South-East): Does my hon. Friend agree that the Government have signally failed to recognise and support a most effective instrument of regional intervention, such as the regional enterprise boards? In my own area, the West Midlands enterprise board has, over the past five years, helped in the creation of 3,500 jobs, invested £40 million and assisted 41 companies in the process.

Mr. Radice: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. We in the northern region would like to have such a development agency. We have put the case for one to the Government on many occasions, but they have failed to accept it. My hon. Friend has drawn a useful analogy.

Instead of supporting this kind of partnership, instead of expanding regional policy—as they could do with all the money they have — the Government — partly, I suspect, to satisfy Lord Young's vanity—are once again changing regional policies. They are making changes which seem designed not to reduce regional disparities but to decrease the amount of money spent on the regions. This is a thoroughly bad Bill. It is inadequate and irrelevant to the real needs of the regions.

8.7 pm

Mr. James Cran (Beverley): I want to make my contribution to the debate this evening against the background that I too am a Member from the north and not from the south and that, before coming to the House, my experience as northern director and also west midlands director of the Confederation of British Industry has given me a unique insight into how regional policy in this country has worked—or, as I contend, has not worked at all.

I listened very carefully indeed to the extremely eloquent speech of the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair). What he was really telling hon. Members and anyone who reads the record was that regional policy in its classical form would solve the problems of this country. I heard it also from the hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice), who said that all we need is more resources. What I shall say has already been said but I do not mind mentioning it again because I think that every hon. Member should continue to look at the facts of regional policy. I took the trouble to look at those facts and to find out that, over the past 20 years, between 1964 and 1984, successive Governments of all complexions have spent about £20,000 million on regional policy. So I find it extraordinary that we have had the proposition continually put to us from Opposition Members that resources have not been put into regional policy. They have been put in with a vengeance.

The record, shows—there is variation in the statistics —that about 500,000 jobs have been created. I would be the first to say that those jobs were valuable, but they were not enough for the money that we put into regional policy in the past 20 years. At a cost of £35,000 or £45,000 per job, it has been a dramatic failure, of the classical form, in regional policy. That does not mean that I do not want a regional policy. The argument between myself and Opposition Members is what sort of regional policy we should have.

With regard to my experience in the north of England, where I spent five years, what did regional policy do of which any of us could be proud? Some 80 per cent.— plus of people employed by companies in the north of England were employed by companies whose headquarters were not in the northern region. The hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) made great play of the fact that there are insufficient company headquarters in the regions. However, he did not tell us how to attract them. Regional development grants will not attract them to the north of England or anywhere else; they will lead to a dependent economy. I found a low level of management in the region, with no autonomy to take decisions for the good of the companies or the region.

Ms. Armstrong: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cran: The hon. Lady has had ample time to make her case. She should listen for a change.

I also found in the northern region—it is the same in the other regions that Labour Members have been talking

[Mr. Cran]

about — that there was little or no research and development capability. One of the prerequisites of any successful regional policy is such a capability. I know that you do not like to look at unpalatable facts——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. I do not mind looking at unpalatable facts.

Mr. Cran: I am sorry, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The past 50 years of regional policy, although it has been well-meaning, has been relatively ineffective. All it has produced — if anyone can produce facts to the contrary I would love to see them—are fragile, lopsided, recession-prone, drip-fed regional economies. That is what 50 years of resources being pumped into the regions, in the amounts of which Labour Members approve, has done.

Not only has regional policy been ineffective; it has been positively destructive. During my experience in the north I found that it encouraged the big company job mentality—one gets a job down the end of the road, where everybody has done so for the past 50 years. That is destructive; understandable, but destructive.

At one time, the west midlands — this is a phenomenon of which we are all aware—was one of the most prosperous regions of the United Kingdom. It had no assisted area status. Then it fell on hard times. Why? That is the salient question. There were many reasons. One was that given by the hon. Member for Gordon — interventionism of the Government that we have experienced in regional policy for some time.

There were industrial development certificates. The policy behind them was that the Government operating from the south-east had to redistribute industry throughout the United Kingdom. My goodness, they did that with a vengeance. The automotive industry left the west midlands. Ford went to Halewood, Standard Triumph went to Speke, Rover went to Cardiff and Rootes went to Linwood. Need we go further than to remember what happened to Rootes? The natural home for that investment would have been the west midlands. Unfortunately, what interceded was regional policy of the classical kind that Labour Members want to perpetuate.

Early-day motion 569 says that the House

"views with alarm the Government's plans for further cuts in support for regional industry under the guise of selectivity."

I was present when regional policy for the west midlands was being discussed. At that time it did not want a regional policy because it knew how destructive it could be. It was pulled kicking and screaming into regional policy, and I suspect that it was correct in not wanting that regional policy.

Regional policy has clearly not succeeded according to the standards that I, not Labour Members, set. All it has done is provide a temporary jobs lifeboat. If the standards of Labour Members are as low as that, it is no wonder that it has taken us so long to re-evaluate regional policy. It has attracted only closure-prone production units to the regions of the United Kingdom. I hope that in the next 50 years we shall not experience the sort of regional policy that we have had for the past 50 years.

The ultimate judgment of regional policy is that when I have looked at the assisted area status map of 1934—it would be interesting to know how many people have done this—and compared some of the areas on it with those on the present map, I found that a number of areas on the first map are present on the second. We have been unable to remove some of those assisted areas from the map, which is definitive proof that something has been dramatically wrong with the policy.

I agree with those who have said that regional development grants are wasteful. I shall not desist from reminding the House that we gave £100 million for a capital-intensive project at Sullom Voe, which, at the end of the day, produced very few jobs. I gathered from what was said by Opposition Members that regional policy should be judged by the number of jobs that it produces. That investment produced very little. Many of us believe that that investment would have gone to Sullom Voe anyway. There was probably nowhere else for it to go, so we wasted £100 million that could have been better spent in other regions of the United Kingdom. The tragedy of the matter is that that is not only one such example. There are many.

There are further weaknesses in regional development grants policy. Multinational companies, which, as we all know, are very sophisticated outfits, are extremely adept at using the system of regional development grants to set one country or one region against another. That is not how we should run regional policy. Regional development grants, or regional policy as we know it, have not taken into account how industrialists operate and think. I think every hon. Member will agree that if someone throws money at us, we catch it. It is human nature, and that is what has been happening with regional development grants, for as long as I can remember or for as long as anybody with any knowledge of this system can remember.

As for the PIEDA report sponsored by the DTI in 1987, I must confess that I distrust some of the answers because they are enormously at variance with much that I have heard from the industrial community in the past 10 or 15 years. Before Labour Members smile too much about that, I remind them that that report told me that 71 per cent. of companies said that location was not affected by regional development grants and that is why I am doing as much as I can to support what I think is an enlightened and far-seeing Bill. We need other ways to strengthen the regions of the United Kingdom. I am clear about that. The Government will retain my support only as long as they say that that is their aim. I have heard nothing from the Government to say that that is not their aim. That is why I support the Bill. I only mourn the length of time it has taken for us to get here to talk about it. I strongly support the Bill.

8.22 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): I was interested in the speeches made by the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) and by the hon. Member for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw). I recognise that they may be suffering from an incurable disease of this House—"out-of-officeitis"—but I find that when people of experience have something to say that arises out of their experience in office, once their personal ambitions have gone one sometimes gets the truth. I hope that the hon. Member for Pudsey was convinced by some of my visits to him when he was a Minister, because much of what he had to say covered points which I want to make this evening.

In the earlier speeches in the debate made by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), figures were

thrown across the Floor of the House in disagreement. However, I was certain of one thing—none of them would be coming to my area. I think that everyone will agree that regional policy does not mean a thing if it is not effective. If regional policy, White Papers or Bills do not take into consideration parts of the country and areas of the regions with severe unemployment problems, then the Government that have produced the White Paper or the Bill are not facing up to their responsibility.

Paragraph 7.1 of the White Paper called "DTI—a department for Enterprise" says:

"Regional and inner city problems have often been caused by inflexibility in responding to the decline of traditional industries, the low rate of creation of new firms and inadequate levels of innovation."

Paragraph 7.11 says:

"Regional policy remains based on the existing regional map. The Government have concluded that it is too soon to re-open the definition of the boundaries of the Assisted Areas which were last fixed at the end of 1984. The present intention is that the existing map should remain in place for the lifetime of this Parliament."

Areas with coal mining communities, like my own, have been virtually wiped out since 1984, and are suffering severe economic and unemployment problems.

Before 1981, the Castleford travel-to-work area enjoyed assisted area status. I tabled a question to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster asking

"if he will list the total value of regional assistance given to companies in the Castleford travel-to-work-area for each year since 1979."—[*Official Report*, 9 January 1988; Vol. 125, c. *672*.]

I received a reply showing that in 1979, the area received £275,000. The following year, 1980, that grant increased to £1,173,000. Since that time—bearing in mind the period of the miners' strike in 1984—assistance has continued to decline. In 1987, the area received not one penny of assistance in any form.

In that period, the area also lost its two staple industries of coal and glass. All hon. Members are aware that the coal industry was run down rapidly, without any effort to help and without any planning to put alternative employment in its place. In that period, my constituency—not throughout the whole of the Castleford travel-to-work-area—lost five pits. That meant, with the spin-off jobs, that something like 10,000 jobs were lost over a short period. We have made persistent representations through correspondence, visits to Ministers and visits by Ministers, in an attempt to persuade them to rezone the Castleford travel-to-work area and make it an assisted area. The Regional Development Grants (Termination) Bill makes it clear that the Government have no intention of doing that.

Concern has been expressed by the hon. Members for Pudsey and for Corby (Mr. Powell) who, in giving examples from their constituencies, have pointed out that constituencies with a low unemployment rate continue, under the Bill, to enjoy assisted area status and the grants that go with it. I hope and expect that the Minister will tonight be able to explain whether there is some assistance within the Bill from which areas like mine could benefit. If not, why not? I hope that he will be able to tell areas like mine why the Government feel that no assistance is required. I hope that he will be able to tell us that they will get special assistance, but I cannot find any in the Bill. I certainly cannot find any in the Bill. At present, unemployment in my constituency costs £5 million a year. Would not that sum be better spent on designating Pontefract and Castleford an assisted area, to facilitate investment in the area and create jobs? Without that, we are a doomed area.

The right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) referred to one of his local papers—the *Cleveland Express*, I think it was.

Mr. Devlin: I think that it was that famous Left-wing magazine, the Middlesbrough *Evening Gazette*.

Mr. Lofthouse: Whatever it was, it pointed to the success of the area and referred to a bright future. My own local paper, the *Pontefract and Castleford Express*, which is certainly not political, repeatedly points to the problems of the area. Only a fortnight ago it carried a major front-page story drawing attention to the great problems. It is not only that the area lacks jobs. It has become completely rundown, partly because of the Coal Board's callous decision to sell off all its houses in the area, thus creating problems for men who have worked in the coal mining industry all their lives and for their families. The paper published photographs which I have sent to different Departments. I hope that they will influence someone.

When the Select Committee on Energy conducted its investigation of the coal industry in 1986-87, Ian MacGregor, the then chairman of the Coal Board, and the Secretary of State for Wales, who was then the Secretary of State for Energy, informed that Committee that the problems of coal-mining communities savaged by the rapid rundown of the pits were the responsibility not of the Department of Energy, but of the Departments of Employment and of Trade and Industry, which had a responsibility to provide alternative employment. The Select Committee accepted that.

Whatever the inadequacies of the Bill, I hope that it will make special assistance available to areas that need it. I only hope that the Government will be able to dispel the suspicions of those in the mining community who feel that this Government have had it in for the miners and want to continue to crush them. They fear that because the Government have nothing to gain by offering assistance to areas where the mining communities are loyal to Labour and return Labour Members of Parliament, they will let them stop there and rot. I hope that the Government will dispel those fears.

8.34 pm.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): Let me begin by stating the general view held by Conservative Members: we cannot and should not force companies and enterprise to move to locations where they do not want to be. The north-east region, from which I come, has to get up on its own two feet and create its own economic infrastructure, which cannot be grafted on by national Government. We have only to look back at the notable failure of the car plant at Linwood and the aluminium smelter at Invergordon to see that an unnatural market position will collapse if the subsidies are not there to support it.

In most cases, large-scale industry in the region is more widely based internationally and makes investment decisions according to other criteria. Undoubtedly, ICI would have made the investment that it has made over the past few years regardless of regional development grant. As hon. Members have told the House before, capital investment has cost jobs. In answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey (Mr. Shaw) who is no longer here, the

[Mr. Tim Devlin]

mobile investment to which he referred could easily be covered by regional selective assistance. Indeed, I am sure that it will be.

Regional aid should seek to encourage ventures to go ahead that would not otherwise do so. It should fill the gap in cases where the risk is just too wide for banks to make loans but narrow enough to represent a prudent investment. We should look to smaller and medium-sized businesses to increase their output and market.

For far too long, the north-east has relied on the industrial giants to provide employment. Since the 1930s, Socialist persuasion has turned many eyes in the region towards the Government, to create employment. It cannot be stressed too often in the north-east that it is individuals and companies who create jobs. The Government are not the universal provider, and nor should they be.

Enterprise always played a key role in north-eastern culture before the Jarrow March. Middlesbrough was built to accommodate the new industrial classes of the late 19th century, using what was then the very latest technology. Dorman Long, now British Steel, Ashmore, now Davey McKee and Cleveland Bridge—all successful companies —were founded and built up by enterprising individuals who banded together without any regional aid. Some, like Pickerings Lifts in Stockton, are family firms, handed down from enterprising father to entrepreneurial son.

Such enterprise remains and this initiative will bring it back to the surface. Not long ago, I visited St. Peter's enterprise centre in my constituency. The centre runs a youth training scheme, and the occasion of my visit was its open day. Some of the 17-year-olds told me that they would like to open a shop or a small business dealing in aquarium accessories. Another started in printed T-shirts and is now in the rag trade. Ten years ago on Teesside, people of that age were expected to go into ICI, British Steel or British Shipbuilders. Their parents would have discouraged such enterprise in favour of a solid, dependable apprenticeship in a declining industry. There are now 10,000 self-employed people on Teesside and 6,000 new businesses are set up each year in the north-east.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is quite right in saying that talent, initiative and ability are present in the region. This debate is about a measure designed to foster that talent, initiative and ability, and I believe that the targeting proposal will achieve that.

The enterprise in the north-east is proving an attractive feature to outside and inward investors alike. My hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey talked of the need to attract people to the region from outside. He called them the big mobiles. He needs to consider not just regional aid but a range of relevant aspects, such as the skilled work force, the commendability of the location and recommendations from other companies, as well as arrangements for grant.

Nissan is extremely happy with its north-eastern work force. It is now building better Bluebirds in the north-east than in Japan and recently announced an expansion that will bring 1,400 new jobs to the north-east. Mitsumi has confirmed that it is to set up a new electronics manufacturing operation in south Tyneside, expected to employ 400 staff by its third year.

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Devlin: No, I am not giving way.

Tallent Engineering at Darlington has set rolling a new assembly line, installed especially to make parts for Nissan cars. Elta Plastics in my constituency is now making parts, not only for Nissan, but for Ford and Hitachi. All those developments are the result of recommendations made by word of mouth. NEI Power Projects of Gateshead has won a £2 million project to supply lighting and electrical equipment to the port of Rangoon in Burma.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Devlin: Davy McKee has letters of intent to build two steel-making plants in South Korea. Following on from what my hon. Friend the Member for Beverley (Mr. Cran) said, Davy McKee is one of the more interesting firms as it carries out a great deal of research and development in the north-east.

Mr. Cook *rose*——

Mr. Devlin: Tetleys at Eaglescliffe is now the largest teabag manufacturer in the world. AL-KO of Consett, County Durham——

Mr. Cook *rose*——

Mr. Devlin: I know that Opposition Members do not want to hear about the north-east's successes because they are too used to giving out doom and gloom, but I shall tell them of some of the——

Mr. Cook *rose*——

Mr. Devlin: No. The hon. Gentleman can make his own speech.

AL-KO of Consett, County Durham, has launched a comprehensive range of power washers for domestic and industrial use. Silleck Mouldings in Stockton is currently carrying out a £1·3 million expansion programme to recruit extra staff in the next six months to make plastic computer parts.

Mr. Cook: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Devlin: I have already said that I am not giving way.

Armour Plastics of Sunderland is to invest £700,000 over the next three years. The work force is to increase by 30 to 80. It makes a range of baths and sanitary fittings.

Mr. Cook: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is it not a convention in this Chamber that when an hon. Member refers to the constituency of another hon. Member and there is a point at issue, that hon. Member would normally, under reasonable circumstances, give way?

Mr. Devlin *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Let me answer this point of order. Hon. Members must decide for themselves whether it is appropriate to give way. I understand the point that is being made, but I can see the clock and I quite understand the position at this time.

Mr. Devlin: Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, Silleck Mouldings, the last company that I mentioned, happens to be in my constituency. The hon. Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook) should have intervened five minutes ago when I mentioned his.

Mr. Cook: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. For the sake of the record, I tried consistently to intervene but this hon. Member consistently refused to allow me.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. That is hardly a point of order for me. However, I try to keep a close eye on the clock.

Mr. Devlin: If I may continue. There are small companies in starter units, for example, a small company in my constituency makes speedboats. It now wants to expand and to build luxury yachts for use in the West Indies——

Mr. Cook: On the issue of speedboats, will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Devlin: No, I shall not.

A small company—also in my constituency—called Videoscan makes short-range video transmitters——

Mr. Cook: On the issue of video transmitters, will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Devlin: No.

—so that cabling does not need to be used to project programmes in house. Another small company—also in my constituency — turns over £3 million per year, making lipsticks holders.

Things are improving rapidly. It has been a record year for North-East Investors, the regional capital fund. Profits are up by 34 per cent. In the past three months, 63 per cent. of companies in Teesside chamber of commerce have increased their sales and 34 per cent.——

Mr. Cook: On the issue of the Teesside chamber of commerce, will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Devlin: No.

—and 34 per cent. have revised their investment plans for plant and equipment upward. It is interesting to note —I know than many hon. Members are anxious to hear good statistics from the north-east—that 79 per cent. believe that turnover will increase and 76 per cent. believe that profitability will increase. Compared with 12 months ago, more report that they have increased sales, more report that they are upgrading their plans for investment and considerably more anticipate increased sales and profitability. Compared with three months ago, export sales have shown a great improvement and the work force is increasing.

Miss Mowlam: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Devlin: No. I shall come to the hon. Lady's constituency in due course.

There are several exciting ventures, including seven flagship projects in the Teesside development corporation —£160 million is being spent on them. It was good to hear my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks reading a positive image of our area from the Middlesbrough *Evening Gazette*. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Corby, who stressed the need for a positive self-image and the need to convince other people of the greatness of one's product.

I should add that we must convince ourselves in the north-east of the enterprise culture that is already there. We must see all of Teesside working together. We must learn from Corby, and I hope that before long Teesside will suffer from Corby's difficulty in looking forward to a situation in which we have too many jobs——

Mr. William Powell: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Devlin: No, in fairness to the whole House I do not think that I should give way.

Smiths Dock is to become an offshore supply base. Bowesfield lane is being turned into a high-tech office development. We have an extremely exciting project at Belasis Hall technology park——

Mr. Cook: On the issue of Belasis Hall technology park, will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Devlin: No, I shall not.

English Estates North is putting up 50,000 sq ft of office and small manufacturing space and there have already been 20 serious inquiries—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Devlin: I know that Opposition Members do not want to hear of these successes, but they will have to hear me out.

Cleveland business centre is setting up 56,000 sq ft of small offices and flexible workplaces. In the introduction by my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, we heard of the extra resourcing that will be put into English Estates North. It is already refurbishing 75,000 sq ft of Teesside industrial estate in Thornaby in my constituency.

At present in Middlesbrough only about 41,000 sq ft of prime modern accommodation is available, with only 26,000 sq ft of secondary accommodation and 18,000 sq ft of tertiary accommodation. That total of 85,000 sq ft compares favourably with the position only two years ago, when there was 200,000 sq ft on the market. That accommodation has been taken up by companies as diverse as Albany Life, which has recently announced its move to Teesside, and Legal and General Insurance which is also coming to Teesside.

Demand now primarily exists for between 2,000 and 2,500 sq ft but unfortunately accommodation varies in availability from 5,000 to 15,000 sq ft and 1,500 sq ft at the small end. Therefore, when the Minister replies, I hope that he will stress the role of English Estates and I draw to his attention this need, which English Estates should meet in the years to come.

Prime shopping locations are being snapped up in Middlesbrough and throughout the north-east. Sainsburys, Laura Ashley and The Body Shop are all moving to Middlesbrough. A professional magazine recently quoted a local estate agent as saying:

"Things are beginning to improve. Now is the time to be buying in Cleveland".

There is much to be welcomed in the White Paper, of which the abolition of automatic regional development grants forms part. The objectives of regional policy remain the same as they were in 1983—to reduce the imbalance in employment opportunities on a stable long-term basis and to help develop indigenous potential, leading to self-generating growth. The latter objective must continue to be our central objective.

When I heard earlier in the debate the call for greater co-operation between the Departments of Trade and Industry, of Employment and of the Environment, I thought immediately of the three wise men presiding over the north-east and the closeness of their co-operation. I must commend that to the Minister and hope that it will continue.

[Mr. Devlin]

I take this opportunity to welcome the setting up of a Middlesbrough office of the DTI. It is absolutely vital to our initiatives in the north-east that we have a one-stop shop, which should be more accessible to the people of Teesside. In addition to the excellent brochure that the Department of enterprise has now produced, we must have a good quality brochure giving a list of all the assistance that is available to companies throughout the region. The brochure that has already been issued is excellent. I have tested it by ringing the numbers and making inquiries, and I am pleased to say that the response was exceptionally good.

English Estates must be encouraged, but I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to consider looking at some of the rents it is charging. The enterprise initiative is particularly welcome in the north-east. It will give higher grants to smaller and medium-size companies, which are the very ones we are short of. It will also give them specific help with design, marketing, quality control, manufacturing strategy, business plans and financial and information systems. That range of help will probably be much more valuable than large dollops of money.

Assistance is already being provided in some areas by, for instance, the Teesside polytechnic new products unit, the Newcastle fashion centre, based on Newcastle polytechnic, and the initiative called higher education support for industry in the North. There are also initiatives by the Northern development corporation and the new urban development corporations.

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): Come on. We have had 15 minutes of this drivel.

Mr. Devlin: I am just setting out the vast range of help available to companies in the north-east, all of which is helpful.

There are organisations such as Aycliffe ITEC, providing hardware and software support, which need to be pushed more centrally. They all need to be drawn together in another booklet, and I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to consider that.

The Department is now to offer special assistance, some through independent consultants, some through existing agencies. It needs to be tied together.

I am very pleased with the response that I received when dealing with the regional office of the Department of Trade and Industry.

Our objective in the Bill is to strengthen and modernise regional policy. I welcome the Government's commitment to the north and the other regions, but I look for a more effective way to encourage a new and lasting economy. The economy of the north-east of England is changing. We can no longer prop up yesterday's industries, and the changes need to be sustained by helping small companies which are building the sunrise jobs of tomorrow with development. There is a particular need for investment in small companies with fewer than 25 employees. I very much welcome the investment grant of two thirds for product and process development by those small companies.

It is also extremely important for us to continue to build greater bridges between school and industry, between higher education laboratories and commerce. The recession in 1979-81 hit my region hard. Shipbuilding has gone; 54,000 jobs in steel have been lost. Yet we may see the beginning of a turnaround. Yacht-building may come back to the Tees if shipbuilding does not. Investment is rising. Unemployment has fallen every month for the past 18 months, providing one job for the man who has to revise the figures in Stockton town hall each month.

There has been a 19 per cent. drop in long-term unemployment, and we see in the north of England pay survey recently carried out by Hay Management Consultants that although pay is less in absolute terms in the north than in the south, purchasing power in the north is much greater.

Our policy must not be to seek to distort markets in ways similar to the optimistic move of Rootes to Linwood or that aluminium smelter at Invergordon. I agree wholeheartedly with my hon. Friend the Member for Beverley that our paramount consideration is to build on strength which already exists in the north-east of England. As I have shown, those strengths are there. We must build on them.

8.53 pm

Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas (Meirionydd Nant Conwy): The hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) listed a large number of companies. I was not familiar with the names of all of them, but I know that one that he mentioned — Laura Ashley — has received substantial amounts of public expenditure and employs a large number of people in the area in which I live in mid-Wales. Without a regional aid package, that company would have relocated in Holland.

The hon. Gentleman also gave us a caricature of the relationship between regional policy, regional aids and the role of the market, as did other Conservative Members. They must realise that the regional policy was brought about because of the effects of market distortion on existing communities. What we are now seeing from the Government is the withdrawal of even that limited role of intervention in the effect of the market upon communities and work forces.

That dimension is lost on many Conservative Members. I regret that we have a simplistic analysis of the relationship between the economy and society, although it does not surprise me, in view of the attitudes of some Conservative Members and the Government.

The regional policy debate tends to concentrate all the time on what are perceived to be problem regions—that is, us—rather than on the major problem of the United Kingdom, which is, of course, the south-east of England. We have had in this debate — at least from the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) and others—the clear statement that the south-east of England is itself not only a region but very much a problem region. The hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), who opened for the Opposition, stressed that very clearly.

What we need to do when we are talking about regional policy and regional development programmes, such as the one we are considering, is to see them in the context of the real regional policies. It is about time the real regional policy stood up in this Parliament. That means that we should look at the hidden state subsidies—not all that hidden, if we look at the public expenditure White Papers —which go directly to those companies and industries located in the south-east and the south-west of England. The Government's overall macro-economic policy hit the regions that are traditionally most dependent on manufacturing worse than others.

In particular, the cuts in regional spending of over 50 per cent. have obviously most directly affected the areas that were most dependent on that spending — the northern regions of England and the nations of Scotland and Wales, which, for the purpose of this debate, I shall call regions—that is, EEC regions; I am not denying them national status within Britain.

Real regional policy means expenditure on defence, new technology and the procurement budget of the Ministry of Defence, which increased by 40 per cent. in real terms between 1979 and 1987, a period in which there were massive cuts in official regional policy spending. It is now up to £8·2 billion. The main beneficiaries are the aerospace and electronic industries. It is no surprise to us to see them located in the south-west and south-east of England. It is those areas that are benefiting from that aspect of regional policy.

Let us look at the extent of Government research and development on defence. Eighty per cent. of all Government expenditure in the electronics industry is accounted for by the Ministry of Defence. That, too, distorts the area in which the spending is carried out and the form of spending. Looking at the overall levels of civilian research and development, we see quite clearly that Britain devotes more of its Government-funded research and development resources to military expenditure than any other major power except the United States.

Fifty-three per cent. of all Government research and development expenditure generally — not just on electronics—is absorbed by defence. The result is that public sector spending on research and development, which is a form of indirect regional policy, benefits certain regions and disbenefits others. On an overall picture, the position in the south-east and south-west of England is progressive and positive but elsewhere similar expenditure is not available from public funds.

I do not argue for the diversion of all military expenditure to Wales and Scotland, although we suffer a lot from military expenditure in the form of low-flying training. I ask for recognition of the fact that the state's decisions on research and development, areospace and defence are part of regional policy and should be quantified as such. When we debate regional policy we should debate the regional impact of all public expenditure, not just a limited programme of grants, as we are doing at the moment.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: Will the hon. Gentleman acknowledge that in many cases the receipts to the Exchequer from corporations and companies that invest throughout the United Kingdom are credited as though they are earnings in the south-east, when in fact they are earnings from investments in the regions, for which the regions get no credit? The Government should take account of that fact when quantifying the whole package.

Dr. Thomas: The hon. Gentleman is right. Many sectoral patterns of expenditure which are Great Britain-wide are not regionalised in an assessment of public expenditure. At the beginning of this decade, 80 United Kingdom plant locations received Ministry of Defence contracts of more than £50 million. Half of them were in the home counties. Ten of them, including Rolls-Royce and the celebrated Westland, received contracts of more than £100 million and were in the west country. Only nine were in Scotland and there was none in Wales. That shows the way in which that part of public expenditure distorts regional policy.

In looking at regional policy we need to take account of all the spatial consequences of other Government policies. We need a level of regional intervention that is enough to counteract the pull of other spending programmes concentrated in certain locations. This is where the approach to regional policy, which has been depending on the forms of grant aid, is inadequate. I share the Labour party's previous view—not its present one—that the allocation of regional development grant to major multinational companies can be argued to be a waste of public expenditure.

Ministers have not told us how they intend to ensure that the selective package will make up in levels of expenditure what is currently made available. We have not yet had that commitment from the new Secretary of State for Wales or from any Scottish Office Minister. We want such a commitment from the Government if they are seriously saying that they will produce the same level of support, directly or indirectly, through their expenditure programme.

I am not taking part in the filibuster on the Government Benches which has occurred because the Government cannot find enough Conservative Members to speak. I stress that the Bill will not be welcomed by the agencies involved in industrial development in Wales. We welcome the additional funding made available to the Welsh Development Agency, but we can debate that on Thursday evening on the Welsh Development Agency Bill, when I hope to catch your eye again, Madam Deputy Speaker, which is why I am being brief now. I stress that there are other regions in Wales, especially mid-Wales, which have been badly affected by the loss of development area and assisted and intermediate area status from this Government and by the potential loss of status in the European Community. Mid-Wales Development has received a slightly smaller increase in budget than the WDA.

Mid-Wales is the poorest area in Wales. Pay levels are the lowest in Britain. The population density is one sixth the European Community average. One job in four is dependent on agriculture. It is the most remove rural area in England and Wales that I know of, because I have to get up there. The Development Board for Rural Wales, with its small budget, had been doing the particularly important work of social and economic investment in the area.

We want assurances that the Government's regional policy will not contain anything that will affect the operation of the Development Board for Rural Wales or the Highlands and Islands Development Board in Scotland. We want an assurance that the Government, when looking at the SDA and WDA, will look in parallel at those other development agencies which are the real engines of participation between the state and the commercial sector and which are really involved in regional development.

9.3 pm

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): I am a strong believer in regional development policy and represent a development area in the north-west of England. This is a bit like déjà vu. In March 1984, I sat through a debate on the Co-operative Development Agency and Industrial Development Bill, now an Act, which this Bill amends. The Opposition made the same complaints then about the

[Mr. Kenneth Hind]

new system of grants that they have made tonight.

At that time, unemployment was half a million higher than today and the basic rate of income tax was 30p in the pound, compared with today's 27p in the pound. This shows that that legislation worked. After four years, we have a time to review and adjust to the changing circumstances in the economy. In the north and other parts of the country that are regionally aided, we cannot escape the fact that a strong economy is needed for employment to be reduced, and for the regions to prosper.

When I took over a new constituency in 1983, I was appalled at the level of ignorance about what went on in the local factories among Labour representatives on the local council, and at some of the statements made by Labour politicians in the locality about local industry. The truth is that they knew nothing about what was going on in local industry. I am afraid that, listening to tonight's comments, I find myself in the same position.

However, I wholeheartedly endorse the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin), who made a point of putting on record the strength of the local economy and its improvements over the past few years. I took over a constituency in which there was no employers' organisation. I formed one. With the assistance of the Bishop of Liverpool and the aid of all the local parties, I set up a task force to attack the problems of the area. Now we have a full-time director, who was appointed this week.

The message is clear: we must use self-help to tackle the problems in our areas. It is no use crying salt tears and saying that the state will provide, and that we are not prepared to take action to help ourselves. In Skelmersdale —oh, yes, the place that everyone loves to hate—in the past two years, we have created 1,500 new jobs, and 78 new firms have come in during the past two and a half years. In the past three weeks, over 300 new jobs have been announced in three new factories that are coming to the area.

That progress has not been due only to grants. It has also been brought about by attempts by the local council, the Commission for the New Towns and the task force to go out and promote the town. I must say with pride that Skelmersdale, like Chorley, is becoming a success story, and is a booming area in the north of England. I am now in the embarrassing position of telling the House that, in the next three months, we shall not have an empty factory in Skelmersdale. We shall have to start building them. That is a measure of our success.

Mr. William Powell: Will my hon. Friend confirm that Skelmersdale took the sensible step of hiring the former director of industry from Corby to take over? Middlesbrough did the same for its urban development corporation.

Mr. Hind: My hon. Friend is correct. Skelmersdale employed the economic director from Corby to take on the direction of the town's development.

I have found that the major problem with small firms is that they are not necessarily creating jobs, but they need to buy new machines to keep them up. The limit on grants for 25-employee firms — up to £15,000 for new machinery, or £25,000 for innovation — is very successful, and will meet many of the problems that will be created by the removal of regional development grant.

Regardless of how my right hon. and learned Friend puts the case, regional selective assistance is a process of backing winners. We are trying to create enterprises that will sustain themselves and go on beyond the grant, rather than simply throwing money at projects that will fail. The Bill, and the White Paper that goes with it, by providing the expertise of consultants to provide guidance, will equip those companies far better to take advantage of regional development grants.

Let me tell Opposition Members that where firms fail is in expertise: design expertise, marketing expertise and the basics of business planning. The business development initiative system will provide those advantages and help firms to take advantage of what is available.

Finally, despite all the crowing, the truth is that during the next three years, £900 million will be available for the regions and for towns such as Skelmersdale. There will be no diminution of the amount of money available: far from it—there will be an increase. It is up to industry to use and take advantage of the system that is available. If it does that, there will be no need for any fall in the amount of money it receives or for any fall in prosperity in areas that take advantage of the new system.

I commend my right hon. and learned Friend's proposals. He has hit the right turn in the tide, and places such as Skelmersdale will take advantage of it.

9.10 pm

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): I listened with great care to the speech of the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin). He demonstrated that, whatever political deficiencies he may suffer from, dyslexia certainly is not one of them. His ability to extract dramatic interest from a rendering of the Middlesbrough area yellow pages telephone directory brought new heights to a discussion of regional policy. Like Conservative Members, I hope that the Minister in winding up will be sympathetic to their appeal for hospitals to be ready to cope with the injuries that will be caused among the rush of industrialists moving to the north, the west, Wales and Scotland, as a result of the initiatives that the Government have announced tonight.

I shall say three things about regional policy, on which I worked for 20 years before entering the House. First, how much do the Goernment know about what they are spending on regional policies and where they are spending it? Second, I should like to say something about the taxation treatment of regional development grants and regional selective assistance. The Government have omitted that from their White Paper. Finally, there is the question of fraud and abuse of regional aid.

Do the Government know what they are spending, and where they are spending it? Let us briefly look at the figures that they gave in their public expenditure White Paper and compare them with the figures for the same year, the same region and the same programme as they gave in last year's public expenditure White Paper. Under the heading, "regional and general industrial support," the DTI gave the figure of £888 million for 1982-83. One year later, it says that, in the same period, it spent £503 million. That is a little matter of £385 million that seems to have gone missing.

The following year the DTI had the same problem. Last year's White Paper gave a figure of £617 million, but this year's White Paper gives a figure of £426 million. In the past three years, the problem was slightly less. This year's

White Paper gives a figure for the coming financial year of £463 million and last year's White Paper gave a figure of £300 million.

There are similar enormous discrepancies in the figures for Scotland and Wales. This year, the Government say that they spent £439 million five years ago on regional development in Scotland. Last year, they gave the figure for the same year as £158 million. Has £300 million-worth of regional expenditure jumped across the border in one year? Are they now saying that five years ago the money was spent not in England but in Scotland?

One has to doubt White Papers as an indication of what the Government are spending, on what they are spending it, and where they are spending it. They should assist those who work in industrial development and be completely frank when discussing their regional policies. They should not hide the mess that they made in last year's White Paper; they should tell us about it in the House, quite frankly, so that we can have a sensible, mature discussion of the real priorities for regional policies. It is no good trying to hide the confusion by obfuscation and mixing up regional selective assistance and regional development grants so that we do not know where we are going because the Government do not know where they are going.

The figures show that the Government do not know how much money they are spending, in which regions and on what programmes they are spending it. That is a major problem. If we are to have a higher level of debate, they should give us the figures that are not given in the public expenditure White Paper or this month's enterprise White Paper.

How much are the Government spending on regional development grant next year? How much has already been committed of the money that the Government expect to spend over the next two, three, four or five years in regional development grant contracts that have already been signed? How much have the Government committed themselves to spend on regional selective assistance and how much money is still available for industrialists who have yet to come along and see the Government? That is the figure we want to know.

As we all know, RDG is paid after one has spent the money. The Government are committed to paying the money by the fact that the guidelines have been met. There may be people today who are spending regional development grant for five years from now. Therefore, what is the uncommitted money still left in the regional development budget, and will that money be cash-limited?

Regional development grant had the virtue of not being cash-limited. If there was an upturn in industrial investment in the regions, the Government met the bill because there was more incentive and more investment. Industrialists were confident in the fact that they could, as it were, break the bank if there was an investment boom.

The Minister said that he was worried about the fact that, with an industrial take-off, the regions no longer needed industrial development grants. However, we know that industrial investment is only now returning to the 1979 levels. Therefore, why is there a fear of having to pay incentives to encourage some of that greater flow of investment to go to the regions? The higher the level of investment, the greater the mobility of that investment because it will be hitting the sticking points and obstacles to investment in the south-east. In 1988-89 there may finally be a shift between the regions; from the south-east to the outlying regions, which are more dependent on manufacturing jobs.

There are some faults in the Government's White Paper, which lead to cynicism when industralists look at it to see what guidance it can give them. The same faults affect practitioners who work in regional industrial development, as I did for 20 years before coming to the House. They are looking for some idea of what it really means to the industrialist to have regional selective assistance on offer. We have had no clarification from the Minister on that. All we know is that the Government have tried to pretend that the same amount of money, or more money, will be available, without allowing for inflation in the cost of investment goods. That may be running quite high at the moment, because there is rampant inflation in the building industry, as we all know. That is one of the pinch points for industry. There is a shortage of bricklayers, carpenters, plasterers and so on.

If people are trying to discover how much money the Government intend to make available, they will want to know whether it will be taxed or untaxed. The same money spent on RDG and then switched to RSA actually means 35 per cent. less money because corporation tax will have to be paid on RSA. If, as in Wales, the Government intend to spend £100 million on RDG and switch that to RSA, one would need to be spending £150 million on RSA in order to give industry the same benefits. The Minister has made no reference to the difference in the tax treatment of RDG and RSA. That is the tactic of a cardsharp. In fact, it is a cardsharp's White Paper. It is impossible to work out how much money is left and how much money the Government are committed to spending as distinct from making an allocation that they do not worry about. RDG commitments can run on for five years, and that reduces the amount left. We want to know whether what is left will be cash-limited.

Fraud is a serious issue in regional development, and always has been. If the Government want to say to the House—I do not see why they should not—that RDG2 is difficult to administer and has been prone to fraud and to non-viable companies exploiting it and not producing the jobs, why do they not just say so? That scheme was devised by the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) who was Secretary of State for Trade and Industry at the time of the changes in November 1984. The Government should just say, "Our problem is that we cannot monitor the RDG2 scheme. It is difficult for us to handle, and we intend to scrap it altogether." If they said that, we could have a sensible discussion about whether we should change RDG2 in order to get rid of the fraudsters and those who take the money and run, instead of now having to scrap the scheme altogether.

There is another alternative on which I wish to press the Minister. Will he please investigate the possibility of making regional selective assistance tax-free? One attraction of regional development grant was that it was tax-free. Firms which receive regional selective assistance often use it to prettify their balance sheets. After all, a revenue support item that is taxable makes the industrialist look very clever when he presents his balance sheet. He seems to have made more profit out of no expenditure. But they could not do that with regional development grant because it was a capital support scheme.

I make three pleas to the Government: first, for a much better quality of public expenditure White Paper next year;

[Mr. Rhodri Morgan]

secondly, for complete frankness with the House when discussing how much money remains available to industrialists in the regions who want to develop; and, finally, a greater appreciation of the importance of regional aid in giving the regions the confidence that they have a future under this Government.

9.20 pm

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): This is one of a series of debates on regional policy, and I am still puzzled why the Conservative Government hate the regions. It is not as though they do not say the right things. They just seem to do things that undermine their protestations. In 1970, the first act of the Conservative Administration—it was Iain Macleod's one and only Budget—was to get rid of investment grants. That was a major blow which, within two years, cut the amount of new industry going to the regions by 50 per cent. So devastating was it that, two years later, the Government introduced the Industry Act 1972 which introduced regional development grants. My right hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) and I served on the Committee which discussed that Bill. It introduced regional development grants, which the Government intend to abolish with this Bill, because of the failure of the previous attempt to abolish capital investment grants.

Let us consider the cumulative effect. It is not as though this is a one-off attempt. There has been a series of attacks on regional policy, including the abolition of the industrial development certificate — I do not suppose that was much mourned—cuts in the boundaries of assisted areas and the abolition of special development areas, which had a great impact on the old industrial, coal mining and steel areas. Most important has been the sustained and varied attack on capital incentives, which is especially important when one remembers how critical manufacturing investment is to effective regional policy.

The Government have calculatedly destroyed incentives to investment. First, they cut regional development grants from 22 per cent. to 15 per cent. and now they wish to abolish them. Despite their claims of wishing to modernise the regions and make them efficient, they have abolished the regional development grants that were available for new machinery and equipment for existing plants.

The Government have destroyed capital allowances. In the 1970s, with capital allowances, regional development grant and regional selective assistance, Britain had the best package of incentives for investment of any European country. But since the Government came to power in 1979, we have lost £11,000 million-worth of manufacturing investment. That is how much lower investment has been under what the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster called the enterprise economy with which his Department wishes to be associated.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) said, manufacturing investment, which is at the heart of job creation, has not only been bled by £11,000 million but is still, after the so-called growth about which the Minister boasted, 10 per cent. below the level that the Government inherited. Because of that, we have invested less in the regions, and, because we have invested less in our industries, they are less competitive than our international overseas competitors — the OECD countries. We have been losing ground in terms of balance of trade in world markets.

I hope to show that, as a result of the Government's decisions, there has been a £2·5 billion deflation in the assisted areas. It is not even as if the Government's policies are any good for the south. They may not be good for the north, but they are no good for the south either. One of the great illusions is that there is a clash of interests between the south and the north. However, the south has as much interest as the rest of the country in seeing the full deployment of the resources available in the regions, not just because they bring extra productive capacity on stream but because the resources stop the congestion problems that all hon. Members understand take place in the south of England.

During the Minister's statement, the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant) asked whether the Minister could

"confirm that the effect of his new regional policy will be to stem the migration of people from the assisted areas into high growth areas such as Cambridgeshire, where the pressures have become intolerable?" — [*Official Report*, 12 January 1988; Vol. 125, c. 161.]

A similar point was made by a Conservative Member who I think represents a constituency in Berkshire, on Third Reading of the Co-operative Development Agency and Industrial Development Act 1984. That hon. Gentleman stressed the pressures on the south as a result of the inevitable movement from the north.

Let us consider the scale of that movement. Cambridge Econometrics predicts that by the turn of the century, the northern region will have lost 1 million people through outward migration. That represents 7 per cent. of its working population. Where will they go? Who will accommodate them? We should not think that that is just a problem for the future. In the past five years the north has lost 187,000 people. Scotland has seen an outflow of 190,000 and Wales an outflow of 169,000. In three years the gross outflow of population from those three regions was 550,000. Where have those people gone? Where are the pressures building up?

That outflow has occurred before this Bill is enacted and before a further weakening in the Government's regional policies. There is a problem for the regions implicit in the Bill. However, there is also an implicit problem for the south and the areas of affluence and prosperity.

I want to consider some of the Minister's arguments. We have heard the value-for-money argument. The right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) administered the grant system for somewhat longer than the present Minister. Indeed, my right hon. Friend the Member for Govan and I administered that system for some years. It is well known and incontrovertible that in efficiency terms the regional development grant is far cheaper to administer for the Government and for those firms in receipt of the grant. That is one reason why it is so popular with small firms and why 80 per cent. of the grants go to those small firms. The argument that the grant is not cost-effective is exploded by one of the few pieces of revelation in the White Paper.

The White Paper states that in 1985-86 regional selective assistance cost 46 per cent., or £378, more per job than regional development grant. In 1986-87, it cost £331

more per job than regional development grant. In 1986-87, it cost 28 per cent., or £432, more than regional development grant per job. The figures are even more astonishing if we consider Wales or Scotland.

Ministers claim to be hellbent in pursuit of administrative efficiency and value for money. In the Bill they are asking the House to give them the flexibility to give up the system of grants that provides jobs at £1,500 each, so that they can concentrate on their alternative, preferred system which costs £1,950 per job. These are the people who have the cheek to talk to the Health Service and local authorities about competitive tendering and value for money.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have seen such figures reported and they have been misinterpreted. If we compare the jobs provided with RDG and RSA offered, which is the correct comparison, unlike the one made by the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) this morning, we see that the cost per job of RDG is £3,701 and the cost per job of regional selective assistance is £2,760. These are 1987-88 estimated outturn figures. There appears to have been a mistake in the Labour party's research department when comparing the amount spent for grant paid in a year with the jobs created by the offers made in that year.

Mr. Williams: I invite the Minister to sit down with his little calculator and go through the tables in the White Paper. He will find that my figures are correct.

The Government say that we must get rid of regional development grant because it has no relationship to jobs. They get the money even if they do not create jobs. I thought, "That is interesting. Let's see what they have in mind," so I asked the Minister

"what checks will be made under his proposed new regional investment grant to ensure that firms achieve the promised number of jobs"?

On 19 January I received a fascinating reply from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, the hon. Member for South Ribble (Mr. Atkins). I see the right hon. and learned Gentleman smiling. The Under-Secretary of State replied:

"The creation of jobs will not be a condition of the new regional investment grant but the scheme is expected to have a beneficial effect on employment"—

here comes administrative prudence—

"and we shall be setting up arrangements to evaluate this on a sampling basis."—[*Official Report*, 19 January 1988, Vol. 125, c. 673.]

The Minister today described his bold new policy as a straight path to new jobs, except in so far as the new incentive scheme is concerned. How does he reconcile that with value for money? Indeed, I wonder how long the Minister will enjoy the privilege of a ministerial car?

In all these discussions, the Government have overlooked the important point made by the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks, particularly in respect of inward investment, about which Ministers protest. Predictability is a critical factor. I could not have put it more effectively than the former Secretary of State and Chief Secretary to the Treasury put it. Predictability is an important factor in determining whether the grant is even taken into account when finance directors and boards are considering their decisions. They must bear in mind that many inward investment projects are phased developments. They are not single projects. They come in intending to build up in the European market and expand, but, before taking any decisions, they consider what sort of incentives they can look to in phases two and three.

The loss of regional development grant robs us of that predictability, but the number of changes in regional policy means that there is no predictability, even about the continued existence of the regional selective grant. Under this Government, nothing about regional policy is predictable.

The Government say that we need indigenous development. Of course we do—no one disputes that fact—but we must bear in mind the limits of indigenous production or development. In a way, it traps us within the limits of the skills of old industries. Therefore, we need cross-fertilisation of inward investment, be it from the south or overseas. We need it to bring in high value-added industries and high-technology industries with their demands for new skills.

The Minister does not appreciate that in the long term, diversity and the industrial mix are as important as the creation of jobs. That is why capital grants are so important. Unless we have diversity, we may have all the north in low-paid jobs and all the south in high-paid jobs, and still have a regional divide. Conservative Members do not seem to want to understand that point. Indeed, they protest that they are committed to regional selective assistance. As I pointed out in an intervention, that protestation—that hand-on-heart commitment to value-for-money regional selective assistance—would perhaps be more credible if only I had not seen the depth of it during the past year.

The Government were giving regional selective assistance at the rate of £127 million less than the rate at which the Labour Government were giving it when they left office in 1979. In fact, in the intervening period, the regions have lost £685 million of the very incentive that the Government say they favour. They have actually cut by 37 per cent. the very incentive that they say is the most efficient. They say, "You must bear in mind that we are coming forward with a new set of proposals. We have a new investment grant scheme whereby jobs will not be the criteria."

Is it not absurd to try to convince us, and even more absurd to try to convince business men, that small firms are getting a good deal? They are told that, at present, they can get 15 per cent. of capital cost with an alternative of £3,000 a job and up to 200 jobs created. Under the Government's new, brilliant scheme, they will get 15 per cent on up to 24 jobs, and a maximum of £15,000. So lucky small business men will lose grants of £3,000 a job. Of course, they will happily say, "What a good Government we have. They have given us grants of £600 a job instead." What is more, because they are good little Conservatives, they will say, "How happy are we. We shall also help the Chancellor. Not only will we take less, but that less will be taxable. We shall also put some of it back into the Chancellor's pocket."

We have heard hon. Members speak about whether there will be more or less spending. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Govan said, the figures in the White Paper are clearly intended to mislead, or at least to obscure, rather than to reveal. I noticed the dubiety that was expressed by the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks, a former Chief Secretary to the Treasury, who referred to the Treasury's tricks of the

[Mr. Williams]

trade. He implied that he would not be taken in by the figures, even if the Minister thought that everyone should be. We shall examine the figures in future.

We have been over this ground before. The real reason has nothing to do with efficiency; it is all to do with cuts. In 1984, the present Chief Secretary stood at the Dispatch Box, looked us straight in the face — many hon. Members were present—and said, "Of course, this has nothing to do with cuts. Coincidentally, we shall spend £300 million less, but that has nothing to do with our motivation. It is just a coincidental consequence of what we are doing."

Last week, the Minister gave his reason for changing things. He said:

"we are now changing the nature of the grant because of the change in economic circumstances. Most notably, a huge increase in investment is going ahead in the regions, and unemployment is now falling faster there than in the rest of the United Kingdom."—[*Official Report*, 12 January 1988; Vol. 1433, c.149.]

Is the Minister seriously suggesting that, in redressing 200 years of industrial revolution, a one-year blip on the regional life-support system means that the regions are now all fit and well? What he is saying is that the patient is breathing and that we should turn the electricity off and save a bit on the bill. The idea that one year's growth makes the slightest difference to the positions of Wales, of the north, of the north-west and of Scotland vis-à-vis the south is beyond credibility. What is more, it is an insult to the Minister himself that he has the cheek to put it forward, because we all know that he is too intelligent to believe it.

The Minister's policy is not just foolhardy or shortsighted; it is dangerous. As in our cities we have seen the divide of poverty and affluence generate the politics of envy, desperation and violence, so to allow a continual widening gap of hope and expectation between those who live in the north and those who live in the south is potentially explosive. We cannot, and the Government should not, allow the prolonged widening between degrees of affluence on either a geographical or a social basis. One cannot allow it to be perpetrated on a geographical basis without producing a political and constitutional backlash. I warn the Government that today's economic divide could become tomorrow's constitutional rift.

9.41 pm

The Minister of State, Scottish Office (Mr. Ian Lang): The debate has roamed wide over the provisions of the Bill, and that is understandable and right because it is only one element of the new regional policy which, in its broader setting, is probably the most positive, most comprehensive, most imaginative and most relevant that we have had for quite some time.

But that would not be apparent to anyone listening to the speech that we have just heard from the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams). One would never have thought from his speech that in the past 18 months in Wales unemployment had fallen faster than anywhere else in the United Kingdom, down by almost 26,000 in 1987 alone. One would never have thought that the Welsh Development Agency was now well on course to let a record amount of factory floor space in this financial year or that one sixth of all foreign investment in the United Kingdom had chosen Wales as its location, and that Wales now employed more people in inward investment companies than it did in coal and steel. These are just some of the many encouraging facts about the present state of the Welsh economy that will come as something of a surprise to the right hon. Member for Swansea, West.

It has been a curious feature of this evening's debate that, despite the changes in the economic circumstances of the country, it has been conducted against a background of the refusal of Opposition Members to acknowledge by even the slightest word or expression that there has been the smallest change in the national economy in the past year or two. It is as if the past two years had never been and as if a fall in unemployment of 600,000 had never happened. Opposition Members are wrapped in some time warp by the imagery of their obsolete rhetoric.

Everything must be characterised as failure, decline or disaster, no matter what the reality is. Every change in Government policy, however sensible or whatever the background, is instantly characterised as, at best, vindictive and, at worst, mad; and the contrast is striking between the demons conjured up by Opposition Members and the examples of what is going on in the real world, of which evidence was given by my hon. Friends the Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) and the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) or my hon. Friend the Member for Corby (Mr. Powell), where unemployment has fallen from 25 per cent. to 12 per cent.

Ms. Armstrong: The Ministry has in other forums used Consett in my constituency as an example of the massive success of its policy. Does the Minister realise that employment in Consett in the past three years has grown by 0·4 per cent. — less than half of 1 per cent.? Unemployment has fallen but so has the number of people living there; and the Government's figures have been fiddled so that unemployment looks as though it has fallen by about 4 per cent. This is the real position.

Mr. Lang: That is all the more reason for the changes in regional policy. We are proposing to concentrate help in a way that will bring the most assistance to the hon. Lady's constituency and to others.

The debate would have been more constructive if Opposition Members had recognised that these changes are not being forced on us by a crisis, being imposed by the IMF or being turned to in order to fight off any failure. We are changing our regional assistance policies because we want to and because we think that the new arrangements are right for the economic circumstances. Above all, we are doing so against a background of growing economic success.

The Labour party seems unwilling or unable to comprehend that. Almost every speech from Opposition Members was permeated by the view that because we are changing grants we must be cutting them. They think that one can improve a policy only by making vast increases in the amount of money given.

Opposition Members completely overlooked the fact that inflation is below 4 per cent.; that last year manufacturing output increased by 6·5 per cent.; and that manufacturing investment increased by 6 per cent., with the largest increases being experienced in Scotland, Wales and the north. That has been achieved by controlling expenditure as a proportion of GDP, by cutting taxes and by cutting regulation and control. That has given us seven

years of sustained growth in manufacturing productivity. Since 1979 it has increased by a remarkable 40 per cent. Britain is at the top of the league table instead of at the bottom.

Mr. Henry McLeish (Fife, Central): As the Minister is outlining his success story, will he reflect on the figures between 1979 and 1986, which show that, in the regions that he is talking about, we lost 1,529,000 jobs, but that the south-east, East Anglia and the south-west lost only 9,000 jobs. Does that not show that there is a north-south divide?

Mr. Lang: No, it does not. Most of those jobs lost in the north were lost in the early years of the period that the hon. Gentleman quoted. Since 1983, employment growth in the midlands has been greater than in the south-east. We approach these changes reinforced by the fact that our policies have succeeded and are succeeding.

The hon. Member for Gordon, (Mr. Bruce), is the industry spokesman of the Liberal party, if you, Mr. Speaker, will pardon the expression. He said, with some justification, that we are changing the rules too often, which diminishes respect for them. I must tell the hon. Gentleman that so does changing one's policies. Over the Christmas period, I had to refer to an article in *The Scotsman* in which his policy for regional assistance was shown to be slashing business taxation only in Scotland and making Scotland a tax haven. I have no idea what his English colleagues think of that, still less the Liberal shadow Chancellor, but no wonder his party wants to put VAT on everything. No doubt, soon we shall be told that it will put VAT on Trident.

My hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw), who, like my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan), is a gamekeeper turned poacher, welcomed a large proportion of our proposals but questioned the underlying philosophy of our regional policies. He said that there was a need, not so much for encouragement as for implantation. That statement implies a measure of dirigisme that I would find difficult to support.

With regard to his queries about inward investment, in which he quoted the examples of Germany and France. France is already discretionary in its regional assistance and, like us, the Germans are abolishing automaticity.

I share my hon. Friend's view of the importance of attracting inward investment and revitalising the regions — *[Interruption.]* — bringing new attitudes and techniques——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask the House to give a fair hearing to the Minister. This has been a well-natured debate.

Mr. Lang: I do not believe that the changes that we are making, whereby regional selective assistance will still be available for inward investment projects, will diminish the number of companies coming here.

I shall deal with the issue of spending, as I know that Labour Members are obsessed with who can spend most of the taxpayers' money. One would never have thought from the speech of the right hon. Member for Swansea, West, that it has been announced that Wales will receive an increase of 39 per cent. next year from the Welsh Office in total assistance to industry. One would never have thought from the speech of the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) that Scottish industry's budget will be increased by more than £25 million next year or that the SDA's budget will be increased by 8 per cent. in real terms.

The Labour Opposition point to the years when they were in power and make the sterile claim that they spent more in regional policy than we are doing, but they overlook the fact that their policy did not actually work. Manufacturing jobs, certainly in Scotland and probably in other areas, were lost at a far faster rate in the late 1970s than they have been in the past few years. Now, by contrast, unemployment is falling in a way that it never did in those years.

What they do not point out is that what they were taking out of the regions at that time through capital taxes, to which my hon. Friends have referred, and corporation tax, far outweighed what they were putting back in. Their corporation tax rate was 52p in the pound, compared with our present rate of 35p. So, quite apart from having to cope with high inflation and industrial unrest in that period, companies all over the country were having more than half of their profits drained off by the Treasury in Whitehall to pay for Labour's follies.

There were follies such as nationalisation, which was another anti-regional policy. Millions of pounds were taken from the hard-pressed taxpayer so that the Labour Government in Whitehall could take over the commanding heights of the economy in the midlands, the north and Scotland. We have reversed that policy and liberated industries such as Jaguar and British Aerospace from the shackles of centralised control and they are now galvanising the regions and enriching both the regions and the nation.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden) *rose*——

Mr. Lang: No, I will not give way. The hon. Gentleman did not take part in the debate.

If that is one way of pumping blood back into the arteries of regions, another is through the reform of non-domestic rates. It is estimated that this proposal, so bitterly opposed by the Opposition, will pump around £700 million into the economies of the north and the midlands.

Mr. Blair: The Minister said a moment ago that the industry budget for Scotland was increasing, but it shows a drop in 1978-88 and no real increase over the next few years.

Mr. Lang: If the hon. Gentleman waits until the publication of the Scottish commentary next month, all will be revealed to him.

The Opposition are not even right when they say that we are cutting the cash for regional policy. That is not what this exercise is about. I have already shown the spending trends in Wales and Scotland. In England, the public expenditure White Paper shows that spending is now expected to be up by £200 million over the next three years. However, cash levels are not the point. The point about the proposed changes to policy concerns value for money, not volume. It is not a cost-cutting exercise, but a cost-effective one.

Mr. Brittan: I am interested in what my hon. Friend has said. Does that mean that regional selective assistance for England will not be cash-limited under the new proposals?

Mr. Lang: Regional selective assistance is not cash-limited.

As to value for money, this is a cost-effective exercise and that is why I believe that we are right to move away from a situation where grants are given automatically, regardless of need, to giving grants on a more selective basis. The automaticity remained in our post-1984 changes, and now that our economy has continued to recover and grow, so that many companies have less need of taxpayers' funds to enable their projects to proceed, we should concentrate our resources more intensively where they can do most good, and that means putting them into projects in the assisted areas, which will benefit the economy, but would not go ahead without that help.

Whatever the Opposition may think of such an attitude, it is clearly one which endears itself to the business community——

Mr. Morgan *rose*——

Mr. Lofthouse *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Only the Minister or, if he gives way, one Member should be on his feet at a time.

Mr. Lang: Indeed, the Scottish Council for the Development of Industry, a body not normally regarded as friendly to the Conservative party, has said that it welcomes the recognition that it is more important to make incentives available selectively rather than automatically. The change in tone in favour of enterprise rather than narrowly defined industrial development is also welcomed.

One of the features of the recovery of the economy has been the unity of purpose and understanding that exists between the Government and industry. It is as pleased as we are that investment is rising so fast, because productive investment is the secret of success. Industry is as pleased as we are that the leverage achieved for Government funds invested is now reaching such remarkable levels. For example, every £1 invested in industry by the Scottish Development Agency is now triggering £13 of private investment. In Wales last year £104 million of Government investment triggered £760 million in private investment.

That is the way to get value for money for the taxpayer as well as increasing investment in the regions.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: The Minister is aware that his reply was wholly unsatisfactory. I am not concerned that he is not replying to Opposition Members' questions, but he should at least address points made by Conservative Members. They are not happy with his reply, and he is not acknowledging the criticisms even of former Cabinet Ministers.

Mr. Lang: Clearly, the hon. Gentleman was not listening to my replies—

Sir Giles Shaw *rose*——

Hon. Members: Give way.

Sir Giles Shaw: If the Minister will permit a dirigiste gamekeeper, may I ask him the question again? Can we please have a straight answer to the question? Will grants under the regional selective assistance scheme not be cash-limited in future?

Mr. Lang: I can only tell my hon. Friend the policy as it exists at the moment. He has seen the proposals and the figures in the White Paper. Demand for selective assistance cannot be anticipated. It will be essentially demand-driven and it is our purpose to ensure that sufficient proposals come forward.

There is now a new slogan in the Labour party, we are told. That slogan is "Labour Listens". It is a pity that it did not listen a bit earlier; it might have avoided some of the damage tht it inflicted on Britain's regions in the 1960s and 1970s. The hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) said that there had been 40 years of consensus on regional assistance. There was no consensus on selective employment tax—the particularly destructive instrument introduced by the Labour Government in the 1960s. That was Labour's idea of selectivity—not selective help but selective handicaps.

We are selective in distributing assistance to industry, but Labour was selective in the industries that it chose to clobber. Because Opposition Members had some primeval instinct that the only job worth having was bashing a bit of metal and developing industrial deafness, they decided to tax jobs in the service industries. They chose to attack the one part of the economy that had the best growth prospects and thus destroyed thousands of jobs.

In the 1970s Labour did a bit more listening and realised that it was not fair to attack only one section of the industrial community, so they brought in the national insurance surcharge and clobbered all industries, destroying thousands more jobs — especially labour-intensive jobs in the regions. As an added refinement, they thought, "How can we concentrate these remarkably beneficial policies on the regions?" So they listened a bit more and came up with the answer—scrap the regional employment premium, overnight with no warning. That meant 40 per cent. off all regional spending in Scotland and similar amounts in other parts of Britain as well as the loss of thousands more jobs. That shows the consistency of Opposition Members when in government and demonstrates their affection for the regions. For good measure, Labour slashed the roads programme by 20 per cent. to leave the regions more remote from their markets.

Labour listened all right; Labour Members listen with their mouths and talk through their hats. If I can persuade them to listen I would like to offer them some advice. They should drop their policies of high tax, high spend and high borrow, because they would destroy jobs. They should drop their policy to scrap nuclear electricity because that would increase electricity prices and destroy manufacturing jobs in the regions. They should drop their plans for a tax-raising assembly in Scotland because that would destroy jobs in Scotland.

The Opposition cannot bear the fact that we are introducing these proposals against a background of growing success. They are so attuned to failure — because in government they experienced nothing else — that they cannot even recognise success. They do not like our enterprise initiative because they do not understand enterprise and they do not trust initiative. Conservative Members recognise that to support a regional policy we first need a successful national economic policy. That we have achieved and will sustain — by bringing down inflation, controlling public expenditure and reducing the public sector borrowing requirement and by introducing better training, better industrial relations and now a better, more relevant, regional assistance policy.

The provisions in the Bill, together with the other changes that we have announced in our policies, will reinforce that success and carry it forward on a broad front to all the country. I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The House divided: Ayes 282, Noes 212.

[Division No. 152] [10 pm

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bigge-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'Y'a)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cartiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Timothy
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knowles, Michael
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Marland, Paul
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Hon Sir Charles
Morrison, Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Roesl, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Alan Howarth and
Mr. David Maclean.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Ms Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*

Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, J.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alastair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Galbraith, Samuel
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gordon, Ms Mildred
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Douglas
Hinchliffe, David
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, James
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kilfedder, James
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lambie, David
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Leslor, Miss Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Tom
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, John
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Speller, Tony
Steinberg, Gerald
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thomas, Dafydd Elis
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Walley, Ms Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A. J.
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Anthony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mrs. Llin Golding and
Mr. Frank Cook.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

London Regional Transport

10.14 pm

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Paul Channon): I beg to move,

That the draft London Regional Transport (Levy) Order 1988, which was laid before this House on 11th January, be approved.

Any discussion of London Regional Transport's policy and performance is inevitably overshadowed at present by the terrible fire at King's Cross on 18 November, in which 31 people lost their lives. At the outset of the debate, I repeat the sympathy which I know is felt by the whole House and which I expressed immediately following the fire. I know that the House will join me in again expressing sympathy for the continued pain suffered by the injured and bereaved. I am equally sure that the whole House shares the Government's determination that all possible steps should be taken to find the cause of the fire and to ensure that any lessons that can be learnt are acted upon swiftly and effectively. I know that the chairman and boards of LRT and London Underground also share that determination.

It is not the purpose of this debate to speculate on the cause of the fire; nor would it be right for us to attempt to do so. That is a matter for the formal investigation led by Mr. Desmond Fennell, QC. Public hearings will begin again next Monday, 1 February. Mr. Fennell and his team, with the advice of experts, will consider in depth all the available evidence. I shall study the conclusions reached carefully, and report to the House as quickly as possible.

LRT's performance and plans are set out in its annual business plan, published earlier this month. Sound progress has been made. LRT has improved efficiency and reduced the revenue deficit. That has allowed record levels of investment to be funded, while the burden on taxpayers and ratepayers has been reduced. This year, productivity improvements of 5 per cent. are forecast. Passenger levels are also about 5 per cent. up, and the revenue deficit is expected to be approximately halved to £45 million compared with 1986-87. At the same time—this is an important point—investment is being increased to £294 million—a real increase of over 14 per cent. over last year. This has been secured as a result of strong growth in demand and improvements in efficiency, and will, I think, be recognised as an impressive achievement.

The progress made in turning round the business since LRT was formed will continue in 1988-89. For the first time since the early 1970s, LRT as a whole expects to be able to cover its operating costs from revenues, and thus will not require revenue support from the Government. London Buses will continue to need revenue support of £92 million, but will receive it from the revenue surpluses earned by London Underground rather than from the Government grant. Taking LRT as a whole, the annual business plan envisages a revenue surplus of £9 million, but I would emphasise that that will be a surplus before depreciation and revewals provisions. Both London Buses and the underground will continue to require and receive substantial support to cover their trading losses after depreciation and renewals. That, in addition to grants, will continue to fund new investment.

The year, 1988-89, will see a continuation of the policy of supporting the high levels of investment which are required to modernise and expand the capacity of the network. The Government grant of £190 million will, together with internal resources and external contributions, enable LRT to invest a record £365 million —£1 million a day. That is nearly 60 per cent. more in real terms than in 1984-85.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): How much of that investment is already committed to safety and security, which are of greatest immediate public concern?

Mr. Channon: Considerable sums of money are involved in safety. I shall try to answer the hon. Gentleman's question in more detail in my winding-up speech. As Sir Keith Bright has made clear, safety is paramount in all that London Underground does. It is an important matter that the House will wish to debate in detail, but we shall be better informed after the inquiry into the disastrous fire at King's Cross.

Mr. Sydney Bidwell (Ealing, Southall): Will that mean that in future hard-pressed commuters in London will be able to ride in trains that are less overcrowded than they have been for many years?

Mr. Channon: That will happen as our investment programme takes effect. It is one of the purposes of the investment programme. I shall give the House some of the details of investment for the next few years. An important and very welcome development is the degree of external funding for extensions to the Docklands light railway. Three quarters of the investment planned in 1988-89 will be funded by the developers of Canary wharf, or out of the proceeds from higher land values resulting from the construction of the railway. That is a fine example of public and private sector bodies working hand in hand to regenerate an inner-city area.

As usual, the underground will account for the lion's share of LRT's investment expenditure in 1988-89. As well as providing for essential renewal of the infrastructure—signalling, track, lifts and escalators — much of the investment will yield benefits in more modern and attractive conditions for passengers, and more reliable equipment. As far as London Buses is concerned, the investment emphasis is on management systems to increase efficiency and reduce costs further. Trials of electronic ticketing systems — designed to improve boarding times for one-person operated buses—are also in progress.

As far as bus services are concerned, I expect the impetus for improved performance in the immediate future to come from a greater use of tendering. LRT will continue to push forward its programme of seeking competitive tenders for bus services. During 1988-89, it expects to increase the proportion operated under contract by 50 per cent. to about 27 per cent. of its total mileage. That should mean better value for money. LRT is realising significant net savings on routes already operated under contract with additional passengers attracted to the more reliable and generally improved services.

In the slightly longer term, we intend to see Londoners enjoying the benefits of deregulation as soon as practicable. In preparation for that, I have asked LRT to bring forward early proposals for the restructuring of London Buses Ltd. into smaller units which will be able to operate commercially in a competitive environment.

As far as the underground is concerned, the major longer-term challenge after the lessons of King's Cross

[Mr. Channon]

have been learnt is dealing with the continuing growth in demand. Some £75 million of investment has already been authorised for measures to relieve overcrowding. Those include the purchase of 16 new trains and improvements to ease bottlenecks at Angel, Tower Hill and Farringdon stations.

Further proposals are expected, and the identification and evaluation of longer-term options for increasing the capacity of the system is in hand. Within the next few months I expect LRT to bring forward proposals for a comprehensive re-equipment programme for the Central line, the cost of which will approach £500 million. A new generation of high-performance rolling stock is planned. Together with a completely new signalling system, that should result in a faster, more reliable service in the 1990s. It is likely to be followed by a similar re-equipment programme for the Northern line.

Finally, I turn to the order itself.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): While we welcome the Docklands light railway, is it not almost a tragic waste of time that that railway system is incompatible in operational terms with the rest of London Regional Transport and with British Rail? Will the Minister include in any future proposals the necessity of building compatible railway systems in the Greater London area?

Mr. Channon: I shall certainly examine what my hon. Friend has said. The point is not an academic one. As I have said, many imaginative proposals are coming along, some of which are from the Docklands light railway, some from London Underground and others from British Rail. Therefore, I hope that there will be all sorts of exciting new investments to improve public transport by rail in London.

I shall now move on because I know that many hon. Members wish to speak. I shall try to answer all their questions at the end of the debate, if the House will allow me.

The proposed levy will pass on to London's ratepayers the benefits of LRT's improved performance. The figures tell their own story. They reflect the way in which the business has been turned round over the past few years. A levy of 6·07p in the pound is proposed. That is 1·7p, or over 20 per cent., less than last year and 4·73p, or over 40 per cent., less than in 1985-86, the first year of the levy. That means that in real terms the burden on London's ratepayers will have been nearly halved over just three years.

I commend the draft order to the House.

10.25 pm

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): It is somewhat amazing to hear the Secretary of State talking about the sound progress of London Regional Transport and passenger levels being up by 5 per cent. Everybody who is a regular user of the underground system knows that it has come in for considerable criticism, not just from my hon. Friends but from Government supporters and even from that sound advocate of Conservative policy, the *Evening Standard*. On 30 November, only a few days before the King's Cross disaster, the *Evening Standard* had a headline on its lead story, which read:

"Find out why the Tube is So Bad."

It talked about an independent inquiry that had been ordered by Lord Young because conditions on the underground were so bad. He said:

"Up to a dozen stations a day are often without a lift and escalator services since the decision was taken to put maintenance and installation out to private tender."

I am concerned about the Secretary of State losing his job, not because of the interest of Lord Young but because of the inability of LRT to deliver any of the goods that we have been promised.

My hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) asked Sir Keith Bright, the chairman and chief executive of LRT, why services on the Northern line were so bad. Sir Keith Bright rightly said that over the past two years or so up to November of last year, the number of passengers using the underground had increased dramatically. That increase was due not to any improvement in the operation of the underground system but simply because those passengers were forced on to the underground by the lousy road conditions in London and because Government decisions had not solved the road problems and, at the same time, had not done anything to solve the problems of the tube.

Sir Keith Bright went on to say:

"The sequence of events which actually occurred during the critical months of September and October now indicates that too much risk was accepted in the interest of economy and I believe we have all learned a lesson for the future."

I hope that that is right. The reality is that the Government, who have systematically under-invested in London's transport system, have had a willing ally in the penny-pinching, cost-cutting exercises of the management of LRT.

Mr. Sydney Chapman (Chipping Barnet): Surely the hon. Gentleman must know, even if he is not a London Member, that yesteryear the increasing subsidies went to cover operating losses. At long last we have a system whereby the revenues are now paying for much-needed capital investment.

Mr. Lloyd: The whole concept of funding capital spending directly from revenue is something that most people would recognise as nonsense. It is normal to allow revenue to cover the cost of capital in the long run, but not to fund capital from revenue. Conservative Members may laugh, but that simply indicates a lack of understanding of normal economics and accounting principles.

Even during the four years when I have been travelling regularly in London, I have seen a massive deterioration in the standards of travel on the tube. The Minister talked about reducing the number of passengers per tube as though it was a great achievement, yet, during the past five years, the number of people travelling in each carriage has increased dramatically. The response of LRT has been not to put on more trains, but to suggest removing seats from trains to make more room for standing passengers. There is no concept of comfortable travel. Instead, we shall have strap-hangers and the Japanese system of shoving people in using sticks. Indeed, LRT should import a few Japanese pushers to make sure that they can get more people into our underground trains.

The Secretary of State talked about the 16 trains that LRT is about to purchase. That purchase was planned by the Greater London council when it was in charge of London Transport, which was some years ago. The GLC planned to buy the trains because it recognised the need to reinvest in the rolling stock. But that reinvestment did

not take place in the years following abolition of the GLC, and it is now paraded by the Secretary of State as a great triumph that is about to take place. Those 16 trains will increase the amount of train mileage by 11 per cent. at a time when the number of passengers has increased by 50 per cent. That is why the system is falling apart and decaying.

The reality with LRT is that, where there has been investment, it has been under-investment, and the attitude of management has been cost-consciousness and cost-saving, at the expense of the interests of passengers. The travelling public in London are not, in the final analysis, worried about the cost of the service through the rates. Of course, it is a consideration, but it is considered alongside the wish for a tube to turn up to take them where they want to go. That is equally important to them, but it is not happening on the underground today. It is also important for the public to feel safe on the underground. King's Cross has been a great stimulus to the thought that people are no longer safe on the underground. For all those reasons, the travelling public believe that they are getting a bad deal from LRT.

There has been some investment in the transport system, especially in bus garages. The garage at Plumstead was improved at a cost of about £6 million, but some time later LRT tried to close the garage which, as a result of the tendering process, became surplus to requirements. That is the sort of inane and irrelevant investment that LRT has made, which is completely irrelevant to the needs of the travelling public and a sound economy. It is relevant only to an organisation which sees cost-cutting as the only way forward.

We have seen how that cost-cutting affects all aspects of travel, especially safety. I refer at this stage not directly to King's Cross, but to a report which appeared in the *Evening Standard* two days after the King's Cross disaster. It stated:

"London Underground chiefs were today planning a dramatic about face on their decision to delay vital safety improvements at 10 major stations."

This could lead to a restart of the

"£9 million programme to fit false ceilings with emergency fire-breaks on all Victoria and Jubilee tunnels and escalator halls."

The LRT spokesman said:

"The programme to install these fire-breaks is one of the action points arising from the Oxford Street station fire inquiry in 1986."

That did not go ahead until the King's Cross disaster forced London Regional Transport to reassess its objectives.

The article went on:

"King's Cross was one of the 25 stations targeted for emergency fire-breaks."

But that was not done at King's Cross or at several other stations. It is ridiculous that in 1987-88 a cost-cutting exercise which saved £3 million prevented those safety programmes from going ahead.

Great play has been made of the fact that London Regional Transport can now fund its capital programme from revenue. We know why LRT can fund its capital programme in that way. A monopoly market is driven off the roads on to the public transport system because of the appalling state of London's roads and the travelling public is forced to use those systems and forced to accept fare increases imposed by LRT this year of more than 9 per cent. on average.

In some areas, and especially in the inner-city areas where fare increases have been higher than average for several years, 9 per cent. is no small increase. However, the travelling public will accept those fare increases because they have no choice. Yet the increases run directly counter to the objectives set for LRT as long ago as 1985. It was then stated that LRT's fare increases would be pegged no higher than the level of inflation.

On 15 December my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) asked the Minister "whether the objectives for London Regional Transport laid down by the Secretary of State . . . are still in force." The reply was:

"The 1984 objectives cover the financial years 1985-86 to 1987-88. They have not been superseded or supplemented and are still in force."—[*Official Report*, 15 December 1987; Vol. 124, c. *430*.]

If they are still in force, the Secretary of State should explain why the objective that fare increases should be at a level no greater than inflation has been overridden in the interests of fiscal convenience for LRT and of saving the Government a few bob in their contributions to LRT.

The reality is that the sloppiness and penny-pinching financial consciousness of LRT's management has had a devastating effect on the quality of transport. However, the Government's decision to underfund LRT has meant that London has a transport system that bears no comparison with Paris, the nearest comparable capital city. The Secretary of State made great play of the number of people travelling on the underground. Some 2·5 million people a day are carried on the London system. In Paris, 5·5 million people are carried on a modern, clean, efficient system that is liked by the travelling public.

If London had such a system, if the Government were prepared to invest the money to provide such a system, and if the management of LRT was prepared to operate such a system, it would be possible to see a first-class public transportation system in London and we could also get the cars off the road. The Government are prepared to spend £50 million a mile on motorway systems. We should save that money and begin to accept that London needs public transport. That is the way to solve London's transport problems.

10.37 pm

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): I am grateful for the opportunity to intervene briefly in the debate, and I hope that I am not preventing any of my London colleagues from speaking.

I was slightly surprised to hear the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) complain that the Government's policies were forcing people off the roads and on to public transport. I thought that that had been Labour party policy for years. One of the problems of this type of debate is that the Opposition believe that they must oppose everything that the Government are doing. I constantly try to be dispassionate about these affairs, although not always to the pleasure of my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Government Front Bench. I can hear the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) making strange gurgling noises. If he believes that I fail in that task, I am sure that he will gladly tell me so, and I should be pleased to give way to him. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for staying firmly in his place.

Political dogma and public transport are and always have been uneasy bedfellows. Therefore, I welcome wholeheartedly the fact that there has been an increase in the number of passengers on London's buses and underground. I can tell my ministerial colleagues that their policy of nationalising London Regional Transport has been a considerable success. They may not put matters like that, but that is what has happened. LRT was nationalised, the Government are happily taking the credit for the results of that policy, and I do not want to detract from that.

The fact that London has escaped the full rigours of bus deregulation that has taken place in other parts of the country may give us a chance to look a little dispassionately at what we intend to do in London with the buses before we subject them to the same treatment. There have been distinct advantages in some aspects of bus deregulation. Frankly, there have been some problems, too. I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends will look at what has happened. My hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport is glaring at me. I dare not criticise any aspects of bus deregulation.

My agent, who lives in a village called Burton in my constituency, and I are trying but failing to obtain assurances from private bus companies operating in that part of Dorset that they are not paying bonuses to drivers to beat each other to bus stops to pick up passengers. Serious road safety consequences could arise in that village. That is one possible by-product of deregulation which needs to be examined.

The other day, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State kindly saw my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler), my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General and me to discuss the effect of coach deregulation in London, which has been disastrous. Not only do the railways face grotesque unfair competition from vehicles that pay none of the fixed costs that the railways must pay, but the use of unsuitable roads by coaches, which were previously controlled by the traffic commissioners, has provided a situation that the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis has described as intolerable. I regret that the Conservative party's transport policy has given the Metropolitan police so much extra work to do.

Mr. Banks (Newham, North-West): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Adley: I am being brief. The hon. Gentleman can make his own speech.

Mr. Banks: Go on.

Mr. Adley: Very well; I shall give way.

Mr. Banks: I shall not make a speech. What was the Minister's response to the delegation? The hon. Gentleman appears to me to be the lone voice of sanity in Conservative transport policy.

Mr. Adley: That was one of the most unkind and unhelpful things that has ever been said to me. It will take me years to live it down. My right hon. Friend was totally sympathetic. He allowed us to put points with which he was not entirely familiar. He gave instructions that satisfy me that the problem will be studied in depth. If a satisfactory solution cannot be arrived at by negotiation between the coach industry and the local authorities concerned, further legislative action may be contemplated.

The side effects of deregulation cannot always be envisaged when various pieces of legislation are passed. I refer to the use of unsuitable roads and the illegal parking of commuter coaches on double yellow lines in London. Also, commuter coaches are left with their engines running for hours on end to generate air conditioning in the summer and heating in the winter for passengers on coaches that are in competition with British Rail. These coaches are heavily subsidised by the taxpayer. As Sir Robert Reid said to me the other day——

Mr. John Wheeler (Westminster, North): Who is he?

Mr. Adley: He is the chairman of British Rail.

He said that if he were to park his trains where coach operators park their coaches, there would instantly be an outcry. Of course he is right.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Adley: I shall not give way in case I am praised again by the Opposition. I am not quite sure why the hon. Gentleman is waving his arms about. I am not a bookmaker. I cannot understand what he is saying. Very well, I shall give way.

Mr. Rogers: The hon. Gentleman mentioned that problems were not foreseeable. In Committee, my hon. Friend the Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) pointed to such problems time and again. They could easily have been foreseen, but they were ignored and neglected by the Government.

Mr. Adley: The persuasiveness of the hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) caused me not to vote for the Bill at its Third Reading. Therefore, I am entitled to make my comments now.

We thus have several undesirable consequences of deregulation: the use of unsuitable roads; illegal parking; engines left running, causing considerable pollution to many of London's citizens; and, of course, the problem of speeding.

As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State fairly claims, while London's ratepayers are being saved a lot of money by the tremendous improvements made in the management of London Transport, many of the inner London boroughs are now having to spend money on kerb

extensions and the construction of rows and rows of bollards to keep coaches out of particular roads — coaches which are there as a direct result of deregulation.

My right hon. Friend has done some good things. Some of them have had unfortunate side effects. The replacement of the bad, ineffective, GLC-driven management of London Transport has been wholly welcome; and perhaps the continuing debate about the relationship between central Government, local government and public transport could benefit from what happened in the same debate about our railways in the 1950s and 1960s.

Therefore, I plead with my right hon. and hon. Friends and with Opposition Members not to let political dogma become our chief motivation in these debates on public transport.

10.46 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): The House is grateful to the hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) for being able to say, somewhat more influentially than some of us, some salient things about coach deregulation. I remember that my former hon. Friend the Member for the Isle of Wight, Mr. Ross, made very similar noises when that Bill passed through the House.

As an hon. Member representing a London constituency living less than three miles away and coming over Westminster bridge every day, I ask the Secretary of State and the Minister of State to take serious note of the points made. Coach congestion is a major safety and amenity problem; it is totally unsatisfactory and needs serious attention.

Inevitably, a debate on an order of this kind has two elements: normally a short debate on the order and a longer debate on London Regional Transport. On the order itself, it is a foolish politician who resists a reduction in the amount of rates that his ratepayer constituents will pay, and the sharing out of the burden of paying for London transport between the grant paid by the taxpayer and the contribution paid by the fare payer is obviously a refined formula. In general terms, I do not think that any great exception can be taken to the idea that the balance be altered, although the fare payer has paid considerably more than inflation has caused prices to rise. There are some disadvantages in that—and substantial increases at any one time often discourage regular use of public transport.

I would like to put specific points to the Secretary of State about the various operations of public transport in London, starting with buses. There is still great dissatisfaction with one-person operated buses. They are slower. The most regular route from near my front door to near the front door of the House, the 53, has just gone on to one-person operation. There is the new ticketing mechanism. It is slower and results in general discontent; and at night, although I cannot remember whether the pattern has been consistent, and assaults may have gone down some of the time, for many passengers it is much more perturbing that there is only one person in charge and that person is closed in.

One-person operation is also less safe when it comes to boarding and disembarking. An elderly passenger was killed recently when her foot was trapped in the door and she was dragged along the road. That sort of accident, to say nothing of other safety risks, is one of the consequences of literally one person being in charge of a bus. There is no one there to help people—people with shopping, people with young children, elderly people.

So the public are still very resistant to the idea of one-person operation, in addition to the obvious consequence that it has for the staff of London Regional Transport. I am not one of those who argue that jobs should be created for the sake of it, but creating jobs for safety, to make sure that a system is safe, is surely acceptable and appropriate. The rush towards one-person operation goes against the will of the majority of people and delays buses; there is no doubt that services are slower.

Waiting times have increased. The graph in LRT's annual report makes it clear that, although the increase is not substantial, whereas waiting times for all buses stayed the same or decreased between 1982 and 1984-85, for high and low frequency services and the underground, waiting times have increased. Not only have they increased, the average waiting time for buses was nearly seven and a half minutes for high frequency services. Over the whole day there was a 27·1 per cent. chance of waiting more than 10 minutes. The wait is increased as a result of one-person operated buses.

Regularly, people have to wait not 10 or 20 minutes but half an hour, three quarters of an hour, or hours. I wrote to the chairman of LRT on this matter because it is unacceptable that when one is waiting for the last bus it never arrives. That has happened on more than one occasion when I have been waiting outside this building.

With regard to competitive tendering, Kentish Bus runs some routes—the No. 42 is an example. Someone who frequently works on my team regularly tries to use that route but reports that that bus is up to an hour late two or three times a week. The regularity and reliability of the service is crucial in any city, particularly a capital city. The service is not being maintained at a high standard.

I ask the Secretary of State to show more urgency and less complacency about this matter and to pass that complaint on to LRT. It still does not understand that it is fundamentally important to some people that the bus arrives and that there are enough buses. It does not help the productivity of the capital city if that does not happen.

There are the same problems with regard to the staffing of the underground. There are complaints that there is more graffiti, that violence is increasing and that there is more rubbish. We await the inquiry into the King's Cross tragedy, but, as the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) said immediately after the disaster, clearly the lack of attention given to cleanliness — the passenger committee is concerned about this matter and it mentions it in its report—is because staffing has been reduced.

Increasingly, people are sleeping in tube stations. They have nowhere else to go; the Government's housing policy is not very helpful in that regard. Inevitably, on occasion such people represent a fire risk.

There must be proper and adequate staffing. The number of underground staff has reduced from 21,598 to 20,612 and the number of bus staff has reduced from 24,665 to 22,389 in a way that is a risk to safety, cleanliness and good management.

We must spend more, particularly on the underground, and I would be grateful if the Secretary of State would deal with my question about the Government's commitment to safety and security budgeting in the investment programme.

[Mr. Simon Hughes]

I should like to make one general point for the Secretary of State to consider. The Travelcard system is clearly right. The more that we can integrate British Rail, the underground and the buses the better. It is still impossible to obtain a Travelcard to travel across more than one zone. In the central zone one cannot obtain only a bus or tube card. An unfair financial burden is therefore placed on some people.

Every year I make the ritual plea of south London Members of Parliament for the area to receive some additional benefit from public transport. It receives substantially less than the region north of the river. The white hole still exists—look at any London Transport map. There is still no east-west connection between the northern line and the arm of the metropolitan line.

There are arguments about the sort of railway that the docklands light railway should have been north of the river, but the south does not have a docklands light railway or anything like it. The previous Minister of State said that she recognised the problem and that she would do something about it. Since I have been in the House, nothing has happened to improve the matter and fill that gap.

Secondly, I ask that we look at the security of the underground network, particularly in relation to women's security, and at accessibility for the disabled. Too often, that is still inadequate, and a means by which people could travel around the capital city is not used. For example, lifts are regularly out of order, where there are lifts, and one cannot get access.

Lastly, although £5 million is to be given to Dial-a-Ride this year, there is concern that that might be reduced. It would be helpful—and London Members have regular correspondence about this with the Under-Secretary, the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) — if the Secretary of State could assure those who rely for their mobility on Dial-a-Ride that the Government are committed to retain at least the real value of their commitment, and that they would plan to increase it substantially. Those most disadvantaged in transport mobility terms need public transport services most. Dial-a-Ride is a good example and it needs that commitment from the Secretary of State.

10.56 pm.

Mr. Hugo Summerson (Walthamstow): I welcome this opportunity to say something about what my constituents feel about the services given by London Regional Transport. I have lived in London for nearly 12 years now, and during that time, I have got about by bicycle, bus or tube, so I see a great deal of public transport in London. This evening, for instance, I went out to my constituency on the Victoria line, and I am sorry to say that that journey was like most journeys made on the tube nowadays. The trains are unpunctual. They are filthy outside and revolting inside. They do not come when it is announced that they will come. Often, the signboard says that the train will go right through to Walthamstow, but it does not. It stops at King's Cross, and everyone gets kicked off. If one is a bit luckier, it will go on to Seven Sisters and everyone is kicked out.

This evening my train stopped at Seven Sisters. Admittedly, the board said that it would, so that is fair enough. I walked through to the other platform and I waited—and waited. I waited with lots of other people and during that time four other trains came up the Victoria line, all of which stopped at Seven Sisters, and more and more passengers were waiting on the platform for a train to take us to Walthamstow. We had to wait for about 15 minutes, and the people waiting with me were not very happy, and I do not blame them.

Another station that I use regularly is the Angel, which must be one of the most filthy and disgusting stations in the entire system. It is a truly horrible station, but I have to use it from time to time. Two new lifts were recently put in, but the chances are that they are out of order and one has to walk down the emergency steps. There are hundreds of them and as one gets nearer the bottom, they get smellier and smellier and even more revolting.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I agree thoroughly with the hon. Gentleman's description of the Angel station and the lifts there. Is he aware that LRT is trying to privatise the lift maintenance service, and dismiss the lift repair teams that have done the work so successfully and for so long, and that one of the major causes of delays in repairs is privatisation?

Mr. Summerson: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will know that the Angel is due to be entirely rebuilt, which I hope will take care of the problem there. I will come on to privatisation. At the moment I am setting out what I feel is wrong with the system.

It is not only the underground — it is the buses as well. Many's the time that I have had to stand out in the pouring rain in one of those apologies for a bus shelter. The wind whips up the street and one's trouser legs and shoes become soaked. As an hon. Member, one is supposed to turn up at one's appointment looking quite smart. However, when one eventually arrives, the creases in one's trousers have disappeared. One's trousers appear all baggy around the knees and ankles and that terrible white bloom has appeared on one's shoes. One does not look at all like a Member of Parliament.

I am happy to see the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) in his place. When he and I were serving on a Standing Committee, he arrived late. I do not know whether that is endemic among Labour Members, but the hon. Gentleman told me that he had been delayed on the tube. That should not happen. Despite what Opposition Members say, the tubes and buses have been funded by the Government and the ratepayer to an enormous extent; LRT gets enormous amounts of money. I am concerned to know what LRT does with that money.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) talked about staff shortages. Those of us who use the underground frequently know perfectly well that, before one can go on the escalator — if the escalator is not broken—one has to pass through a sort of pinch point where a man is sitting in a cubicle. Now, what is he doing?

Mr. Adley: Knitting.

Mr. Summerson: Yes, he may well be knitting. He is reading his paper, or doing the pools or doing his knitting. He is not in the least bit interested in the ticket that one dutifully shows him. One may have to drop all one's luggage to get the ticket out of one's wallet, and I can never find it when I want it. Eventually one gets the ticket out

and shows it to the man and he does not even look up. Why cannot he be sent to work sweeping the carriages or scrubbing off graffiti?

The answer does not lie in trying to keep the public transport system going as a public transport system. [HON. MEMBERS: "Ah."] Now we get to it. The London underground system should be coining money. It is a monopoly. It carries millions of passengers and it is carrying more and more. It ought to be able to provide a decent, regular, clean, tidy and safe service for the people of the capital. The only way forward is to sell off the lines to private enterprise. They could be sold off individually——

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): Does the hon. Gentleman think that if LRT were sold off and privatised it would become as warm, caring and efficient as British Telecom?

Mr. Summerson: It will be a great deal better than British Telecom. One needs to consider the separate functions of the two companies. The function of LRT is to provide transport for the people of London, and the best way to do that is to ensure that private enterprise takes over and runs LRT. In particular, we need to sell off London Underground, which will mean a decent service both for the people of London and for visitors.

11.4 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Clearly the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson) did not realise that his right hon. Friend the Minister had told the House that London Underground already makes a £92 million a year surplus. The reason why the Government are pressing on lack of staff and not doing what they should do for the London underground is that Ministers want to transfer that £92 million to the buses, which they are shortly to sell off.

Responsibility for London transport is no longer at 55 Broadway; it lies with Transport Ministers. Section 2 of the London Regional Transport Act 1984 says:

"It shall be the general duty of London Regional Transport, in accordance with principles from time to time approved by the Secretary of State",

to provide transport.

The Secretary of State and his hon. Friends are, in effect, dictators for London Regional Transport because Parliament says so. I am not saying that they wish that —they probably do not—but Parliament says so and it is they who are planning the very programme that the hon. Member for Walthamstow advocates.

Page 6 of the business plan, to which the Secretary of State referred, contains an anomaly. It is clear that we are due for another set of objectives. In 1985, the Secretary of State laid down a number of objectives for London Regional Transport, which had to convert them into a strategic plan and had to convert the strategic plan into an annual business plan. One feature of those objectives was that fares should not rise, in general, more than the retail price index. The debate is taking place in the shadow of the 9 per cent., or thereabouts, fare increase earlier this month.

Clearly, the Secretary of State's objectives have been breached. My inquiries show that London Regional Transport's interpretation of that is that it was for three financial years. However, those objectives have not been replaced and in a parliamentary answer the junior Minister said that those objectives still operate. I suggest that the 9 per cent. increase was made on the instructions, under the London Regional Transport Act 1984, of the Secretary of State, and breached his own objectives. If that is not so, let us hear what happened.

The Secretary of State made it clear at the start of the debate that some of the rate income—about which we have heard today — has been transferred to invest in capital and depreciation provision, but that it will not be spent on revenue support. Those hard-pressed revenue supporters, through the rates, are no longer supporting the next year's revenue—the Secretary of State told us that; they are contributing to depreciation and capital investment. That is wrong in principle and should not be happening; nor should we have had that 9 per cent. increase in fares.

The £92 million, which we heard about a moment ago, is being transferred to the buses. It is clear — the Secretary of State has said so again — that we are approaching bus deregulation in the early 1990s. That means a reversion—again, the Secretary of State said so — to a number of private firms running what, since 1933, has been a single unitary London Transport.

I do not see how that will be done because the whole purpose of public transport by bus, pioneered by the London General Omnibus Company and carried on by London Regional Transport, is that a minority of paying routes pay for those that do not pay. Parts of routes that do pay, pay for the ends that do not. The routes that pay on weekdays or in the middle of the day pay for evening and weekend journeys. That is the principle of public transport as operated in London. How that will be split up either to provide public subsidy for the £92 million taken from the underground—historically, the money used to flow the other way — is a bit of a mystery, because central London provides the bus service. How will that pay for areas such as docklands, Newham and Ilford, and the outer areas, even Walthamstow, if the surpluses are made in central London?

Will the Travelcard facilities be continued? We should be given an assurance on that, because they have been a great boon for people in London, whether travelling on the British Rail Travelcard, the London Regional Transport one or the combined one. It also speeds up the one-man-operated buses that we do not much like. Let us keep the Routemasters as long as we can, because central London is the ideal place for their operation. They should be kept because they speed up traffic and are much better for passengers in central London. It is clear that all this has been planned for some time. British Bus Engineering Limited was closed, as was the centralised bus training depot, which has a worldwide reputation. Indeed, the Minister virtually said that we are to see London Regional Transport split up.

I asked a question not long ago about the proportion of bus routes that paid. At column 532 of *Hansard* on 18 January, the Minister replied that he did not know, that the information was not available. I find that very hard to believe. London Transport will not cough up the information either. No doubt it has been told not to by the Minister. But it is a sensible and fundamental matter in public transport to transfer surpluses.

There is every indication that 12 to 20 private firms —maybe about 15—will be operating commercially, and there will be the virtual break-up of London Transport as we know it today and as it was created in the 1930-32

[Mr. Nigel Spearing]

Parliaments. The legislation went over two Parliaments, with two Select Committees. It was bipartisan; it was introduced by my former right hon. Friend Lord Morrison under a Labour regime and was completed by a Conservative Government in the early 1930s. We had a consensus, and we had a great civic organisation, which achieved worldwide renown, and which the Government are now about to break up, without being clear about it.

It is coming out bit by bit. When LRT sends us its literature now on organising transport for London we find that the familiar circle and bar symbol has gone. London Buses is to be split up, so London Transport as we know it will no longer exist. This is highly significant, particularly for those who voluntarily gave up publicly owned transport. In my constituency we have the West Ham corporation tram depot that was. There is a depot at East Ham as well, and there are depots at Croydon and Walthamstow. They ran their own trams as well. They gave them up to London Transport because they believed that they would be run in future by the public for the public. Now the Government are to change that. It is wrong in principle, and it should be stopped.

Repairs are being done at many of the garages. When I go around, people come up to me and say, "There is all this work being done at these garages — all these changes." Are they chickens being fattened for pirates who will come and take them in two or three years' time? That is what the operatives say, and it is clearly what the Government have in mind.

Talking about selling off, the Government do not even know what they are doing about that. The Victoria line has been mentioned. It has all the latest electronic equipment in it—it was built for that equipment—but it still cannot work properly. The Northern line is worse. When the extension to Morden in the south, built with public money in the 1920s, was opened the trains ran regularly every four minutes. They do not now. Things have got worse, and it is partly the Government's responsibility. Why have they got worse?

I asked London Transport about that, and it replied that there was a shortage of drivers because they were transferring to the Piccadilly line, which has gone to one-person operation, and it was having to recruit new ones. It had not foreseen the knock-on effect of that administrative change forced on it, required of it, by the Government. One-person operation on the deep tubes is in any case questionable, and that was the result.

I recently asked how many houses had been sold off by London Regional Transport since its creation in 1984. The answer, which appeared at column *532* of volume 125 of *Hansard* on 18 January, was that the figure was over 800 homes built by London Transport or its predecessors, probably near the depots to enable men and drivers to get there easily and enjoy good housing.

We know from answers that the cost of housing at Morden and on the Northern line is a problem. Those houses have been sold off on the Government's instructions. I do not say that they are all on the Northern line—probably only a few are—but that is an example of what is happening. Many things that are happening on that line are the Government's responsibility. They have brought it not on themselves, but unfortunately on the hapless travellers of London, whom they are asking to pay even more than before.

What about long-term strategy? The Government do not have much of a clue. I asked the Minister recently about the number of people travelling in London by different modes. On 19 January I received the answer, at columns *695-696* of volume 125 of *Hansard*, that on the underground the figure is now 4 billion passenger miles a year—an increase of 50 per cent. On the buses it is 2·6 billion, a level that has been kept up since 1980. They have done very well to keep that number. On British Rail, the figure is 8·3 billion, an increase of 2 per cent. I also asked how many passenger miles were travelled on the roads of Greater London, and was told that no figures were available. "But", said the Minister in effect, "we think that the number of people travelling on the roads is not much greater than it was in 1980." Tell that to the marines. Any person on London's roads will say that that is not correct.

The Government do not even know the figures, which are vital. If one is constructing a transport policy for a city —all three Ministers have read Select Committee reports and travelled around—one must balance the demand for travel by various modes and the public transport network which provides the basis for that. Give people the option of travelling by private car, facing congestion in certain areas and certain risks, but give them the choice of going by public transport.

The Government do not have a strategy. They are leaving it to chance. We can see that from an answer which I received today. In November 1980, the then chairman of British Rail, Mr. Peter Parker, presented for discussion an imaginative plan called CrossRail — building standard bore tunnels to connect some London terminals from north and south and east and west. The proposal was not put to the Government formally; it was probably done informally. I asked the Minister what consideration had been given to the plan. He said:

> "The Department did not comment formally on the British Rail document in 1980. No proposals were submitted by the board and it was clear that considerably more work was required to establish the cost and benefits of this project. It would be for it to consider reviving this work in the first instance if it believed that it was a cost-effective way of relieving congestion on rail services."

There is a clue — the concern is with "relieving congestion", not with providing the basic infrastructure of public transport for London which is required.

I do not believe that the Government are discharging their duties to London. The parliamentary answers show it. In breaking up London Regional Transport, which is not perfect — I have criticised it in many respects, whatever Administration were in charge — they are breaking up one of the pioneer public corporations, which had great success and was a world leader. The Government are doing that despite the needs of the London people and their complaints, whether about Dial-A-Ride, the Victoria line or the buses. Therefore, the Government are acting irresponsibly towards London. The most damaging thing that the Government can do is to break up the organisations and contributions made by public enterprise in the last century and throughout this century, particularly by corporations such as Croydon, East Ham, West Ham and Walthamstow that served the people. The Government are not serving the people.

11.17 pm

Mr. John Wheeler (Westminster, North): It was not my intention to intervene in the debate, but I felt moved to do so having listened to the hon. Member for Newham, South

(Mr. Spearing) and earlier contributions. It is extraordinary that we should have this debate at all. The people least fitted to manage a business called London Regional Transport are politicians, and the sooner it is denationalised and sold into the private sector — whereby the people of London may, if they wish, own the shares of the business — the better. The last thing we should do is have this annual debate. We are not competent to decide how London Regional Transport as a business should be managed, what its levies should be, and where and how it should do its work.

Under its existing management, London Regional Transport is giving a first-class service to the people of London and the millions of people who work in it and come to see it as tourists. The business plan prepared by the chairman and managing directors of the business is ample evidence of that.

Earlier, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport referred to the disaster at King's Cross. We do not yet know the reason for the fire. An inquiry is being conducted. I for one would rather wait to hear what those who are conducting it say about the cause and aftermath of the fire. Meanwhile, I am confident, having a number of underground stations in my constituency, that LRT is concerned to the utmost degree with the safety of the passengers using the system. That must be said firmly if the debate is to have any value.

Let me also say a word in conclusion about the improving crime prevention record on the underground. Crime prevention is a matter with which I have concerned myself over the years. Technology, better management techniques, a better use of personnel and the co-ordination of the British Transport police have all reduced crime, and there is now only one assault for every 500,000 passenger journeys.

I welcome the work done to reduce crime on the underground, which I believe is, on the whole, a safe and effective system.

11.20 pm

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): The best thing that can be said of the speech by the hon. Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) is that his first point was one of enormous cheek. Some of us sat on the Standing Committee on the London Regional Transport Bill of 1984 which set up LRT. We had arguments with the Minister, of course. His Government stole the democratic control of London Transport from the people of London, which they had held via their local authorities. The Government were forced to pledge a debate at least once a year in the House. This is it: a debate lasting an hour and a half, which is painfully inadequate. Now he wants to take LRT completely away from the people, and give them no say whatever in their own transport system for their own city. That can only be described as enormous cheek.

The order will mean a further decline in London's already severely hard-pressed public transport system. We know the slogan about letting the train take the strain. The Government's philosophy is "Let the passenger take the strain". Because of the pressure on the system, travel is now probably much more stressful for individual Londoners than a day's work. It is certainly more stressful for the housewife who relies absolutely on the system. That is because of the cutbacks that the order will continue.

Revenue support has been run down substantially. I have the figures, which were given to me in a written answer in December. In 1983, the revenue support per thousand passenger journeys at 1986-87 prices was £124·86. In 1986-87, it has been reduced to £34·75, a quarter of the level at which it was four years earlier. That has had a savage effect, with thousands of redundancies in the service. Waiting times have been made much longer, and the standard of cleanliness has fallen, as was pointed out by the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson). The cutback in revenue support has reduced it to a level of squalor.

Fares have risen by much more than inflation. Moreover, safety standards have been enormously reduced. One of my constituents nearly fell out of a train at Stratford, because the doors opened during a rush-hour accident, and she was nearly killed. That is only one example of the increase in accidents.

Traffic income — fares — as a proportion of LRT's total income has increased from the 1983 level of 60·15 per cent. to 71·2 per cent. this year. Fare rises are well above inflation this year, with more to come. There is only one way to describe the position: Londoners are paying more for less.

The Government have got away with a trick in the Autumn Statement. They increased the capital for LRT by £500 million and that is very welcome. However, they cut the same amount off the revenue support. The trick is that the £500 million in capital was for one year only but the cut in revenue support is a permanent cut. That trick has been little noticed so far, but it is a scandal.

There has been insufficient investment in capital terms. I will not go through all the correspondence I have received because several of my colleagues wish to speak. However, I have received many letters about the state of the Central line. I sent some correspondence to the Minister about the terrible conditions on the Central line, which my constituents have to use. There is immense overcrowding at places such as Mile End. I wrote to Sir Keith Bright and asked him about the situation and he said that there would be 16 new trains, but that they will be for the Jubilee line. He said that a few may be released to the Central line. I wrote back and asked him how many were to be released to the Central line and he said one. That is one secondhand train. My constituents deserve better than secondhand trains and a second-hand service. I will be pursuing that with the Minister.

I should also like to raise the serious matter of concessionary fares for pensioners in London. The Secretary of State boasted that his plans for deregulation are quite well advanced. I asked him only this week about his plans for concessionary fares for pensioners after deregulation. He said that they had "not yet been made". He said that he would be paying close attention to concessionary fares, but he has not yet given a commitment that they will continue when deregulation comes into play. When he replies to the debate I urge him to give a guarantee to London pensioners that they will have concessionary fares.

This levy order is part of the process of selling London transport short and selling London short.

11.26 pm

Mr. Stuart Holland (Vauxhall): It has been interesting to hear Conservative Members talking about the case for the privatisation of London transport and asking what we know about London transport and its needs. One thing we do know is what our constituents feel about it and what

[Mr. Stuart Holland]

they wish us to say in this place. Secondly, at least some of us are aware that on the principle of private profit we simply would not have had parts of London transport in the first place. For example, in the 1960s, when working in the Cabinet Office, I was associated with the evaluation of the economic feasibility of the Victoria line. It was well appreciated that the Victoria line, on any discount rate whatsoever, would make no profit at any time. It was only by taking into account the external benefits imputed to the opening of the Victoria line, including the reduction in the cost of road traffic provisions and signalling, reducing congestion and deaths on the road, and so on, that the decision was taken to invest in the Victoria line.

If London transport is to be split up into lots of private segments, who will get the profit-making ones and who will get the loss-making ones? That point was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing). It simply does not make sense, as has been illustrated by my hon. Friend on the surplus being generated during the day rather than at the end of the day and in central London rather than peripheral London, to go for a privatisation formula. I quote an authority as radical as Adam Smith who said that nothing is more certain when two or three producers are gathered together

"even for merriment and diversion"

than that they will seek to conspire against the public interest by

"contrivance to raise prices."

That is what we will see. Prices will be raised in order to pay profits to shareholders, many of whom will not be using the service. It is a disgrace that the Government are even considering it.

Mr. Spearing: Does my hon. Friend realise that the bus services that are let out to the private sector may pay a modest, or even a big, profit to those who run them now, but only because they are paid a subsidy by LRT for the unsocial routes?

Mr. Holland: My hon. Friend has raised an important point.

The hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) fluently described the consequences of private bus operators in central London. I raised this matter in connection with Channel tunnel traffic coming out of Waterloo station. Where is the integrated planning by British Rail and London Underground in relation to traffic use there? There will probably be an additional 4 million vehicles a year. I do not know how many of my hon. Friends have recently tried to take a quick cut on the other side of the river between the roundabout at the far end of Westminster bridge and Waterloo at peak passenger times. What provision is to be made for private tour operators? There has been no forward planning for additional traffic from the Channel tunnel outlet because it is assumed that there is sufficient spare capacity to accommodate it. Tell that to my constituents; they will not believe it. That is why we need these debates and why Ministers must address these issues much more seriously than they do now. We need integrated road-rail planning, not the disintegration of road-rail transport that would flow from private ownership.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): What happened in the 1960s?

Mr. Holland: The hon. Gentleman intervenes from a sedentary position. In the 1960s forward planning led to considerable success—for example, the Victoria line—*[Interruption.]* Would the hon. Gentleman like to get to his feet and tell me whether he would have preferred the Victoria line not to be built? The hon. Gentleman does not take up my invitation; that is very interesting. I am sure that those who use the Victoria line will note that point.

On the question of the OPOs, London Transport told us this morning that access to those vehicles is easier for certain categories of person, but the point that was stressed to me by the Lambeth public transport group is that many categories of persons will be unable to use those vehicles because they are less secure for them, or they feel less secure on them. The estimate is that householders would prefer not to use them. The Government say in other contexts that they are concerned about the interests of the consumers. If they are concerned about these consumers, they ought to be listening to their voices rather than simply supporting LRT by pushing through OPOs.

11.32 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): This debate is a travesty. Very few hon. Members are present for this debate, which is being held late at night. That is what passes for democracy for the people of London. As my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) explained, London Regional Transport was taken away from any form of democratic control.

I am very worried about this order. It demonstrates exactly the direction in which the Government wish to go with London Regional Transport. The levy order includes an estimated grant of £190 million for LRT—the lowest public transport subsidy of any capital city in western Europe and of many cities in the United States. That is why there is to be a 10 per cent. fare rise, why trains and buses are dangerously overcrowded and why safety has been reduced.

We should be discussing the travel needs and priorities of the people of London. Last year was horrendous for many people in London. The King's Cross fire was a disaster. It was, by any stretch of the imagination, terrible, but it was not an isolated incident. Many other accidents and incidents occurred on the London underground network last year. If one cuts back on staff to the extent that London Transport has done, at some point safety must obviously be put seriously at risk.

The Government have not heaped all the horrors of bus deregulation on London, although I understand that many Conservative Members want that to happen. They want us to return to the dangers of the 1930s and before, when there were races between buses in an effort to get to the bus stop first. The hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) outlined what is happening in Dorset. There can be no doubt that what is happening there will happen in London if bus deregulation is introduced here.

I ask the Minister to look seriously at what the traffic commissioners and others are doing to check the safety of buses on the routes that are being sold off, the training that is being given to the drivers and the medical condition of some of those bus drivers. I say that as one who is genuinely concerned about the safety of passengers and not by way of criticism of the drivers.

The Government's record is one of producing unremitting disaster for those who have worked for and given their lives to LRT. The morale of the staff is

extremely low, and that is hardly surprising when 5,000 underground workers have lost their jobs, along with 3,000 bus workers and many members of the ancillary grades. Many of those who have not lost their jobs have been told that they will face the rigours of private competition. Against that background, it is hardly surprising that lifts and escalators are out of action for so long. The organisation involved is a private company that is not even based in London. A perfectly adequate maintenance service was provided by London Transport before the advent of this form of privatisation.

We are spending nationally £190 million on LRT, and 65 per cent. of that sum is provided by London ratepayers. The comparative benefits of spending another £200 million on London Transport would be marvellous. There would be cheaper fares, better services, better buses and less congestion on the roads. A better public transport system would take many private motorists off the roads. Unfortunately, a Government who are obsessed with providing tax concessions for company cars and spending money on road building will not contemplate that approach. London Regional Transport has been provided with a subsidy of £190 million while the cost of two and a half miles of road to Canary Wharf will be over £200 million.

I ask the Government to observe a sense of priorities. Let them cut major road building in London and invest the moneys thereby saved in public transport. That is the way to reduce congestion — improve safety and improve services for the travelling public.

We want to see the restoration of planning in London. We are suffering the reality of a nightmare — the implementation of privatisation, speculation and the destruction of all that is good about London. This is the consequence of the destruction of the Greater London council and the curtailment of planning powers within the boroughs. I want to see a democratically controlled public transport system in London, including the British Rail network within the Greater London area. We must have the sensible, planned public transport network that the capital so desperately needs.

11.37 pm

Mr. Channon: I have listened to the debate with close attention and I shall try to answer as many questions as I can in the brief period that is left for me. If I fail to answer any questions now, I shall write to hon. Members or ensure that London Regional Transport responds directly.

First, I make clear to the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) that I intend to improve both the road and rail systems in London. It is not a matter of either/or. I intend to have a large road improvement programme in London and a considerable investment in LRT. I am sure that that is what the majority of citizens in London wish to see.

It cannot be said that LRT is perfect or that it cannot be improved. No one is complacent. Having heard some of the comments made this evening, no one would think that I have announced a large reduction in what the ratepayers of London have to spend on LRT. There will be a reduction of 20 per cent. on last year's spending by the ratepayer, and that will be accompanied by a large increase in investment in LRT.

My hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) rightly drew attention to the problem of crime, and I acknowledge that there is still far too much crime on the underground. However, there is only one assault for every 500,000 passenger journeys. Of course, any crime within the underground system is unacceptable, but the rate here is better than in many other countries. About £15 million has been made available over three years to follow up reported crime on the underground.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) talked about one-person operated buses. Accidents are extremely rare and records show that door-buses are four times safer than open-platform buses. There are fewer instances of crime within door-buses, and the drivers are twice to four times safer than the conductors on open-platform buses. There has been a 25 per cent. reduction in assaults.

Mr. Holland: What about accidents to children?

Mr. Channon: Of course, any accident is one too many. But the figures show that there are fewer accidents on those buses than on the ones to which hon. Members wish to return. There is no proposal to go for 100 per cent. one-person-operated buses in London. Someone said that we were rushing to increase the number, but there will be only a modest increase next year.

I thought that my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson) made a somewhat understated speech. We shall invest a great deal in the London underground to resolve some of the problems about which he and his constituents are worried. He drew attention to the Angel, Islington, which is a very overcrowded station. That is why vast sums of public money—about £20 million—will be spent to improve conditions there. Similar sums will be spent at other underground stations.

Several hon. Members mentioned fares. Despite the 1988 increase, fares on London Regional Transport are lower in real terms today than they were eight years ago, at a time when London wages have increased by 35 or 40 per cent. As a proportion of earnings, LRT fares are much lower than they were a few years ago. Some hon. Members have given a false impression of fares.

I was astonished that the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) mentioned investment. Next year, we shall invest £365 million in London Regional Transport, compared with £193 million in 1984. In real terms, the figure is up by well over 50 per cent. Indeed, investment in real terms has increased every year since the Government took over responsibility from the GLC. So much for the nonsense talked by some hon. Members about the golden days of the GLC before my hon. Friend the Minister of State and I—whom the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), colourfully but inaccurately, called the dictators of London Regional Transport—took over. Investment is one third higher in real terms since 1984-85, and we have planned a further increase of 19 per cent. in real terms for next year. The elimination of the need for revenue support has released funds for capital investment, enabling investment to be increased while the burden on taxpayers and ratepayers is reduced.

If we are to achieve a better service for Londoners, we must invest in the capital expenditure on London underground, which has been necessitated by the massive increase in passengers during the past few years. Under the policies pursued in the past, public money was spent on keeping down fares and very little capital was spent on improving services.

Mr. Holland: It was generating revenue.

Mr. Channon: The hon. Gentleman knows—I am amazed that he challenges me on it — that this Government's record on investment in London Regional Transport is the best ever. We inherited a system starved of investment, and we have increased it enormously.

The 1988-89 figures for Dial-a-Ride are £6·25 million, not £5 million, as the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey said. That is an inflation-matching increase over the current year and a 40 per cent. real increase over the last GLC year. I know of no threat to Dial-a-Ride, which is an extremely important service.

I reassure the hon. Member for Newham, South that there is no reason why Travelcards should not be retained after deregulation. There is no reason why prepaid tickets, including multi-operator cards organised by LRT, should not continue. Hon. Members need have no worry about concessionary fares, as I shall make clear when I make a full statement about our proposals for deregulation.

The hon. Member for Stretford said that it was nonsense to fund capital from revenue. No business man would agree with that. After depreciation and renewals expenditure, LRT is a long way from making a surplus. London Regional Transport is short by some £175 million. Indeed, the hon. Member for Stretford stated that the Paris Metro carried more people than the underground system in London. Yes, that is true. However, the Paris Metro carries more people but for far shorter distances. The average passenger miles per year are higher in London than in Paris. The analogy drawn by the hon. Member for Stretford is wholly incorrect.

I will study the points that have been made in the debate. We are setting LRT on course so that it will have more investment. Over the next few years we shall be able to provide a better service for Londoners and for hon. Members' constituents, whether they travel by bus or underground. We will do that at a time when fares are lower than they were eight years ago. I ask the House to approve the order.

It being one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the Motion. MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted Business).*

Question agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft London Regional Transport (Levy) Order 1988, which was laid before this House on 11th January, be approved.

PETITION

Rating Reform

11.45 pm

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): I come to the House this evening to present a petition from the convenor and members of East Lothian district council calling on the House to repeal the legislation under which the Government propose to impose a poll tax in Scotland, which is likely to be set at £361 per head for the people of East Lothian regardless of whether they live in a hostel or a castle.

The people in every part of my constituency are making it clear that they object to the grossly unjust principle of the poll tax. It is both important and significant that our elected council is one of many Scottish local authorities that have resolved not to co-operate with the imposition of such a primitive and arbitrary system of taxation on the people of Scotland.

I strongly support the appeal from the members of East Lothian district council to the House to repeal this oppressive and offensive legislation.

To lie upon the Table.

Deep Mining (East Fife)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

11.46 pm

Dr. Lewis Moonie (Kirkcaldy): Just over six months ago, in my maiden speech to the House, I described the coal industry in my constituency. I little thought that I would come to the House tonight to give its epitaph.

My constituency stands on layer upon layer of coal, which extends down more than a mile beneath the surface. Coal has been mined there for centuries—that is, until two weeks ago, when the tradition ended. British Coal announced the closure of Seafield colliery because of low production and heavy losses and it managed to buy the acquiescence of the work force through short-term bribes that it has instituted to persuade men to take early retirement and redundancies.

Why was Seafield colliery closed? Was it exhausted? No. Estimates suggest that there are more than 200 million tonnes of coal left in the measures that I am discussing tonight. Is it poor quality coal? No, it is not. It has the highest calorific value of any coal mine in the United Kingdom. It is low in sulphur and chlorine. It is a high-value product when we consider that domestic coal in this country sells at more than £100 a tonne retail. That is the quality of the coal that we are talking about. Are conditions difficult in the pit? Yes, they are. However, I wonder whether they were difficult enough to force its closure.

There are problems of combustibility with the coal, which have led to a loss of faces because of fires. There are also problems of steep gradients. Steep seam working is difficult. Seafield colliery has been the leader in this country in steep seam working involving gradients up to 1:1·5. Working gradients on that scale must be seen to be believed, particularly when the machine comes down the face stripping off three feet of coal at a time. Seafield has been a model for other areas. We could continue to learn from that pit about the use of that type of technology which we will need in future. British Coal often refers to averages. It refers to average cost and it averages out its losses. We are not talking about an average pit producing average coal at Seafield.

Was the problem industrial unrest? Last year, the work force of the pit gave up their Christmas break to fight a fire. The pit had a tradition of good labour relations. They were soured occasionally, I admit, by certain factors, but they were basically sound. Therefore, what was the reason for the closure?

The fault lies firmly at the door of British Coal and, to some extent, the Government. There is a poor investment record at Seafield. There has been a failure to invest in the modern equipment that the pit deserves. It can take over one third of a man's shift to get down to and up from his workplace. When a man is travelling down to and up from the coal face, he cannot cut coal. One of the problems was a lack of investment in belts for transporting coal out and for transporting men in. Belts were old-fashioned and in need of renewal. There were constant breakdowns in man-riding belts and in coal-carrying belts. When that happens, with no storage space underground, the line comes to a halt. That has been one of the main problems of low production over the past six months.

The other problem is the fact that there is only one working face at the pit. Again, it is all or nothing. If the face is working and everything is going well, coal is produced at a decent rate. If not—there have been many stoppages—production levels rapidly fall. In turn, that has led to a fall in the morale of the work force. It is particularly due to the fact that, last year, British Coal promised new investment in the pit. That promise was not fulfilled.

There has been a lack of sophistication in British Coal's management. It has good managers when it comes to producing coal. There is no doubt about that. They are engineers—they know their jobs—but they are poor handlers of men. Man management and personnel relations have been a failure. For example, last year, after the fire, British Coal paid off many underground technicians, skilled workers, electricians, and so on. The next thing we know is that it is bringing in private contractors to do the job, at two or three times the wages of the miners who were paid off. Oddly enough, the miners found out about it. That was scarcely conducive to good relations in the pit thereafter. Quite frankly, it is incredible that a company could act in that way.

The most important factor in the closure of Seafield is British Coal's failure to develop the new long-term markets that it needs for its product, particularly a product of such quality. It has failed to look abroad to places such as Scandinavia and other areas in which people are trying low-sulphur, good-quality coal to burn and avoid the pollution problems with which we are so familiar.

British Coal's marketing policy has left a great deal to be desired. It has spent the past three or four decades in the pockets of two consumers, the South of Scotland Electricity Board and the Central Electricity Generating Board. It has been quite content to sit back, accept their markets and not go out and look for the alternatives for which it should have looked. That is fine when electricity use is expanding and when buyers will take all the coal that British Coal produces, but it is no good when electricity consumption stops rising at the expected rate. Suddenly, we find a captive seller who is forced to sell at the price that the consumer wants. That possibility should have been foreseen, and the market should have been diversified.

There is also the Government's attitude to dependence on nuclear power. That is a mortgage on our future. We still do not know how we shall dispose of the ruins of the power stations that we shall close over the next 10 years. We still do not know what we shall do with nuclear waste. Yet we are expanding our use of technology that has been stopped in the United States of America. We are starting to introduce the self-same power plants that the United States has banned, to the cost of our indigenous coal industry, and the pit in my constituency in particular.

So I believe that the Government have had a role to play in this situation. But which Scottish Minister has shown any interest in the Scottish coalfields over the past few years? None of them. They do not discuss the subject at all. They say that it is the Department of Energy's problem and nothing to do with them. The fact that the coalfield is part of their country means nothing to them. They have no interest whatsoever. Can no one in the Government, or in British Coal for that matter, see the need to maintain the type of technology that we have developed in these pits, steep seam technology—so

[Dr. Lewis Moonie]

important, yet just thrown away? Can no one see that the quality of the coal that is being abandoned is such that we cannot afford to lose it?

The result is quite simple: 4,500 jobs have been lost in the Fife coalfield since 1983, and another 650 jobs were lost two weeks ago. We have a young work force—average age, 33—with no hope of re-employment in an area where male unemployment is well over 20 per cent. There will be more job losses in the workshops in Cowdenbeath; there will be a knock-on effect on local business and suppliers, who will also be hard hit; there are diminished prospects for school leavers and for the excellent courses at the local technical college on mining engineering. We see all the usual stories of missed opportunities, of failure—everything thrown away.

What does British Coal think it is doing? I do not know. There have been precious few statements nationally about the problem. Are they quarrelling over the succession to Sir Robert Haslam, perhaps? Who knows? They are certainly not talking about Seafield. What is the Secretary of State for Energy doing? He is racking his brains over how to privatise electricity in the way that the Government want, keeping Lord Marshall off their backs at the same time—mutually incompatible objectives, I fear, as can be seen from the worried expressions on the faces of certain Ministers in the Department of Energy.

From my criticism of British Coal, I exclude Mr. George McAlpine, its manager in Scotland, because the tragedy is that British Coal in Scotland now has a manager with vigour and vision, the manager it needs to lead the industry into the 1990s, while nationally we see the management hellbent on closing down the Scottish coalfield. I believe that we will see the end of deep mining in Scotland in the next five years. That is our future under British Coal. When Torness comes fully on stream, while there are still signs of low prices for the oil and gas used in other power stations, when there are these alternatives, when there will be a low, and falling, demand for coal from the South of Scotland Electricity Board, then British Coal will reduce its operations in Scotland, reduce its peripheral operations elsewhere in the United Kingdom, and end up by concentrating production on a few pits in the midlands, in Yorkshire and in Leicestershire.

This is not necessary. British Coal has made promises —well, one could almost call them promises—about the future of mining in Kirkcaldy. It says that it would like to mine the Dysart Main seam where there is 100 million tonnes of coal—40 years' output—and other seams below that. It has promised to consider investment, and I understand that it will begin prospecting near the Frances colliery site to the north of Seafield in April, with a view to a phased development, looking initially at opencast and later, so it says, at putting in a drift mine to take the deep coal out. Looking at the record of British Coal, we can be pretty sure that we will get the opencast, if it can get planning permission for it, but I would not like to stake my future on getting a deep mine at the end of it.

Mr. Alexander Eadie (Midlothian): My hon. Friend makes a powerful case. As he well knows, I worked those seams in the east Fife coalfield for 30 years at the coalface —my father was killed in a pit in that area. But on the point that he makes about the reserves of coal in that area, will he agree with me that we are talking about an area which is the largest proved coalfield in the whole of the United Kingdom, that it covers between 104 and 110 square miles, that there are seams outcropping to about 100 ft? Will he agree that it is absolutely monstrous to think about opencasting there? Opencast is a physical impossibility. Does my hon. Friend think that, with regard to the case that he is advancing, the Minister must give a positive reply about investment in this gigantic coalfield? Not to develop it would be a form of vandalism and a scandal for the people of Scotland.

Dr. Moonie: I entirely accept what my hon. Friend says. It is the largest coalfield in Britain, and the seam that I am talking about is only one of several that can be mined there. Other seams below it can be reached using modern technology. There are others below that which admittedly would be more difficult. We are talking about an enormous coalfield and we must receive some guarantees about its future.

I do not know how feasible British Coal's proposals for opencast mining are. It obviously considers it worth while to explore the possibility—opencast mining is a very profitable operation for it. However, it can be a threat to deep mining in Scotland, not an adjunct.

British Coal wants several conditions satisfied before it proceeds with its investment. It wants planning permission, but that would be fairly simple to obtain, provided guarantees are given about the future of deep mining. It wants guarantees on flexible working. There is no way that I or any other politician can give those; that is a matter for the NUM. There were signs from the local work force that, for the sake of their pit, they were prepared to work almost any hours requested of them.

British Coal wants opencast mining first. What guarantees do we have that there will be anything afterwards? It could be opencast first and last, and in five or six years we would have nothing but a dirty hole to the west of our town, which would, we hope, be reinstated.

British Coal wants guarantees about long-term markets. I thought it was the job of British Coal and the Government to secure long-term markets. What is being done? Can the Minister give any assurances that long-term markets are being sought to sell the product that the industry is producing? It is not much to ask for the Scottish Office, the Department of Energy, the DTI—the Department of enterprise, as it is known—to get together on a project such as this in which 1,000 jobs and an investment of £150 million are involved. If a Japanese company were involved, those Departments would be falling over themselves to be involved. What is wrong with doing it for the coalfield? Can guarantees be given to consumers that long-term supplies will be made available? Can finance be sought from the EEC?

Those questions must be answered, because the people of Fife and my constituency are sick and tired of empty promises. They want action, decisions and investment in our future.

12.2 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Michael Spicer): I begin by paying a sincere tribute to the hon. Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie) and his hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) for their efforts in raising the future of deep mining in east Fife. Last month, they met my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy and registered a number of

points—some of which have been repeated tonight—with him. As promised, my right hon. Friend raised those matters with British Coal. As the hon. Member for Kirkcaldy recognised, they fall within the management responsibility of British Coal. However, I should like to put the issues under discussion in perspective and then confirm one or two points that the hon. Gentleman has raised.

The east Fife coalfield, which straddles the town of Kirkcaldy, has been worked for over 100 years, as was mentioned by the hon. Member for Midlothian. The Frances pit, which at one time was Scotland's oldest working unit, was connected underground with the nearby Seafield colliery in March 1980. Both Frances and Seafield were exploiting undersea reserves, and working Britain's most consistently steep seams, with gradients as great as 1 in 1.2. Mining conditions have proved extremely difficult, with some seams, I understand, particularly prone to heating. During the long and pointless miners strike of 1984-85, both units were badly affected by underground fire, and its two main faces were lost, D51 at Frances and L01 at Seafield. It was one of those fires which caused the Frances end of the unit to be closed down, and production resumed after the strike in two faces at the Seafield end.

British Coal recognised the potential of the unit and, contrary to the impression given by the hon. Member for Kirkcaldy, invested over £8 million in replacement faces, and the unit was well on its way to producing its target of four tonnes per manshift, which would have been an acceptable survival level. I have to say that the efforts were not helped by a series of local disputes.

However, production was nearing its target, and the future of the unit seemed to be safe. But over the Christmas and new year holidays just over a year ago there was another tremendous fire which resulted in the loss of the major production face, L15. The work force rallied round magnificently, working round the clock over the Christmas and new year holidays, to contain that fire. It was successful in saving one face. It is that face, D19, which has been worked over the past 12 months.

The area director, Mr. George McAlpine, to whom the hon. Gentleman advisedly paid tribute, said just over a year ago that in order for the pit to remain viable, a reduction in the work force was necessary. The local unions recognised this and accepted that decision. The agreed target, of four tonnes output per manshift, was reached for the first time in April 1987. Mr. McAlpine said at that time that on the basis of that level of production he was prepared to agree in principle to the development of a new face at an estimated cost of £10 million.

Unfortunately, further setbacks occurred. During September the men walked out in dispute over dust levels brought about by efforts to control a further heating underground, and there was a significant loss of production. Sixteen days later the unit was brought to another standstill by a further dispute. A coal shearer broke down, and members of the union responsible for repairing it, the Scottish Colliery Enginemen, Boilermen and Tradesmen's Association, refused to repair it, wrongly claiming that such action would constitute a breach of the national overtime ban, and losing even more production. In addition, the national overtime ban cost Seafield over £1 million in lost production.

All of these factors, combined with what everyone recognises were difficult mining conditions, meant that the unit was operating well below its target—only two tonnes output per manshift and not the required four. The unit was facing a loss of £11 million for this financial year, and was causing a drain on the rest of the coal industry in Scotland. At a colliery review meeting at the end of November, Mr. McAlpine told the unions that the situation at Seafield was now extremely serious and that there was no justification for continuation unless costs could be reduced substantially, and the production targets met. The unit was to be given a final chance. It was agreed to hold a reconvened meeting on 11 January. Operating performance did not improve, and on 11 January the area director proposed that Seafield should close. That proposal was agreed by the majority of the unions involved, and production actually ceased at Seafield last Friday.

As well as promising that there would be no compulsory redundancies arising out of the closure, and that transfers would be available for those wishing to remain in the industry, Mr. McAlpine promised that a substantial amount of money—some £750,000—would be available for exploratory work to assess the viability of mining the substantial reserves north of Seafield which could be accessed from a possibly reopened Frances colliery.

The Government have made and are making substantial amounts available for investment by British Coal—more than £2 million every working day and more than £5·5 billion since 1979. However, the question of further investment at a particular colliery is one for British Coal management. To take a decision about Frances, British Coal must first be sure that there is a firm market for the coal—as the hon. Member for Kirkcaldy recognised at the price at which it can be produced—and it will need to look closely at the future markets for the coal in electricity generation and other industrial markets. It will also need to compare this project with other possibilities.

Secondly—the hon. Gentleman referred to this—flexible working would have to be agreed by all unions concerned. As Sir Robert Haslam said less than a fortnight ago, flexible working is vital to the industry if it is to survive against fierce competition and expand the market for coal, and it is the only way to create more jobs and secure those already existing in the industry. Thirdly, I understand that the project would need to obtain planning permission in the usual way from the local authorities, and that is not in dispute.

Mr. Eadie: The hon. Gentleman is presenting a proposition to the House based on three assertions. The first concerns the availability of saleable coal—a new feature of the Government's case. Here we have a coalfield that is like a gold mine, yet the Government question whether the coal can be sold. Does the Minister agree that the second assertion then falls flat on its face? Six-day working will not solve anything if British Coal does not try to find a market for the coal that is produced. That places the men in the area in an impossible position. I wonder whether the Minister would reflect on that.

Mr. Spicer: The hon. Gentleman, who is extremely experienced and well versed in these matters, will know that the market depends upon the price at which one is selling—particularly in the context of present world prices. Of course, the cost of coal, and therefore the price

[Mr. Spicer]

that British coal fetches, is crucial in determining whether there will be a market. We have made no bones about that. We have never tried to disguise the fact that once the electricity supply industry is privatised it will be free to purchase coal where it wishes. We hold the firm view that British Coal has the capacity and the capability to compete against all-comers. We agree with the hon. Gentleman that we have superb reserves and a superb capability for producing coal. There is nothing between the hon. Gentleman and us on that. The only thing that we say is that we must exploit the coal so as to make it competitive. That will create the markets that we require.

I should also draw the attention of the House— *[Interruption.]* I must say that we are honoured by the presence of a very high-powered team of Opposition Members, considering that it is so late at night. [HON. MEMBERS: "It is important."] I quite agree. I should draw the attention of the House to the measures being taken by British Coal to mitigate the effects of the closure in the constituency of the hon. Member for Kirkcaldy. Starting today, all 638 men on the colliery's books will be interviewed to determine how many wish to transfer to other units in Scotland. Those seeking redundancy will enjoy the generous terms available under British Coal's own arrangements.

Including the £5,000 supplementary lump sum, the redundancy benefits to younger miners with limited service are even greater than those available under the redundant mineworkers' payments scheme—something that is not generally recognised. For those with longer service, total lump sums of up to almost £40,000 are available, including statutory lump sums and cash in lieu of concessionary fuel.

Under section 3 of the Coal Industry Act 1987, the Government are providing 75 per cent. grant aid towards those redundancy costs, as well as towards the transfer costs of those who choose to take another job in the industry. I understand that British Coal expects to be able to offer alternative jobs locally to those who do not wish to take redundancy.

As both my right hon. Friend and I have made clear, the decisions which will decide the future of deep mining in east Fife are ultimately ones for the British Coal corporation. However, to a very large extent they will rest on the existence of dependable markets and a realistic attitude on the part of the work force.

In conclusion, as the Minister responsible for this issue, I hope that Opposition Members who have great influence in these matters, and many of whom have close connections with the unions concerned, will play their part in ensuring, in the interests of British Coal, and indeed of the country—forgetting party politics— *[Interruption.]* No, it is in the interests of British Coal that we forget politics and get down to considering how best to put the industry back on it feet.

This debate, which the hon. Member for Kirkcaldy has raised astutely — in the context not just of his constituency, but of the industry as a whole—sharply pinpoints the choices that lie ahead. Either the industry is run down or, if we get the industry and the working practices right, it can be put back on its feet. I very much welcome the debate and hope that it will result in a positive outcome in his part of the world.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at sixteen minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 26 January 1988

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

DEFENCE

Cruise Missiles

1. **Ms. Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his latest estimate of the number of United States nuclear air-launched cruise missiles *(a)* currently based in Europe and *(b)* to be based there by 1995.

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. George Younger): There are currently no United States air-launched cruise missiles based in Europe, nor, as far as I am aware, are there any plans to base such weapons in Europe in the future.

Ms. Primarolo: Was not a clear decision made four years ago at Montebello to increase the number of air-launched cruise missiles in Europe? Is not the decision continuing despite the changed circumstances of the INF agreement? Are not the Government guilty of deceiving the electorate at the last election by not making clear their intention to install 1,300 air-launched cruise missiles in Europe, with some being based at Boscombe Down?

Mr. Younger: I am sorry to say that the hon. Lady has been grievously misinformed. The Montebello decision took place years before the INF agreement, which we welcome and very much hope will be ratified shortly. Therefore, it had no relevance to that agreement. It related to updating and modernising the existing nuclear weapons. The INF treaty, to which we fully subscribe, abolishes a whole range of nuclear weapons, and it will be scrupulously adhered to by this country.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the important point to make about this is the success of the INF negotiations, leading to a reduction in these weapons in Europe? Is not this success due to NATO's dual-track policy, which is supported by the Government, and about which the Opposition have been in a total muddle?

Mr. Younger: My hon. Friend is absolutely correct. I remind the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo), as has my hon. Friend, that if the dual-track decision had not been the policy of this Government there would have been no INF treaty and no reduction of nuclear weapons of this sort, for which the Opposition would have been responsible.

Mr. Cohen: Has not a Dutch Minister told the Dutch Parliament that the Montebello requirement "applies in principle in all countries which have particular weapon systems"? Britain had cruise, and therefore Montebello applies to cruise. The Secretary of State and the Government knew that there was going to be a big increase in air-launched cruise missiles, but they pushed ahead and deceived the electorate at the last election, despite the INF agreement.

Mr. Younger: The hon. Gentleman is quite wrong. The INF treaty deals with land-based cruise missiles, and we warmly support that. It is our achievement to have got it, not that of the Opposition. We are proud of having achieved it.

The modernisation of the other ranges of nuclear weapons that we have must take place from time to time, and will continue in the future until such time as there is another treaty reducing still more weapons. Our aim is to achieve that.

Mr. Heseltine: As I was at Montebello when we took the decision, I can say that everything that my right hon. Friend has said today is wholly correct. It was a determination to modernise our weapons systems while significantly reducing the number of individual weapons systems. Does my right hon. Friend accept that it is fundamental to the concept of nuclear deterrence that we modernise our capabilities?

Mr. Younger: I am most grateful to my right hon. Friend and welcome his comments in the light of his having been present at the Montebello decision. He is perfectly right to say that the one thing that is of absolutely no use to anyone is a whole lot of weapons that are out of date. We shall not allow that to happen.

Mr. Denzil Davies: Do not air-launched cruise missiles need aircraft to launch them? Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that, whatever was decided at Montebello, all Britain's Tornado aircraft and all American F1-11 aircraft stationed in Britain will be included in the conventional arms reductions talks that will start in a few months' time?

Mr. Younger: The precise details of what will and will not be included in those talks is still to be established. The right hon. Member knows that no decision has been taken for the adoption of air-launched cruise missiles. Our existing Tornado aircraft, with their free-fall bombs, will continue in being in the meantime.

Petty Officer John Black

2. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the latest position regarding the inquiry into the unlawful killing in Spain over Christmas 1983 of Petty Officer John Black, Royal Navy; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Roger Freeman): I am still awaiting receipt of the report from the Metropolitan police on the outcome of their investigations.

Mr. Latham: Is my hon. Friend aware that it is now nearly three years since a British inquest jury said that Petty Officer Black was unlawfully killed? Nobody has ever been charged with any offence. Will he please assure the grieving parents that everything possible is being done by his Department to get this dark affair sorted out as quickly as possible?

Mr. Freeman: I give my hon. Friend that assurance. I am sure he will agree that the Ministry of Defence has been

helpful to the Metropolitan police in the progress of their investigations, and the outcome of those investigations is expected shortly. I assure my hon. Friend that when a copy of the report is received by the Ministry I shall brief him on its contents.

Challenger Tanks

3. **Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on progress in ordering Challenger tanks.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Tim Sainsbury): The order for the 5th Challenger regiment will be completed shortly. Current orders will also provide Challenger tanks for the 6th and 7th Challenger regiments. Further possible tank requirements are under review.

Mr. Fatchett: Will the Minister confirm that the Army has expressed a preference for the Challenger tank? If so, when will the Ministry give the go-ahead for that order? If such a go-ahead is given, will the Ministry of Defence give a commitment that the work will be carried out by Vickers in Leeds?

Mr. Sainsbury: As I have just said, we are currently considering the need for further orders. We have under review a variety of options as to which tank would be a suitable replacement and when further tank orders should be placed.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: I hope that my hon. Friend will recognise the importance of this programme to the city of Nottingham, because Royal Ordnance plc has a major unit in my constituency employing 1,100 people. That factory is in an area that still, sadly, has a high level of unemployment. Will he bear that in mind when considering procurement plans now and in the future?

Mr. Sainsbury: I assure my hon. Friend that we shall certainly bear in mind the matter that he has raised.

Mr. Marlow: As studies have shown that we can stop many more tanks for our bucks with helicopters than we can with tanks, is it not time that my hon. Friend discovered for himself a new Liddell Hart, so that somebody can do for the antediluvian and outdated tank what he did for the horse?

Mr. Sainsbury: My hon. Friend will recall that last July I answered a question from him on this subject. I confirm that our latest examination of the issue shows that a variety of anti-armour weapon systems are cost effective.

Northern Region (Departmental Jobs)

4. **Mr. Fallon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of his Department's jobs are currently located in the northern region.

Mr. Sainsbury: As at 1 October 1987, 2·2 per cent. of the Department's civilian employees were located in the northern region.

Mr. Fallon: Did my hon. Friend see a recent episode of "Yes, Prime Minister" which emphasised the over-concentration of defence jobs in the south and the west, together with the advantages of moving such jobs to areas of high unemployment in the north and the east? What progress is being made on this issue; and is Hacker triumphing over Sir Humphrey?

Mr. Sainsbury: I did not see that particular episode, but perhaps I shall have the opportunity to do so on repeat. We are conscious of the point that my hon. Friend has made. It is perhaps worth noting that about 10 per cent. of recruits to the armed forces are drawn from the northern region.

Mr. Sean Hughes: Will the Minister tell us how many of the jobs now located in the northern region were previously located in London?

Mr. Sainsbury: I cannot give an exact answer, but the proportion of jobs in the northern region has not changed significantly for some time.

Mr. Holt: Given that rather appalling answer by my hon. Friend, does he accept that a radical Government, such as we have at the moment, should consider what their predecessors did when they moved the Royal Military Academy from High Wycombe to Aldershot? Perhaps we should consider relocating that academy in the north of England, thus stimulating that part of the country.

Mr. Sainsbury: My hon. Friend makes a radical suggestion. He also draws attention to the fact that the location of many of the Department's civilian employees is determined by the location of the major defence establishments, many of which have been in their present locations since the last century.

RAF Air/Sea Rescue Service

5. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement concerning the future of the RAF air/sea rescue service.

Mr. Freeman: As I told the House on 28 October last year, my Department has been studying proposals from Bristow Helicopters Ltd., under which the military search and rescue service in the United Kingdom would be put out to civilian contract. We have also been reviewing the deployment of Royal Navy and Royal Air Force helicopters, to ensure that we are deploying these assets as efficiently as possible and providing satisfactory levels of search and rescue coverage around our coastline — *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I cannot have exchanges of this kind across the Chamber.

Mr. Freeman: These are very detailed and complex studies and I am not yet able to tell the House the outcome. I hope to be able to do so shortly.

Mr. Nellist: Is the Minister aware of the widespread opposition that there would be around the coast of this country if this stupid proposal to privatise air and sea rescue services were more widely known? An injured climber or seafarer in distress knows that an RAF pilot will continue to search until he is found and will not have one eye on the fuel gauge to count the cost. Ought not the issue of saving lives to be excluded from consideration of whether there is a profit in it for the potential private concern, such as Bristow?

Mr. Freeman: The proposal was put to us by Bristow; it was not sought by the Ministry of Defence. We have an obligation to the taxpayer to examine the proposal seriously. As the hon. Gentleman will know, Bristow runs two search and rescue facilities in the north of Scotland, and they operate safely, effectively and efficiently.

Mr. Harris: While rejecting completely the tone and attitude taken by the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist), may I nevertheless express my scepticism about any privatisation of the air and sea rescue service for the south-west? In my constituency we have RNAS Culdrose, the biggest helicopter base in western Europe. It seems nonsense to privatise the service in that area while that facility remains there.

Mr. Freeman: Perhaps I could remind my hon. Friend that while military search and rescue helicopters are primarily to serve military need, they also provide about 90 per cent. of the call-outs for civilian rescue. However, my responsibility, and that of my right hon. Friend and other Ministers, is to ensure first and foremost that our military assets are deployed correctly, and we shall judge Bristow's proposal against that background.

Mr. Heffer: Is it not clear that taxpayers are not arguing for any change? This is merely an ideological aberration on the part of the Conservative Front Bench. Is it not time that the Government put the interests of the mass of the people before the profits of a few who are their friends?

Mr. Freeman: No, this is not an ideological aberration on the Front Bench. We are carrying out our duty to the House and to taxpayers in examining an unsolicited proposal from Bristow Helicopters in order to establish whether civilian and military search and rescue can be conducted more cheaply.

We are well aware of the great value of the military search and rescue helicopters in terms of training, and of the excellent service that they perform indirectly for the civilian community. We shall not lose sight of those valuable contributions.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Will my hon. Friend bear in mind the grave concern in Pembrokeshire that RAF Brawdy may lose its search and rescue detachment, which would leave a large part of the coast denuded of instant cover? Will he also bear in mind that any private operator might be subjected to strike action, which service discipline, of course, precludes?

Mr. Freeman: My hon. Friend's last point is certainly right—that is a risk with any private contractor—but as I said last October in the defence debate, besides the Bristow proposal, we are also studying the redeployment of our military search and rescue facilities to ensure that we have the best possible cover around our coastline. I can assure my hon. Friend that any changes in our military deployment—if, indeed, they take place—will ensure that the interests of his constituents, like those of all other hon. Members, will be properly looked after.

Mr. Rogers: Does the Minister accept that cost and competence cannot be the only factors to be taken into account when arriving at a decision? Is it not a fact that air-sea rescue is a military service, that it has a war role, that it is important in service training, and that rescuing civilians is simply a bonus that the services provide for the taxpayer? Does he further accept that if the Government decide to privatise air-sea rescue they will be sacrificing the long-term interests of the services for short-term expediency?

Mr. Freeman: I agree with much of what the hon. Gentleman has said. The military search and rescue service provided around this country, in conjunction with Bristow in two places in the north of Scotland, is a partnership between the Ministry of Defence and the Department of Transport. In any changes we make, whether in the contractorisation route or the deployment route, we shall work closely with the Department of Transport.

Mr. Churchill: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the excellent search and rescue service provided by Royal Air Force helicopters to civilians represents excellent and important training for the services? Will he also confirm that he will not accept any unnecessary duplication that may arise if we were to go ahead with a scheme for privatisation while it is still incumbent on the RAF to maintain a capability of its own?

Mr. Freeman: I agree with my hon. Friend. At base, Royal Navy and Royal Air Force helicopters, in the search and rescue capacity, have to provide a military service. The training that the pilots and aircrew receive was valuable in the Falklands conflict.

Nuclear Convoys

6. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has any plans to review the present safety precautions taken by the armed forces in connection with the transportation of military nuclear convoys; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Ian Stewart): Safety arrangements associated with the movement of nuclear weapons are kept under constant review.

Mr. Janner: Is the Minister aware that that assurance carries little weight in the county of Leicestershire after a convoy carrying nuclear weapons passed through the centre of Leicester in the rush hour, after the serious accident at Salisbury, and after the Government's refusal even to give an assurance to the county council that chief fire officers will be informed when such convoys are coming? Surely it cannot conceivably be a breach of security to assure the House that, when a convoy carrying nuclear weapons or nuclear waste is to pass through towns, the local chief constables and chief fire officers will be informed on all occasions.

Mr. Stewart: I know that the hon. and learned Gentleman has communicated with my Department over a number of years on this subject and, therefore, he will not be surprised at the answer that I give him. Guidance is issued to some chief constables and fire officers on the basis of the need to know. However, I should like to emphasise to the hon. and learned Gentleman that we are following the practice of all previous Governments in not commenting on the details of individual transport movements. We have an exceptional safety record. No accident resulting in the release of radioactivity from nuclear weapons has taken place during all the time that they have been deployed in this country.

Mr. Key: Does my hon. Friend agree that at no time during the accident at West Dean in my constituency was there a threat to the public when a transporter slipped off the road in icy conditions? Does he also agree that the exhaustive and detailed correspondence that we have had on behalf of the district and county councils and the fire and health authorities has been extremely helpful? Does he further agree that the passage of the Military Defence

Police Act 1987 has sorted out a great deal of doubt that surrounded the question of who was responsible for what in those circumstances?

Mr. Stewart: I am glad to have my hon. Friend's contribution, which sets the whole question in context. Although I am not prepared to discuss the contents of the cargo in a particular accident, I can say that there was never any hazard to the public from the accident to which my hon. Friend referred.

Low-flying Aircraft

7. **Dr. Thomas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations he has received concerning low flying over Wales.

Mr. Freeman: Between 1 December 1987 and 18 January 1988 the Ministry of Defence received 37 inquiries or complaints from Wales about low-flying military aircraft.

Dr. Thomas: Does the Minister accept that low-flying training in Wales gives rise to the greatest number of complaints that land on my desk or are telephoned into my office from people not only in the constituency but outside it? Will he undertake a review of low-flying training throughout Britain? It is now 10 years since the last review took place.

Mr. Freeman: No, I cannot give the hon. Gentleman such an undertaking, and I would quarrel with the assumption behind his question. The issue may preoccupy him, and perhaps some of his constituents, but that is not borne out by the majority of hon. Members.

Sir Antony Buck: Will my hon. Friend confirm that it is important that our services maintain their capability and capcity to fly at low levels? Their expertise in this sphere has stood our country well in many regards, including the Falklands campaign, when they proved to be expert at this sort of manoeuvre?

Mr. Freeman: I agree with my hon. and learned Friend. The low-flying regulations permit aircraft to fly down to 250 ft at up to 450 knots. Most of that flying is done during the daytime. During wartime—I am sure that the House will want to pay tribute to wartime pilots—pilots had to fly very much faster, at perhaps 50 ft, and at night.

Mr. Livsey: What representations has the Minister received about low-flying aircraft at night over Wales? Recently, one flew over Brecon at 9 pm and woke most of the population under the age of five years, causing great disturbance.

Mr. Freeman: Unfortunately, in wartime our pilots would have to fly at night. Most low flying ends at 11 pm; only 5 per cent. of low flying takes place after sunset. I regret the disturbance that was caused to the children of the hon. Gentleman's constituents, but I can assure him that it was necessary.

Sir Anthony Meyer: Is my hon. Friend aware that most people in Wales are reassured to see RAF markings on planes as they fly over so low, but will he ensure that instructions are given to pilots not to use prominent buildings, such as district general hospitals, as landmarks on which to draw beam?

Mr. Freeman: I can assure my hon. Friend that hospitals and all residential locations are not used as targets. That may appear to be the case, but all the targets that pilots use for low-level missions are non-residential.

Army Ammunition Accidents

8. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the current level of Army ammunition accidents.

Mr. Freeman: According to Army records, the number of accidents in 1987 involving Army ammunition was 260. Those resulted in 112 injuries and six deaths; four civilians were injured and there were no civilian deaths. The accident rate in 1987 was not significantly different from that of the past 10 years.

Mr. McAllion: I hope that the Minister is sufficiently concerned by those figures, and by recent Army reports showing an increase in the number of accidents caused by lack of supervision and a general increase in the number of accidents among soldiers, to do something about it. Will he tell the House what steps he is prepared to take to ensure that training in the handling of ammunition and supervision of that handling is of the highest possible quality? What steps will he take to ensure that the appropriate authorities — district councils, community councils and environmental groups — are properly and fully consulted before Army exercises in order to minimise the risk of such exercises to the civilian population?

Mr. Freeman: The risk to civilians, as I hope I have shown, in 1987 and for the past 10 years was minimal. The hon. Gentleman is right to raise the matter, and I share his concern. Some 98 per cent. of ammunition accidents are caused by errors in drill by soldiers; only 2 per cent. are attributable to faulty ammunition. Although the statistics show that there has been no great change over the past 10 to 15 years, I can assure him that the Army and the Ministry of Defence take all possible steps to reduce these figures, which, I agree, are too high.

Mr. Stern: Will my hon. Friend join me in congratulating British Rail on conducting a thorough inquiry into the recent incident involving a munitions train at Stoke Gifford in my constituency, which concluded that the standards of handling of munitions in transit to avoid accidents involving civilians were of the highest and should remain so?

Mr. Freeman: I agree with my hon. Friend. We have always enjoyed close co-operation with British Rail. New regulations are to be introduced shortly, covering not rail but road transport, and I hope that that will improve our accident record still further.

Defence Programmes (Employment Implications)

9. **Mr. Meale:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he makes of the employment implications in the defence industries when considering reductions in defence expenditure programmes.

Mr. Sainsbury: Defence expenditure this year is over 20 per cent. higher in real terms than in 1978-79. In formulating our expenditure plans within the available resources we consider the employment implications for

industry. But our main criteria are the military requirement and the need to obtain the best value for money.

Mr. Meale: Is the Minister aware that the United Kingdom brokers, Scrimgeour Vickers, forecast that 100,000 jobs would be lost in conventional defence expenditure over the next three years? Has the reality of that been borne out by the expenditure White Paper published last week?

Mr. Sainsbury: I remind the hon. Gentleman that on 27 October last year he put his signature to an amendment proposing a non-aligned foreign and defence policy for this country and a massive reallocation of resources from weapons. I am glad to know that he is now concerned with the employment implications of our defence procurement programmes.

Mr. Mates: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is the height of hypocrisy for Opposition Members to call for less and less expenditure on defence unless and until it affects a job in their constituency?

Mr. Sainsbury: My hon. Friend is entirely right. It is worth remembering that both defence and procurement expenditure are substantially higher than they would have been had we continued at the rate that we inherited from the last Labour Government.

Mr. Ernie Ross: Regardless of whether we support defence spending on a particular range of weapons, it is the Minister's responsibility to tell us what effect he thinks the cuts in defence expenditure will have on jobs. The House has a right to know.

Mr. Sainsbury: The hon. Gentleman is looking at non-existent cuts. As I said, defence and procurement expenditure is substantially higher than the level that we inherited and is continuing at a more or less stable level.

Mr. Latham: Is my hon. Friend aware that one of the most depressing jobs of the Public Accounts Committee is to see the tremendous waste of money that there has been on procurement programmes? That money could have been spent properly, on decent weapons systems. Will my hon. Friend assure the House that the Department is putting its full weight behind Mr. Levene to get this matter sorted out?

Mr. Sainsbury: I agree that there have been mistakes in the past. I am happy to assure my hon. Friend that we are determined to secure the best possible value for money in our procurement expenditure.

Mr. O'Neill: Will the Minister tell us the position on staff shortages, which appear to be due to the funding difficulties referred to in today's edition of *The Independent*. Are they the reason for the delay in the production of nuclear warheads for the Trident programme? Will we have to borrow the warheads from the United States, or are we to have an independent deterrent?

Mr. Sainsbury: I can tell the hon. Gentleman that the headline to that article bore about as much relation to its content as its content bore to reality. I am happy to assure him that Aldermaston is nearly up to full establishment and that there are no problems due to funding difficulties.

Nuclear Tests (Radiation Victims)

10. **Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to receive the report of the National Radiological Protection Board on nuclear test veterans; when he will respond; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given in the House on Monday 18 January. I am pleased to be able to tell the House that on 28 January 1988 the NRPB intends to publish the final report into the mortality and cancer incidence in United Kingdom participants in the United Kingdom atmospheric nuclear weapon tests and experimental programmes.

Mr. Howarth: In the light of the recently released Cabinet papers, does the Minister accept that it is now clear that in 1950s British service men were exposed to the effects of nuclear tests and that undoubtedly some have suffered and are suffering? Is not the introduction of a proper system of compensation long overdue so that the families and the service men can be properly compensated for the damage to their health?

Mr. Sainsbury: As I said, the report is to be published on 28 January. It would be wrong to anticipate its contents.

Mr. Benn: Will the Minister address his mind to the question of the papers and reports in the Public Record Office that may have been suppressed, as the report on the Windscale fire in 1957 was suppressed, which prevented people who had claims for possible death or injury following 1957 having access to the relevant information? Will the Minister give an undertaking that all the reports made available to successive Governments since the original tests were conducted will be published so that people may study those reports as well as those of the National Radiological Protection Board?

Mr. Sainsbury: I suggest that the right hon. Gentleman awaits the publication of the report and then studies it before trying to anticipate its contents.

Mr. Denzil Davies: Does the Minister agree that the protection board's report is about statistics, not people, and that the board has never examined one person who was at the tests? Will the Ministry of Defence now sit down with the representatives of those people, who were not properly protected, to try to work out some decent compensation for them, because that is the British Government's moral responsibility?

Mr. Sainsbury: We shall all be in a much better position to judge the situation when we have had an opportunity to read what is a full and exhaustive report, involving a study of the records of over 22,000 service men who took part in the tests.

Chemical Weapons

11. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with the United States Government concerning chemical weapons.

Mr. Younger: I have regular discussions with my colleagues in the United States Government on a wide range of security and defence issues.

Mr. Hughes: Given that the Secretary of State knows that the multiple launch rocket system can carry a different

variety of warheads and that November's *International Defence Review* reported that chemical warheads are now being developed, will he assure the House that there are no plans to develop chemical warheads for the MLRS, and can we be sure that we can rely on that, given that in relation to Motebello, which was discussed earlier, answers were one thing one year but something very different a little later?

Mr. Younger: It would be for the United States to answer that question as it is the only country in the West making chemical weapons. As far as stationing is concerned, the United States has made it perfectly clear that it does not have any plans to station any chemical weapons in Europe, short of a war situation.

Mr. Key: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the case of chemical weapons is a classic example of what happens when countries unilaterally disarm? Will he join me in congratulating the work force of the Chemical Defence Establishment, Porton Down, whose defensive work is one reason why we have such a strong lead in chemical disarmament talks?

Mr. Younger: My hon. Friend is absolutely correct. The work that is done at Porton Down is entirely directed to assessing the protection of our own forces, who face, in this case, a threat to which they have no direct answer. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), who asked me the original question and who, I think, is a supporter of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, might like to note that although we have not had any chemical weapons since the 1950s, there is no sign whatever that the Soviet Union has made any gesture to reduce its production.

Mr. Denzil Davies: The Secretary of State is aware that the United States still has a large stock of chemical weapons in the Federal Republic. Does the British Army have any access to that stock, or is the stock solely and exclusively for the use of the United States Army?

Mr. Younger: Yes, those stocks are entirely the property and for the use by the United States forces. I understand that they intend to phase them out, as they are becoming aged, and to replace them with the new binary weapons, which NATO decided to ask the United States to produce.

Mr. Brazier: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the Soviet Union has an estimated 14 factories producing such weapons, and that the Americans are planning just one?

Mr. Younger: Yes, my hon. Friend is quite correct. It is sad that the Soviet Union does not yet appear to have been clear-cut in its admission about its stocks of chemical weapons. However, it is interesting to note that, on the information that we have, it probably has about 300,000 tons of chemical weapons awaiting use. As I have said, we have not had any such weapons since the 1950s. It is about time that the Soviet Union followed our lead.

Low-flying Aircraft

12. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received concerning the low-flying of aircraft over the site of the National Eisteddfod of Wales in Ponthmeidog in August 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: One complaint has been received concerning low-flying military aircraft over the site of the National Eisteddfod of Wales in Porthmadog in August 1987. This is currently under investigation.

Mr. Wigley: Is the Minister aware of the dismay that will be felt in Wales at the reply that he gave to my hon. Friend the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas), in response to question 7, and at the contempt that he showed for feelings in Wales when he gave no apology for the effect of low-flying aircraft on the community? Is he further aware that, despite repeated requests to the Royal Air Force to avoid low-flying aircraft over this site, there were specific flights which appeared to be buzzing the field and disrupting competition there? Is it not high time that the RAF showed greater sensitivity about such activity and towards the needs of the local communities?

Mr. Freeman: As I have said, one incident is under investigation and, if it turns out that there was a violation of the avoidance area, I shall write to the hon. Gentleman to express apologies and say what action has been taken. In reply to an earlier question, I said quite correctly that the hon. Gentleman and his colleague, the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas), belong to a party which is opposed to low-flying aircraft anywhere in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Bill Walker *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Walker. I remind the hon. Member that the question is about Wales, not Scotland.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my hon. Friend agree that all investigations carried out by the RAF into allegations of unauthorised low flying are very thorough and very full? Does he further agree that low flying, particularly contour low flying and low-level navigation, is an essential part of our deterrence capability, just as search and rescue pilots must be of a standard to enhance our deterrence capability?

Mr. Freeman: I can confirm that all complaints are properly investigated and those of a serious nature are investigated by the Royal Air Force police. I write to hon. Members who draw complaints to my attention when those investigations are completed.

European Fighter Aircraft

13. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to reduce the Royal Air Force current requirement for the European fighter aircraft.

Mr. Sainsbury: As I told the hon. Member on 8 December 1987, it is too early in the project to forecast with certainty the eventual size of the United Kingdom purchase of European fighter aircraft. The work-sharing agreement is, however, based on the declared requirement for 250 aircraft.

Mr. Ross: The Minister will accept that his failure to commit the Government to 260 fighters, which the RAF says it requires, has serious employment consequences for those who will participate in the programme. When will he be able to guarantee that he intends to protect those 260 orders within the present defence review?

Mr. Sainsbury: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that it would be neither normal nor sensible to place a firm

order until after the project definition stage has been completed and there is a design of an aircraft to order and also, by that time, a reasonably firm estimate of the cost.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Will my hon. Friend, in any negotiations, guard contractually against a situation where one of the other parties places a larger initial order than he intends to take delivery of, so that he gets a larger percentage of the work? This is grossly unfair to the other parties to the agreement.

Mr. Sainsbury: My hon. Friend raises an important point. I can assure him that the work-share agreement for the production phase will be based on the declared orders at that time and not on the declared orders at the project definition stage.

Mr. Rogers: Will the Minister ensure that, in the final requirements laid down for this aircraft, the radar installed will be European, and preferably British?

Mr. Sainsbury: We must await the outcome of the present competitive tendering exercise, but the United Kingdom is strongly represented in both the bidding consortia for the aircraft's radar.

Nuclear Weapons

14. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's latest plans to modernise their nuclear weaponry.

Mr. Younger: We are proceeding on schedule with the modernisation of Britain's strategic nuclear deterrent through Trident. In addition, some technical studies are taking place with a view to identifying a possible successor to the United Kingdom's current sub-strategic weapon, the free-fall bomb; however, no decisions on a replacement for this have yet been taken.

Mr. Flannery: Is it true that in the next few years NATO is to introduce thousands of much more powerful nuclear weapons? I ask that question since the Government, and the Prime Minister in particular, do not seem to show the same enthusiasm for the INF treaty as the United States and the other countries in Europe. After Montebello, are more powerful weapons coming in?

Mr. Younger: The hon. Gentleman has asked me a question, and I must, in the kindest possible way, say quite simply that he is wrong. Not only has Britain shown a strong enthusiasm for the reduction of nuclear weapons, but we are the first Government in Britain to have supported a move, which has been successful, to remove a whole range of nuclear weapons and to reduce the total number available to East and West. I should have thought that that was a great success.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. McCusker:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 January.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others, including one with the President of Egypt. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. McCusker: Will the Prime Minister find a few minutes today to consider whether anything of any value is left of the Anglo-Irish Agreement? Will she now concede that it has failed in its primary objective of reducing violence in Northern Ireland, not only as illustrated in the statistics of the past two years, but in the statement by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland last week that the people of Northern Ireland should prepare for another terrorist onslaught, and, more immediately, by the death of another civilian and another policeman in Northern Ireland yesterday? If relationships between the right hon. Lady's Government and the Government of the Republic have failed to improve, to the extent that they could have prevented the outbursts from the Dublin Government over the past 24 hours in relation to the statement made to the House yesterday, what has the agreement to commend itself, except that it continues to alienate large sections of the community in Northern Ireland?

The Prime Minister: It will not surprise the hon. Gentleman to hear that I disagree with him. The Anglo-Irish Agreement has led to greatly increased co-operation on security, which is to the advantage of the people in Northern Ireland and in the Republic of Ireland. With regard to the statement that was made yesterday, I have nothing to add to what my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General said.

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson: Following her remarks on "Panorama" last night, will my right hon. Friend consider the future of the National Health Service management board? Does she think that it adequately reflects the commercial and managerial disciplines of the private sector, and is she satisfied that, since it is responsible for perhaps the largest service organisation in western Europe, it has the powers that any normal board of directors should have over such a massive organisation?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend is aware, the management board has on it people who are well accustomed to managing private sector organisations. We are now gathering together the requisite information, which shows that different authorities make very different use of the money at their disposal. Now that we have that information, the management board may be able to take more effective action on it. I agree with my hon. Friend about the importance of the excellent management of resources throughout the service.

Mr. Kinnock: Will the Prime Minister respond to last Friday's letter from Mr. Trevor Clay of the Royal College of Nursing and other leaders of nursing and midwives trade unions by agreeing to meet those people urgently?

The Prime Minister: Mr. Clay wrote to me and to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services, and my right hon. Friend will be meeting them very shortly. [HON. MEMBERS: "You."] I am delighted that people always want to see me. I am absolutely delighted. Yet if ever I say that I shall do something I am accused of dictatorship and all sorts of things. We have rather a lot of most excellent Ministers on the Government Front Bench, and it is right that the Secretary of State in charge should see these people first, and that is what will happen.

Mr. Kinnock: Does the right hon. Lady not realise that those people want to see her because she is the architect of the crisis of underfunding? Why will she not see them? Why does she treat the nurses with such contempt? Does

she not realise that those nurses are motivated entirely by concern for the National Health Service and the patients in their care? Who can believe that her so-called review of the National Health Service can have any integrity, when she slams the door in the face of people best placed to know the problems of health care and of funding because they have to deal with those problems every day of their working lives?

The Prime Minister: It was this Government who, because the Royal College of Nursing had never gone on strike, and does not, set up a review body, whose recommendations have so far been honoured. It is this Government who have seen to it that nurses have had increases in pay over and above inflation—30 per cent. in real terms. It is this Government who have reduced the standard working week of nurses from 40 to 37½ hours. It was the last Labour Government who cut the pay of nurses.

Mr. Kinnock: If the Prime Minister has such faith in her figures, why does she not have the nurses into No. 10 Downing street and offer that recitation to them face to face? Why does she not do that and see what response she gets? Perhaps she knows what response she will get and that is why she is frightened to meet them.

The Prime Minister: Which of the figures is the right hon. Gentleman challenging? He seems to be indicating that he is challenging none of them. Or is he saying that he does not believe any figures given by the Government? If so, why does he ask any questions?

Mr. Squire: Is my right hon. Friend aware we on the Government Benches welcome her comments last night and the record of her Government? Is she also aware, given the impossibility of a National Health Service meeting immediately every demand that is made upon it, that in addition to looking at further ways of funding it, some of us would also wish us to be looking at medical priorities within the National Health Service?

The Prime Minister: Doctors, of course, make decisions on medical priorities almost every day. I think that it is for them to establish priorities. I doubt very much that we could do it—not between patients. But I know that a number of doctors have made comments recently, which have been very carefully noted, which indicate that they are thinking about this matter themselves.

Mr. Wigley: In view of what the right hon. Lady said on television last night, that the review of the National Health Service should be expedited very quickly, will she suggest to health authorities considering hospital closures that they should suspend such closures until the review has been completed?

The Prime Minister: Not in any way, because, as the hon. Gentleman is aware, sometimes the building of a big new facility which brings new possibilities of medical treatment to a whole region may also depend on the closure of some local hospitals. To stop the one will also stop the other and could result in less medical treatment than the present system provides.

Q2. **Mr. Gerald Bowden:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Bowden: My right hon. Friend must be well aware that the statement she made last night about instituting her fundamental review of the National Health Service will be widely welcomed, since there is widespread public concern about the operation of the service. Does she join me in condemning those who callously exploit individual suffering, often misrepresenting the facts, for crude political purposes?

The Prime Minister: Yes, Sir. I have had occasion at Question Time before to correct the alleged facts of a particular case. Last week at Question Time another case was brought up, of someone who, it was said, had been moved 2 miles in a furniture van which was dirty and smelly. I made inquiries of the regional health authority, which has indicated that the patients, two patients who could not be moved by ambulance because they had to be moved on beds, were in fact moved in a van. They were kept warm with thermal blankets, they were moved skilfully and the van was clean. They were accompanied by ambulance men and nurses on a short journey, and their condition on arrival was as good as it had been when they left the first hospital. The medical staff and the consultant orthopaedic surgeon were happy with all the arrangements. The regional health authority chairman said:

"ambulance men and nurses have expressed their concern at the distorted reporting of the transfer by the news media, particularly as they would never associate themselves professionally with any action which compromised the well-being of patients."

Q3. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Flannery: When will the Prime Minister realise that reading out cold-blooded statistics at the Dispatch Box — *[Interruption.]* — despite all the noise that hon. Members behind her make, will not solve the problems of the National Health Service? Only more money will solve those problems. Would it not be a good beginning to give deserving nurses the 20 per cent. increase which they have asked for? *[Interruption.]* I hope hon. Members will let me say what I want to say. Is the right hon. Lady not ashamed that she can say, "I want to go into hospital on the day I want, to the doctor I want, and when I want," when she is stopping thousands of people doing just that? Babies are dying while she is doing that.

The Prime Minister: First, next year there will be more money, £1,100 million more, which will be paid by the taxpayer. Secondly, 3,000 babies survive every year who would not have survived as far back as 1978-79. Thirdly, it sounds as if the hon. Gentleman wants a voucher scheme. Fourthly, in Sheffield health authority area in-patient cases are up by 13·5 per cent. since 1982—the last reorganisation—and day cases are up by 4,000. The Northern general hospital had a £9·5 million development opened in the summer of 1986, and there is a £8 million development opening this year. At the children's hopital there is a £8 million development opening in 1989. I hope that the hon. Gentleman is pleased with the advances under this Government.

Q4. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Evans: Does my right hon. Friend agree that British Aerospace and the people of Welwyn and Hatfield should be congratulated on designing, producing and selling 109 146 Jetliners and 684 British Aerospace executive jets? Does she also agree that this mirrors the success of privatisation?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend sets out the most excellent record of a successful company, which is selling aircraft in the highly competitive North American market, and getting increased performance and increased profits. I understand that it also exports to about 40 countries. I join him in congratulating the company on its excellent record. It is a tribute to privatisation.

Q5. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Banks: I have given the Prime Minister prior notice of my supplementary in the hope of getting a considered response. Is the Prime Minister aware that the world population of black rhinos has gone down from 65,000 in 1970 to under 4,000 now and continues to decline? The reason, as she knows, is poaching. One of the most important world markets for black rhino horn products is Hong Kong. Will the Prime Minister tell us what Her Majesty's Government are doing to clamp down on the internal and external trade of black rhino horn products in Hong Kong?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving me notice. I know that he and many hon. Members are interested in conserving the rhino. The hon. Gentleman has asked the Foreign and Commonwealth Office a number of questions and I have taken steps to find out the precise position with regard to Hong Kong.

The Hong Kong Government have banned the import of rhino products, including rhino horn, since 1979 and a total ban on the export of all rhino products, including horn, has been in force since 1 April 1986. A total ban on the sale of rhino products within Hong Kong will take effect from July this year.

Q6. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hughes: In the course of her busy day, will my right hon. Friend take time to note the achievement of the London borough of Harrow, which for the third year running has the best O-level results in the country? That is partly due to many years of parent power, as envisaged under the Education Reform Bill, being practised in Harrow. Will she consider an invitation from the London borough of Harrow to see that success at first hand?

The Prime Minister: I gladly join my hon. Friend in congratulating Harrow on its excellent results. May I point out to him that Barnet comes pretty close—in particular Barnet girls are very good indeed. I hope that the opportunities provided under the new Education Reform Bill to give parents a wider say will extend the excellent results of which my hon. Friend speaks.

Parliamentary Standards

3.31 pm

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I seek your guidance on a matter relating to the reputation of the House. Yesterday, on BBC Radio 4 news, at 1 o'clock, an hon. Member stated that he had provoked his naming and expulsion from the House so that he would be invited to appear on the Terry Wogan show and state his views on the Westland affair to an audience of 6 million people.

Mr. Speaker: Order. What goes on outside the House is, thank goodness, nothing to do with me.

National Health Service

3.32 pm

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): On a point of order Mr. Speaker. Last week, in the House, a Labour Member made an allegation about treatment under the National Health Service. This afternoon, the Prime Minister clearly made the point that that allegation had been repudiated by workers in the National Health Service.

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is a continuation of Prime Minister's questions. Perhaps on another occasion the hon. Gentleman will be lucky and be able to put his own question.

Regional Health Authorities (Abolition)

3.33 pm

Miss Ann Widdecombe (Maidstone): I beg to move

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to abolish regional health authorities.

In seeking leave to introduce the Bill, may I first welcome the comments made by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on "Panorama" last night. I am sure that they will bring great relief to the general public, because if the Government are as successful in reviewing the National Health Service as they have been in revising the education system and the economy, there is great hope for the Health Service in the next few years. I thank my right hon. Friend for her remarks.

I propose a modest measure for directing money in the Health Service away from administration and into patient care. I therefore seek leave to introduce a Bill to abolish the regional health authorities. My reasons for doing that are based, first, on the ground of cost. The money would be better spent on patients. Secondly, the functions of the regional health authorities are superfluous, as they could be carried out by district health authorities, by a central board of management, or by central Government. Thirdly, their structure is wrong, as too many disparate interests are grouped together, competing for scarce resources. Fourthly, there is too little accountability.

Theoretically, the regional health authorities are accountable to the Secretary of State, but their powers and budgets are devolved, and very often we hear it said that something must be a purely regional decision. Unlike the Secretary of State, regional health authorities do not have to answer to the public through the ballot box every five years for what they are doing. Furthermore, many of those who sit on regional health authorities have to pass judgment on local situations prevailing in areas with which they are not familiar and which they do not know, whereas district health authorities deal wholly and all the time with what is going on in their own patch, with which they are very familiar.

In 1986, across the country, regional health authorities cost £109 million on administration alone. That figure was given by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Health in answer to a parliamentary question from my hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood). That was £109 million on top of the £317 million that we spend every year on administration costs per district. That represents thousands of nurses' salaries. That represents an opportunity lost for thousands of operations. The Government have always stated, and have more than proved, that they believe that money must be spent at the sharp end of our public services, so that money should be taken from that wholly superfluous tier of administration and put in at the sharp end.

The Bill would allow district authorities to control consultants' contracts. At the moment, the regions issue contracts to consultants and the financial liability for them is passed on to the districts. I know of no commercial analogy which allows one department to issue contracts and another to accept the financial liability.

The Bill would devolve the control of property and land to the districts. At the moment there are considerable numbers of surplus properties and pieces of land throughout the country. There is very little incentive for districts to put their backs into selling that property,

because too often the proceeds go back to the regions because they are over certain limits. The districts could develop those properties and that land, or sell them to raise income to help patients, which is what the service should be about. I strongly believe, therefore, that they should have the control, which would mean that they would also have the incentive to make the best use of such assets.

The territorial overview of facilities that would have to be provided, not in every district, but simply between three or four districts, could, I believe, easily be carried out centrally by a fairly minimal and not particularly costly expansion of the existing regional liaison structure within the Department.

There is already provision for the central purchasing of supplies. I believe that this should continue, but that the districts should take over the control of distribution.

It has often been said that 219 districts is a rather large number for any Government Department to deal with, and I have some sympathy with that view. Nevertheless, the Department of the Environment has to deal with several hundred district councils, and the Department of Education and Science is contemplating dealing with a large number of individual schools, which will draw their grants centrally. I therefore think that this requirement could be accommodated by a slight expansion of the regional liaison department.

I do not regard this proposal as any sort of alternative to any other major reorganisation that may be proposed for our health services, nor that on its own it will solve the problems of the National Health Service, but I do believe that at the moment we are spending money that could be better spent, and this would, administratively speaking, be a fairly easy and straightforward way of getting the money for patient care, to pay nurses and to pay for operations.

3.39 pm

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East) *rose—*

Mr. Speaker: Does the hon. Member wish to oppose the motion?

Mr. Nellist: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The hon. Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) described this as "a modest measure to drive money away from administration and toward patient care." The abolition of the regional health authority structure in the Health Service would mean an enormous upheaval in the organisation of that service. When the hon. Member says that the cost is £109 million for administration, she is, quite frankly, naive if she believes that if her Bill were to be passed the Government would take that £109 million and put it into patient care or use it to increase the wages of those working in the Health Service. As with all the other changes that have taken place in the past eight or nine years, from redundancies in British Steel, to the abolition of the county council structure, the money saved would go back to the Treasury and end up as tax cuts for the top 5 per cent. of the population.

I should like to ask the hon. Member for Maidstone, not today, but at a later stage, to say whether she has approached her colleagues in government to seek ministerial backing for this measure. It seems to me, from a pamphlet from the Adam Smith Institute this month, that once again the Right wing, inside and outside the Tory party, is pushing towards more privatisation in the Health Service. The pamphlet from the Adam Smith Institute said:

"if the Regional Health Authorities are to be retained at all, which is a matter of debate, they could exist as branch offices of a quasi-independent national board. Alternatively, their staffing levels could be reduced and their operations could be made more flexible by the greater use of contracting rather than in-house expertise."

A fortnight ago the hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) started to wave the privatisation flag for the Post Office, and today the flag is being waved by the hon. Member for Maidstone in respect of the Health Service.

As to regional health authorities being "superfluous", there is a clear need for strategic planning, for example, of the siting of regional facilities, whether it be for children's heart operations or for renal dialysis centres. One of the original aims of the regional health authorities when they were established in 1974 was to link each of the 14 authorities with a university medical school and a teaching hospital, primarily to improve the distribution of medical manpower and reduce inequalities between the regions. In the past decade rising unemployment and growing poverty have militated against any serious work in that direction. In fact, Tory Government decisions, ranging from inadequate nutritional standards in schools, all the way through to mass unemployment, simply mean that more people fall sick. The solution is not one of administration, but is one of finance. That is the core of my opposition to the Bill.

On page 2 of its annual report for 1986-87 on the Health Service in England, the Department of Health and Social Security makes it clear how the regional health authorities fit into the centralised structure of health care. They are part of a centralised, unelected, unaccountable structure in which control is exercised downwards from the Secretary of State through the regional health authorities to the districts themselves. The chairmen and members of the regional health authorities are appointed by the Secretary of State. The regional health authorities then dictate the membership of the district health authorities and, in particular places such as the west midlands, the north-west, Merseyside and the hon. Member for Maidstone's own area of south-east Thames, trade union nominees have been weeded out, and vetoed by regional health authorities for having the temerity to stand against cuts in the Health Service.

In my own region, the west midlands, there were three candidates last year — George Evans for Wolverhampton, Marilyn York for Bromsgrove and Redditch and Raghib Ahsan, who was already a member of the West Birmingham health authority. Two of those three were the only woman and the only ethnic minority candidate proposed for the district health authorities. They were vetoed by the regional health authority as part of the process of weeding out opposition on those bodies. Although Marilyn York gained a position in another health authority, George Evans and Raghib Ahsan were vetoed, as was John Dempsey, a National Union of Public Employees full-time official who was nominated for a regional health authority seat.

I can think of legions of examples which, with the under-funding of the Health Service and draconian methods of management, locally and regionally, have no doubt fuelled the anger of health workers in recent years. No doubt many health workers would have some initial sympathy with the move to abolish regional health authorities. A better response, however, would be to campaign for the democratisation of an expanded Health Service, which should include the present peripheral,

[Mr. Nellist]

privately owned institutions, all the way from abortion clinics to the drug companies themselves. The majority of district and regional health authorities ought to be elected and accountable, with, in turn, a majority of their seats reserved for health workers and other trade unionists. Local authorities should have direct representation so as to represent the interests of the population at large. At some stage of his or her adult life everyone is a consumer of the National Health Service, barring of course the Tory Cabinet.

Clearly, the Government would want some representation to secure a reasonable, even distribution, based on specific regional problems. There should be direct representation from the districts to the regional health authorities. In other words, control and management should extend from the bottom up, with the full involvement of ordinary working people, and not Tory placemen. These proposals are outlined in a private Member's Bill, which I support, which has been brought in by my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon). I refer in particular to clause 6 of the National Health Service (Improved Provision of Services) Bill.

There can hardly be any family left untouched by the crisis in the National Health Service, which the Prime Minister again refused to admit today. During the past three months I have brought examples before the House from Coventry ranging from delayed heart operations for babies to the proposed closure of one of the city hospitals specialising in geriatric care and, in some cases, to undignified reductions such as the complete curtailment of supplies of incontinence pads. I told the House of a constituent who, before Christmas, was drying out on a radiator used incontinence pads for her elderly mother because of district health authority cuts. The root cause of that is not administration, but the financial cuts imposed by the Government.

Of the 21 OECD countries, the United Kingdom is 17th on the list — only Spain, Portugal, Greece and New Zealand spend less on health. One of the consequences of that is that for the first time since 1970 the number of deaths of infants between the ages of 28 days and 12 months is rising in England and Wales. The huge problems faced daily by patients, families and Health Service workers are light years away from the Secretary of State for Social Services, who goes into a private hospital at £1,000 a week when he gets ill, and from the Prime Minister, who, in her three periods of illness during her term of office, has used private care on each occasion.

In the past eight years under-funding has totalled £1·5 billion, as estimated by the Select Committee on Social Services. The Government will claim that they spend more money — we heard that again today during Question Time. However, taking into account inflation, the extra cost of drugs and equipment, which the Government estimate to be rising faster than inflation, the Government's estimates of the rising population of the elderly, and the increased sickness, which is due to their policies, it is clear that their 2 per cent. real growth targets are not being met.

In the west midlands, James Ackers, the regional health authority chairman, said that the authority is under-funded by £40 million this year on pay awards alone. The £6·7 million that the authority received before Christmas is pathetically inadequate.

The deep and widespread opposition to the Government's cavalier attitude to the Health Service, ranging from the 40,000-signature petition in Coventry against the closure of Whitley hospital, to the half-day strike in the city last November, to the increasingly spontaneous decisions of health workers to step up their action in defence of the Health Service and their own working conditions and wages, was perhaps best evidenced last night in the constituency of the former Secretary of State for Social Services—Sutton Coldfield —when the workers at Goodhope hospital voted that, if the closure proposals for the accident and emergency services at that hospital are not withdrawn, they will occupy and work in the hospital, with the backing of the area consultant, to take out of the hands of this Government the decision whether or not health facilities should be given to working people in our areas.

The responsibility for co-ordinating this action and supporting it around the country now lies, in my view, with the Trades Union Congress, which should bring together the regional action of workers into a one-day national strike against the Government to warn them that it is our Health Service, not theirs. The Bill should be rejected.

Question put, pursuant to Standing Order No. 19 (Motions for leave to bring in Bills and nomination of Select Committees at commencement of public business):—

The House divided: Ayes 88, Noes 91.

Division No. 153] **[3.48 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Bevan, David Gilroy
Boswell, Tim
Bowis, John
Brazier, Julian
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Butler, Chris
Carrington, Matthew
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dover, Den
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forth, Eric
French, Douglas
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Holt, Richard
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Janman, Timothy
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James
Kirkwood, Archy
Lawrence, Ivan
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
McCrindle, Robert
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Gerrard
Page, Richard
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Redwood, John
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stern, Michael
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tredinnick, David
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen

Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Nicholas Bennett and
Mr. Simon Burns.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Anderson, Donald
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Buchan, Norman
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carttiss, Michael
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alastair
Doran, Frank
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Faulds, Andrew
Favell, Tony
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Hinchliffe, David
Home Robertson, John
Hood, James
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kirkhope, Timothy
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Tom
McCartney, Ian
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Maxton, John
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Mullin, Chris
Nellist, Dave
O'Neill, Martin
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter
Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Radice, Giles
Richardson, Ms Jo
Robertson, George
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerald
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thomas, Dafydd Elis
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Worthington, Anthony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Harry Cohen and
Mr. Pat Wall.

Question accordingly negatived.

Royal Prerogative

3.59 pm

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wish to raise with you a major constitutional question arising from the gross abuse of the royal prerogative by Ministers in the following respects. It is now clear that, by royal prerogative, members of the security services are allowed to break the law. It is also clear that Ministers will exempt people who so do on the grounds of the national security, again using the royal prerogative. It is also clear that Ministers will go to the courts and claim national security and will win judgments, such as that given by the Master of the Rolls, on the groundss of royal prerogative.

In this House, questions on security are refused by the Table on the grounds of national security under the royal prerogative. If hon. Members raise this matter in the House it will be sub judice under the royal prerogative, and if hon. Members draw conclusions from it and use words that are plain in the English dictionary to describe it, they are suspended for using unparliamentary language.

I make my point briefly at your request, Mr. Speaker, but I genuinely believe that the abuse of the royal prerogative by this Government has negated the rights and responsibilities of the House of Commons, which we elected you to defend. I do not ask you to respond today, but I ask you to consider carefully the points that I have made, which are all founded in established fact and records, and to consider how best the House can defend itself against a major evasion of the Government's manifest constitutional responsibility to the Parliament elected by the people of this country.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow) *rose*——

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Before we go any further, may I say to the right hon. Gentleman that I shall carefully consider what he said, but I should like to have more details about what he has in mind.

Mr. Dalyell: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I provide the detailed and precise points that we would like you to consider? Sir John Donaldson, the Master of the Rolls, said that law-breaking by the Security Service, MI5, was in the public interest——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That matter is sub judice and we cannot discuss it on the Floor of the House.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. You asked for more information——

Mr. Dalyell *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I did not call the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell). Mr. Campbell-Savours.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Further to that point of order Mr. Speaker. Perhaps I can help you. You may have noticed that over the past seven days I have tabled innumerable questions on the royal prerogative and its use. If you study the answers that have been given, you will notice that there is ambiguity in the replies. I know that you will say, legitimately, that answers from Ministers are not a matter for the Chair. However, I put it to you that this is not a minor question. The answers are significant, in the way that my right hon. Friend the Member for

[Mr. Campbell-Savours]

Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) has suggested, because they have a constitutional importance. There are people throughout the world who are observing those replies because they have implications not only for our Parliament but for other Parliaments throughout the Commonwealth. May I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to consider those answers and make the necessary representations to Ministers?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I should have no time to do anything else if I studied all the written answers. I have no intention of doing that. If all the right hon. and hon. Gentlemen who have raised these matters would kindly put their points in writing, I shall, of course, gladly consider the matter.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is the right of Parliament to ask Ministers about any form of public activity. That is one of the jobs of Parliament. If that was not one of the roles that we play, Parliament would be very much eroded and undermined. I am asking you to rule on a matter of great public importance—our right to question the activities of the security and intelligence services when we believe that there may be serious allegations of law-breaking.

As I understand the law—I am sure that you will correct me if I am wrong, Mr. Speaker—all public servants have a duty and responsibility to uphold the law. Parliament has not given any public servant the right to break the law. I am referring, not simply to the exchanges that we had yesterday, but to wider issues. If there is a genuine feeling in Government circles that the security and intelligence services are in a position to break the law, and that the law that we are all supposed to uphold does not apply to the security and intelligence services, are we, as Members of Parliament, not able to ask Ministers about that? That would mean that the security and intelligence services would be acting illegally and were not being prosecuted for such activities, and we, as well as the press, would be gagged, because we would have no way of questioning Ministers. It is an important issue.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I sense that this is a continuation of what went on yesterday. *[Interruption.]* Order. The hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) addressed his point of order to me.

There is every reason why the Government should be questioned on security matters, as they were yesterday. I cannot rule on a general proposition, but I say yet again that if right hon. and hon. Gentlemen will specify their points in writing, I will look into them.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick), referred to one of my hon. Friends as Hitler. I imagine that that is most unparliamentary——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The best thing that we can do is get on with the debate on the Army.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Does the hon. Gentleman wish to take up the time of his colleagues who want to speak in the debate? If he does, I shall have to bear that in mind.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I want to raise with you the question of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, for which you have a special responsibility. The CPA is made up of representatives of all the Parliaments throughout the Commonwealth. I put it to you that there are interests in Parliaments throughout the Commonwealth that mirror the interests that are raised in this Parliament. The issue of the royal prerogative will be debated in other Parliaments.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have already said that if the hon. Gentleman will specify his point, I will consider it.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. There has been a plethora of allegations, particularly in recent months, about the activities of the security services against past Labour Governments. I know that this is not original, but it is appropriate to this series of points of order. According to the rules of the House, it seems that if something happened in the past, in the 1970s, it is history; if it is happening at the moment, it is sub judice; and if it will happen in the future it is hypothetical. I have been elected, not just once, but several times, by 50,000 people in Coventry, South-East to come here and scrutinise the activities of Ministers. How can I do that with those constrictions on my activities?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is bound by the Standing Orders and rules of the House on these matters. There are plenty of opportunities to raise these matters.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: When?

Mr. Speaker: We have had debates in the past, and there was Question Time yesterday.

Mr. Richard Ryder (Assistant Government Whip): I beg to move, That this House do now adjourn.

Mr. Speaker: The Question is——

Mr. Benn *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I cannot answer the right hon. Gentleman's questions, because I do not know what he is talking about.

Mr. Benn: To save you having to read a lot of documents Mr. Speaker, may I put the point to you simply? If the House and you, Mr. Speaker, accept that anything that the Government define, including theft and murder, as covered by national security cannot be debated, the House and you personally are reduced to impotent witnesses of actions by an unaccountable Government. You do not have to read the papers or any documents or written answers to appreciate the vitality and importance of the point that is being made.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I realise the importance of the matter, and I am the first to protect the right of Back Benchers to ask questions, provided that they are within our regulations. I shall continue so to do.

The Army

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Ryder.]*

4.9 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Tim Sainsbury): Just over 175 years ago, the Duke of Wellington said:

"The country must have a large and efficient army, one capable of meeting the enemy abroad, or they must expect to meet him at home."

After successive years of growth in the defence budget, and in the capabilities of the Army, the British soldier is better equipped, better trained and more highly professional than he has ever been. I am confident that the Iron Duke would immediately recognise the same great fighting spirit that is to be found in the British Army today as it was in his time.

The development of the Army must be considered against the wider background of East-West relations. The intermediate nuclear forces treaty, which was signed by the United States and the USSR last December, is a milestone, especially because of the precedent that it so clearly establishes for asymmetrical reductions and intrusive verification regimes which will be of central importance as we move forward to discuss conventional and chemical arms control—both sectors in which the Soviets have clear advantages.

The Alliance strategy of extended nuclear deterrence and flexible response remains unchanged. All the necessary ingredients of flexible response — strong conventional forces, theatre and intermediate nuclear forces, and strategic nuclear forces — remain in place and, as before, the potential aggressor faces a range of possible NATO reactions to aggression which he cannot calculate with precision in advance, and which face him with unacceptable risk.

It is right that, with the treaty signed, closer attention is focusing on the conventional disparities. We must recall that the central security problem for western Europe has been, and remains, the massive military power of the Soviet Union in central Europe—especially its capability to mount an invasion of western Europe at short notice.

The Warsaw pact continues to modernise its conventional and nuclear forces facing us in cental Europe. By any standards, its superiority is substantial —twice as many soldiers as NATO, more than twice as many main battle tanks, three times the artillery, twice as many tactical fixed-wing aircraft and several thousand assault and ground attack helicopters.

Nor is it simply a case, as some have claimed, of Warsaw pact quantity opposing NATO quality. In recent years, the Warsaw pact has made very extensive improvements to its conventional forces, concentrating in particular on enhancing the firepower and mobility of its offensive systems, such as tanks and artillery. For example, improved tanks are now appearing in the group of Soviet forces in Germany fitted with explosive reactive armour, which pose a significant extra threat, as the armour is more difficult to penetrate. The T64B and T80 are equipped with a 125 mm smooth-bore gun, which is capable of firing anti-tank guided missiles as well as conventional rounds.

More effective helicopters are also appearing, with two new attack helicopters about to enter service. The number of heavier calibre artillery pieces based in eastern Europe is roughly double what it was in 1981. The 152 mm howitzer not only uses a more effective conventional round, but is capable of firing nuclear rounds.

At the same time, the Soviets' concerted development of the infrastructure of command, control and communications will enhance the flexibility and quicken the reaction time of the Warsaw pact forces, increasing their capability to make rapid and deep offensive thrusts. Its possession of a wide spectrum of chemical weapons remains a most significant threat. It is unmatched on our part, thus giving its forces a considerable potential advantage in the light of our inability to respond in kind to a chemical attack.

Those factors, together with the potential aggressor's ability to select the time and place of attack to achieve an overwhelming local superiority, presents a formidable challenge to NATO forces committed not to be the first to use force. The British Army of the Rhine makes a major contribution to NATO's response to that challenge.

The centrepiece of the Army's contribution to NATO and the forward defence of the United Kingdom is its role in the central region within the Northern Army Group known as NORTHAG. BAOR consists of 1st British Corps and supporting elements to provide the necessary logistic support. The BAOR peacetime strength is 55,000, and that will be increased to 56,000 by the end of the decade. BAOR is the most tangible evidence of the Government's continued commitment to the forward defence of Europe. Three armoured divisions, containing seven armoured brigades, an airmobile brigade and substantial numbers of supporting corps troops, are in place in peacetime.

On mobilisation, the numbers in BAOR would be increased to more than 150,000 by the movement, from the United Kingdom to the Federal Republic, of 2nd Infantry Division, containing one regular infantry brigade and two territorial infantry brigades, and other units.

The NORTHAG area covers northern Germany, roughly from the Ruhr to the coast. Within that area 1st British Corps is responsible for a 60-km wide sector of the front. The Commander-in-Chief BAOR also carried the NATO appointment of Commander NORTHAG.

Since the adoption of the strategy of forward defence and flexible response by NATO in 1967, NORTHAG has planned to fight its defensive battle as far to the east as possible. But continuing improvements in Soviet firepower and developments in its military doctrine have led to its placing great emphasis on the concentration of forces to achieve surprise and local superiority.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): With regard to BAOR, has the Minister seen the report of the Comptroller and Auditor General which was issued by the National Audit Office a week or two ago? Does he accept that there is room for economies in BAOR, as is suggested in the report? Will he say whether he thinks that that is the case?

Mr. Sainsbury: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that it is normal to wait until the Public Accounts Committee has considered the report and responded in the normal way through a Treasury minute. We should not anticipate what the PAC has to say on that subject.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Does the Minister have a view on the matter?

Mr. Sainsbury: The hon. Gentleman is asking me to anticipate the PAC's report. As he is a member of the PAC, that is a rather surprising request.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I am not asking the hon. Gentleman to anticipate a report of the PAC; I am asking him to respond to a report that has been produced by the National Audit Office, which makes a number of statements. I am asking for his comments.

Mr. Sainsbury: The National Audit Office's report will be considered by the PAC, which presumably will then give its views. When it has done so, as is the convention, the Government will respond.

A new concept for the defence of the NORTHAG area has therefore been devised to respond to the new developments in Soviet firepower and changes in its military doctrine.

The essence of the new concept is to place greater emphasis on the selection and defence of the most vital areas, the employment of reserve formations, tactical flexibility and mobility and close co-operation with allied air forces. Limited penetration into NATO territory would be accepted to expose the flanks of the enemy to a variety of counter-moves using reserve formations. That does not imply any abandonment of the principle of forward defence, which remains a fundamental tenet of NATO strategy. Nor does it imply a willingness to abandon West German territory to an invader. But it recognises that force improvements to the various national corps, including 1st British Corps, will permit the adoption of a more mobile tactical concept within the overall strategy of flexible response and forward defence.

The new concept places increased emphasis on the need for strong armoured reserves. In order to strengthen 1st British Corps reserve, 6 Brigade, which at present has two non-mechanised infantry battalions only, will be converted to an armoured brigade, starting in April this year.

Over the past four years, 6 Brigade has been carrying out an extensive trial as an airmobile formation. Such a formation provides a highly mobile force strong in infantry anti-armour weapons, which can be moved by RAF support helicopters at short notice to respond to an enemy penetration. It can delay such a penetration until the main armoured reserve can be brought to bear. The trial has fully validated this concept and has shown the potential for further development of airmobile operations. It has therefore been decided to transfer this important role to 24 Infantry Brigade, which is based at Catterick and is part of 2 Infantry Division.

Unlike 6 Brigade, 24 Brigade will be specifically organised and equipped for its new primary role. It will incorporate an Army Air Corps regiment equipped with Lynx helicopters in the utility role and fitted with TOW missiles in the anti-tank role. The brigade depends for its effectiveness on RAF support squadrons. RAF Puma and Chinook will provide the support helicopter lift until the 1990s, when EH101 enters service and becomes the brigade's prime mover. Six Brigade, working with helicopter squadrons from RAF Germany, has already demonstrated the outstanding operational results that can be produced by close inter-service co-operation. The developmeent of an airmobile force for use in the central region of Europe from the present early stages on into the next century presents a challenging and exciting new role for the Army.

I must also mention two exercises that took place in BAOR. Exercise Keystone provided an opportunity for the United Kingdom-based 2 Infantry Division to practise its operational role in BAOR in conjunction with elements of 1st British Corps and troops from Belgium and the Federal Republic of Germany. Some 19,000 men travelled to BAOR for this exercise, of whom some 12,500 were members of the Territorial Army. The exercise demonstrated not only their commitment and enthusiasm but also their professionalism and expertise, which enables them to fulfil a front-line role alongside regular soldiers

Some 7,000 British troops were among the 78,000 troops who took part in Exercise Certain Strike, in which 3rd US Corps practised its deployment from the United States to continental Europe, as would happen in war.

The exercise demonstrated the ability and determination of the United States to reinforce Europe in war, and the extensive allied co-operation at many different levels of command. The exercise was under the command of General Sir Martin Farndale; and this was the first time that such an exercise had been run by a non-American. It proved to be an outstanding success from every point of view and in particular it fully validated the NORTHAG concept to which I have already referred.

Exercises also provide an invaluable opportunity to test the reliability of our equipment. I am glad to say that recently the Army has received a large amount of new equipment. Over the first eight years of this Government the Army programme has been expanded by more than £4 billion in real terms at 1987-88 prices. That excludes expenditure directly attributable to the Falklands conflict. The greatly enhanced strength and capability of our forces, especially the front-line units, are the results of the massive investment.

Of course, that does not mean that we will not face difficult choices in the future. It will always be necessary to establish relative priorities in our forward plans, as part of our normal planning process. The improvements that have already been made to our forces, however, are evidence that we are getting the decisions right. Whereas BAOR had eight armoured regiments in 1980, by the end of the decade there will be 12.

There will be a third air defence regiment, equipped with the new high velocity Starstreak missile. Six Brigade, following its successful trial in the airmobile role, will from 1988 be re-equipped with Challenger and Warrior and return to its former mechanised status and 52 Field Squadron Royal Engineers will be moved in 1989 from the United Kingdom to RAF Bruggen in Germany. It will be our first in-theatre airfield damage repair squadron and its presence will considerably improve the operational availability of our aircraft by ensuring that the runways and other facilities on which they depend are kept open during hostilities.

The bulk of the increase in resources, however, has gone on new equipment. I should therefore like to say a bit more about what that money has bought and is buying for us — not simply with a recitation of new items of equipment coming into service, but by setting the items in their operational context and against the background of our continuing aim of achieving greater value for money in procurement.

Taking armoured vehicles first, deliveries for the fifth Challenger regiment will shortly be completed. Tanks for the sixth Challenger regiment are on their way and those for the seventh have been ordered. A replacement for the

remaining Chieftain tanks is now under active consideration. Ten battalions-worth of Saxon armoured personnel carriers and 13 Warrior infantry combat vehicles have been ordered. Most of the Saxon battalions are already in service and we expect nearly three Warrior battalions to come into service this year. With its Chobham armour, Challenger is among the best protected main battle tanks in the world and we are engaged in a major programme to improve its main armament and fire control systems to preserve and enhance its capability to engage and destroy enemy armoured vehicles.

I am happy to say that the infantry have not been neglected. With the introduction of Warrior, not only do we have a vehicle that is the result of a highly successful competitive procurement; we provide our infantry with greater protection, greater mobility and, with the Rarden 30 mm cannon, greater firepower. The introduction of this very capable vehicle will enable our infantry battalions to work more closely and effectively with our armoured regiments. The infantryman's indivdual weaponry has also been improved. The introduction of the SA80 rifle has given him a weapon which is lighter and more accurate than the SLR, and which uses the standard NATO calibre of ammunition.

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): I have just had a meeting with my local regiment, the Queen's Regiment, which is on its way to Ulster. The men were re-equipped with the rifle just six weeks ago. They were telling me that, so successful is the new weapon, on the ranges their proportion of marksman and, indeed, ordinary passes has been transformed.

Mr. Sainsbury: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his remarks, which confirm what I was about to say. The new weapon is popular with the soldier and impressive improvements in marksmanship have been achieved where the rifle has been used in place of its predecessor. Whereas an average of 8 per cent. of recruits would reach army marksmen standard using the SLR, the figure for the SA80 is 50 per cent.

In addition, this year will see the introduction into service of the LAW80 anti-tank weapon. This man-portable one-shot launcher will enable a single soldier to destroy the most advanced Soviet armed vehicles.

On air defence, I have already spoken of the new Starstreak missile. It is a highly capable weapon which will provide effective point defence of key units and installations against a wide range of air threats. A number of our existing Rapier area air defence missile systems are being updated to improve their night and poor weather capability, and our planned introduction of Rapier 2000, with its eight-rail launcher and improved ECCM, will represent a quantum jump increase in this capability area. We also plan to introduce the air defence alerting device which, by giving early warning of an air threat, will enable our missile crews to get into action much more quickly.

The creation of three multiple-launch rocket system regiments will vastly increase the firepower of our artillery and will enable our forces to engage targets and interdict movement behind the enemy's forward battle area with heavy firepower.

However, before the Army can fight its enemy, it must find him, and on the modern battlefield it is not enough to wait for him to appear in one's sights. We have therefore ordered a new medium range surveillance and target acquisition radar to replace the old ZB298 battlefield radar, and the Phoenix remotely piloted air vehicle for surveillance and target acquisition is due to be introduced in the next few years. Both these systems, incidentally, were procured after successful competitions had been held.

In the mobile battle, the importance of command and control functions will be heightened by the speed and fluidity of operations. The Army's major investment in command, control and communications in past years has been designed to meet this requirement. It has given it, for example, Ptarmigan, a mobile secure trunk communications system which proved its worth in the recent major reinforcement exercise, Certain Strike, when its ability to handle a vast quantity of messages reliably and rapidly, and so enable commanders to respond quickly and surely to events as they develop, clearly demonstrated why that and other systems like it are known as force multipliers.

Mr. Martin O'Neill (Clackmannan): I am grateful to the Minister for giving way. Will he explain to the House whether Ptarmigan is compatible with other systems used by our NATO allies, or do we have a series of systems which are not compatible and which, at present, do not dovetail together but simply work as separate entities?

Mr. Sainsbury: The intention is certainly to have as much inter-communication ability as can be contrived within our own forces—the next one I am coming to is the Wavell system — as well as between forces. Incidentally, it is interesting that during exercise Certain Strike the performance of Ptarmigan was particularly praised by the Americans, who saw it in use for the first time then. Ptarmigan has cost us about £1·25 billion. Similarly, our air defences will be considerably enhanced by the introduction of ADCIS, another command system designed to enable fire units to engage enemy aircraft more effectively.

Alone, the main items of equipment that I have highlighted represent an expenditure of well over £6 billion by this Government on equipment for the Army and are themselves only a part of the wider programme of development and purchase that we have undertaken and are continuing.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Will the Minister say a few words on this interesting contract BATES, battlefield artillery target engagement system, or words to that effect? Will he tell us what is happening in terms of the investigation by Ministry of Defence police into Marconi on that contract? Will he give us an assurance that no obstruction will be placed before the MOD police in carrying out those inquiries and that it will be made most clear to the Director of Public Prosecutions, when finally the report on that and other Marconi contracts is placed before him, that the Government expect a prosecution?

Mr. Sainsbury: The hon. Gentleman is always ingenious in finding moments to raise points which he finds of particular interest. As he knows, we have had exchanges on this issue before. He knows that the MOD police in this inquiry are acting under the direction of the Director of Public Prosecutions, so questions on that matter would be for my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General—*[Interruption.]* In an inquiry of this nature, the MOD police act under the Director of Public Prosecutions, who is, of course, answerable to my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General.

[Mr. Sainsbury]

I was talking about the £6 billion expended by this Government on equipment for the Army. That is only part of a wider programme. Examples of other recent orders are thermal imaging sights and new NBC protective equipment. The new generation of military bridging ordered last year is another example of a successful procurement where the application of competition has yielded estimated savings of 26 per cent. of the final cost. We expect to place orders for 16 Lynx light battlefield helicopters in the near future, which will provide additional support for airmobile operations now to be conducted by 24 Brigade.

I do not say that any of that is extraordinary, or that the last year, by itself, stood out in any special sense from those preceding it. Military programmes are planned so that expenditure is spread from one year to the next, each year being in itself only one step in the continuous process of keeping the Army's equipment up to date.

Although much of the equipment that I have mentioned is being deployed with our forces in Germany, a great deal is also going to equip the 60,000 soldiers engaged in the vital task of defending the United Kingdom which, of course, is a vital role. The United Kingdom also provides key ports, airfields and other operational facilities for the assembly, transit and launching of reinforcements to the NATO forces on the continent. We plan to hold later this year a series of military home defence exercises, within the separate Army districts, to test defences against sabotage or attack.

Many of the men committed to home defence are Territorial Army and Home Service Force personnel serving alongside regular reservists and Regular Army personnel. The continuing build-up in the strength and capabilities of our reserve forces demonstrates the importance we attach to home defence. One important initiative last year was the establishment of the National Employer Liaison Committee, to give independent advice to Ministers on measures needed to maintain the support of employers for members of the volunteer reserve forces of all three services.

I am pleased to be able to inform the House of the recent decision by the States of Jersey to provide on Jersey, at local expense, a Territorial Army Royal Engineer field squadron as their contribution to the defence of the British islands. I am particularly glad that this contribution will consist of a formed unit made up of citizens of Jersey. As such it will be a valuable and tangible witness to Jersey's commitment to defence and of its resolve to pay its way. Setting up a unit from scratch can be a lengthy business and there are dangers in seeking to go too fast. However, Ministry of Defence experts will give the advice and assistance required to ensure that an effective field squadron will be established in Jersey as soon as is practicable.

I am sure that the House will wish to join in paying tribute to the men and women who give up their free time to train for the defence of this country. This Government will continue to support all efforts to recruit and sustain the Territorial Army so that it can fulfil its role in the Army's order of battle.

The services' commitment to Northern Ireland continues to be substantial. The Army, including, of course, the Ulster Defence Regiment, together with the Navy and Air Force, carry out a vital role in supporting the Royal Ulster Constabulary in the fight against terrorism. I am sure that the whole House will join in expressing our admiration for the way in which our service men and women perform that difficult task with dedication and bravery in the face of dangerous and trying circumstances. It is a tribute to the professionalism of all involved that they maintain steady progress in bringing terrorists to justice and thwarting terrorist acts of murder and destruction. One measure of that is the fact that in 1987 over 250 weapons were found and nearly 10 tonnes of explosives were found or neutralised — the highest total since 1976.

Sadly, there has been a price to pay for those successes. During 1987, 11 soldiers were killed and 26 wounded in terrorist attacks. Eight of those killed and nine of those wounded were members of the UDR. The fact that all the UDR dead were murdered while off duty speaks volumes for the courage of the men and women who continue to serve even in the face of a relentless threat to their lives both on and off duty. We must not forget that that threat continues even after they leave the regiment. A former member of the UDR was murdered in June—he had left the regiment in April.

Mention must also be made of the bravery of the bomb disposal teams, who were last year called to over 1,300 incidents. The courage and skill of our service personnel serving in Northern Ireland are highlighted by the fact that in 1987 they won 88 awards for gallantry, including two military medals and 76 mentions in dispatches.

The Army has also continued to provide two additional battalions over the past year to enhance the flexibility of the security forces in countering the terrorist threat.

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): Is it correct that the bomb disposal team has been used on the other side of the border?

Mr. Sainsbury: I have no knowledge of such an event. If the hon. Gentleman has some suggestion to that effect, perhaps he could let us know the circumstances in which he thinks it occurred.

As I said, the Army has continued to provide two additional battalions over the past year to enhance the flexibility of our forces. The need for those additional battalions, together with the level of service support as a whole, is kept under constant review. There are currently over 10,000 regular and some 6,500 UDR personnel in Northern Ireland, and we retain the capability to reinforce at very short notice should that be required.

Last Thursday, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland announced that he had, with the Chief Constable and the GOC, reviewed the deployment of the security forces in the Province. As a result of this review, a new brigade headquarters will shortly be established, to be concerned with the border areas, leaving the existing two brigades responsible for supporting the RUC in the rest of the Province. As part of the ceaseless quest for new and better ways of tackling violence and banishing the spectre of terrorism from Northern Ireland, I believe that these new arrangements will make a valuable contribution.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Can I ask the Minister about the allegation made by Mr. Frank Turner on "QED' that he supplied army equipment, including berets, to the Royal Ulster Constabulary and that they were delivered to Ulster by van from a site in Kent? Will the Minister

explain to what possible use he believes RUC personnel would want to put British Army equipment, other than covert activity?

Mr. Sainsbury: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman could let me have more details about this allegation. I am not familiar with the details of the suggestion that there was delivery to Northern Ireland.

Turning now to matters further from home, we maintain a number of garrisons overseas—including, of course, our forces in the Falklands. Britain also provides military training and advice to many countries, particularly in areas of the world where we have traditional ties. The scale of Army military assistance has been growing steadily in recent years and now totals 360 service men on loan service in 23 different countries. In addition, many more service men are used on short-term advisory visits.

The nature and type of military assistance varies widely. Sometimes the personnel are integrated into the armed forces of the country concerned. In Belize, Brunei and Oman, for example, we have made available a number of personnel for operational and command appointments. The trend, however, is towards largely training and advisory roles for our loan service personnel, working in self-contained teams which concentrate on the development of one or more aspects of military organisation or training. These teams may vary considerably in size and in the scope of their activities, from personnel on long-term loan to short-term visits by advisory teams such as the REME team that visited Mauritius and the infantry team that trained members of the Royal Lesotho defence force. During the last year, an Army team has been helping to train the new Gambian army and bring it up to its full establishment.

We have also provided personnel in support of sales of British defence equipment, including those to Saudi Arabia, and a team is now established in Indonesia in support of Rapier sales. It is often necessary to provide this training to back up sales of the United Kingdom's advanced defence technology on which so many jobs in Britain depend.

The Army has again given valuable help to the civil community in 1987.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Are Defence Ministers happy about the efficacy of the end user system? There have been various undertakings to review it, particularly in view of arms finding their way to the markets of Peshawar in Pakistan.

Mr. Sainsbury: If the hon. Gentleman knows of cases of misuse, perhaps he will let me know about them. However, he will be aware that it has been the practice of successive Governments not to comment on such issues.

In the wake of the storms in October, service men, and the Army in particular, provided over 5,000 man days of aid, and some 700 vehicles were employed in tasks ranging from the clearance of fallen trees from roads, railways and power cables, to the delivery of meals to old-age pensioners, and the provision of generators to hospitals and farms.

Army personnel were also involved with the provision of medical support and general administrative assistance in the aftermath of the tragic sinking of the Herald of Free Enterprise at Zeebrugge early last year.

Our explosive ordnance disposal teams continue to clear both munitions left over from the last war and devices planted by terrorists. Of more than 3,000 incidents which were reported, one of the most spectacular was a 1,000 lb world war two bomb discovered near Tower bridge, in Bermondsey, on 29 June, which required nearly two days' work by the Royal Engineers to make it safe. The calm courage of these men deserves our highest praise.

The Royal Engineers were also involved in disaster relief operations in the Cook Islands, Vanuatu and Bermuda. The Queen's Gurkha Engineers assisted the Royal New Zealand Engineers with rehabilitation work in the Cook Islands following cyclone Sally in January. In March, they also produced a team, supplemented by sappers from the United Kingdom, to help in the aftermath of cyclone Uma in Vanuatu. In Hong Kong, the Queen's Gurkha Engineers cleared 1,000 tonnes of mud and boulders in 17 hours after a landslide blocked a road at Kwai Chung in July. A Royal Engineers officer also advised the authorities in Bermuda after hurricane Emily in September.

In conclusion, as I have said, the Army's main role is to form part of the United Kingdom's contribution to NATO, but it may be called on to perform other tasks, for example, the defence of British interests overseas. A soldier may be required to confront terrorists in Northern Ireland, to train to fight in the jungles of Belize or the chillier climate of the south Atlantic, to help restore hurricane damage on a remote Pacific island, or to aid the civil community at home. The skills required to meet this wide range of demands calls for physical fitness and mental flexibility, and the highest degree of professionalism, training and dedication. The last 12 months have witnessed a fair, but by no means untypical, test of the flexibility of our soldiers in dealing with unexpected challenges, as well as the complete spectrum of operational tasks and training. We can rightly be proud of the Army's achievements.

4.45 pm

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): The Minister paid tribute to the professionalism of our armed forces, the Territorial Army and the reserve forces and, I am glad to say, especially to the bomb disposal units for their bravery and professionalism. I join him in those tributes. As his speech showed, the British Army still carries out its duties and tasks in many different parts of the globe, from Ireland to Belize and from Berlin to Hong Kong. However, as the hon. Gentleman recognised at the beginning and end of his speech, the British Army is now, in the main, a European army and perhaps more of a European force than either the Royal Air Force or the Royal Navy.

Fifty-five thousand troops live in West Germany with their families and are committed, first of all, to the defence of the Federal Republic as part of NATO. Obviously, many troops based in Britain would rapidly be transported to the central front if war broke out in that part of Europe. The Minister spent some time on this point, and I shall concentrate on the Army's commitment to NATO and consider how that commitment may change as the political realities in Europe change over the next few years.

The Army's duties and tasks in Europe, and the military strategy that governs its operations, are affected by a number of factors. Some of them are wholly within the British Government's control, some of them are partly within the British Government's control and, frankly, some of them are totally outside the British Government's

[Mr. Denzil Davies]

control. As always, the Army is dependent upon the money that the Government provide for it from the budget and, as the House well knows—the Minister mentioned this — is increasingly dependent on the modern equipment that that money can buy.

The Army's strategy is affected, not by the military strategy that the Government might wish to lay down, but by the strategy of NATO. Almost since the inception of NATO that strategy has been substantially fashioned by political and military priorities as seen in the Federal Republic of Germany. The Army's role in future is bound to be affected by the political relationships between the super-powers and by the consequences of any arms reduction agreements, both nuclear and conventional, that may be reached between the super-powers and also between the members of NATO and the members of the Warsaw pact. The Minister mentioned briefly the conventional arms talks.

The Minister did not say very much about money, and one can understand that. Last week's public expenditure White Paper confirmed what we all know. The "Statement on the Defence Estimates" made it clear that expenditure on defence over the past few years has been declining, is now declining and will continue to decline, certainly until 1990. Some have estimated that that reduction comes to about 2·5 per cent. in real terms. That is on the basis of what I would describe as the general rate of inflation, but since the cost of defence equipment, often, although not entirely, because of technological advances and changes, tends to increase faster than the general rate of inflation, the reduction in expenditure must be, and is, greater than 2·5 per cent.

While general defence expenditure is now declining, expenditure on nuclear weapons is apparently increasing rapidly. In 1979-80, expenditure on nuclear weapons to which the Government admit — official expenditure — was about 1·5 per cent. of the defence budget. This year that expenditure is 4·7 per cent. of the defence budget, and it is rising rapidly — an increase of 300 per cent. Of course, that is not all the expenditure on nuclear weapons; it is only the expenditure of money wholly and exclusively on nuclear weapons. As I understand it, there is no apportionment in the official figures of expenditure on nuclear and conventional matters. Therefore, we are seeing a decline in the total defence budget, but a dramatic increase in the money spent by the Government on nuclear weapons, at the expense of our conventional defences.

The Minister is responsible for procurement, and he spent some time dealing with equipment. Over the next few years, as the Government well know, much of the British Army's present equipment will have to be replaced, at a considerable cost. The Minister said a lot about tanks, but not what we wanted to hear. The reality is that 900 old Chieftain tanks will soon have to be replaced with new Challenger tanks. Some people unkindly say that many of the old Chieftain tanks emit so much smoke that they can be seen coming miles away. I do not know about that, but the total cost of the replacement of those 900 old Chieftain tanks at today's prices has been estimated, in the press at least, to be about £700 million. I hope that when the Minister replies he will tell us whether that is a reasonable figure.

I want to press the Government on their intention about replacing the old Chieftain tanks. Are they still thinking about buying new tanks, either from the United States or from the Federal Republic, or are they committed to placing that order with, in effect, the royal ordnance factory in Leeds? If that order is not placed, it will be a devastating blow to our defence industry. It will mean the closure of the old ordnance factory, now under new management, and would have a considerable effect on subcontractors in Britain's defence industry. I hope that when the Minister replies he will tell us a little more about the Government's intentions in relation to tanks.

The Minister mentioned briefly light armoured vehicles. As I understand it, many of those — the Fox and Ferret reconnaissance vehicles, the AFV432 personnel carrier, and some of the older Scorpion tracked vehicles —will have to be replaced. What are the proposals for the replacement of many of those vehicles?

The Minister said nothing about the so-called self-propelled howitzer. The SP70 has already cost the British taxpayer £88 million in an abortive multinational exercise. What will happen now? Will the order be placed with the United States? I believe that Vickers at Barrow and Vickers at Newcastle have put proposals to the Government. What is the Government's intention? Can the Minister at least tell us that the Government intend to buy British and to provide the Royal Artillery with the self-propelled gun that it requires and needs?

On expenditure, I raise again the Schleswig Holstein question. Perhaps I should leave that to my hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley South (Mr. Hughes), who knows exactly whether Schleswig Holstein is in Denmark or in Germany, but there is a commitment to the defence of Denmark and Schleswig Holstein, and 16,000 British troops are part of that commitment. Some people — General Sir Frank Kitson is one—believe that in terms of NATO that commitment is more important than even the commitment to Norway. I do not know about that, but it is certainly an important commitment from which the Government have been trying to resile over the past year. They have been trying to move away from it and to cut down on it. I hope that when the Minister replies he will tell us exactly what is happening. Are the Government still negotiating through NATO with the Danish Government on that important NATO commitment?

The kind of equipment that the British Army needs obviously depends to a considerable extent upon NATO's collective strategy, which must be influenced by NATO's perception of the intentions of the Soviet Union—what is described as the threat — and by the relationship between the Soviet Union and the United States.

The Minister touched upon the INF agreement and uttered a few ritualistic sentences at the beginning of his speech about how flexible response was still completely sacrosanct. I wonder why the Minister felt it necessary to make those remarks. Perhaps there is some doubt or concern about it. Frankly, I do not believe that the concept of flexible response and forward defence is realistic any more. I have always believed that it was obsolete, and certainly after the INF treaty it is becoming more exposed and unrealistic. As I have said, it owed as much, if not more, to political factors in West Germany than it often did to sensible military doctrines.

There is nothing very flexible about a strategy which envisages a battlefield nuclear war in central Europe which follows about eight to 10 days of conventional hostilities.

It never seemed to me a sensible military strategy, and it certainly was not flexible. After the INF agreement, that strategy is even more unrealistic.

The Prime Minister was right to call a meeting of NATO Heads of Government before President Reagan and Mr. Gorbachev meet in Moscow later this year. As I understand it, there will be such a meeting at the beginning of March, and I hope that the Minister will be able to confirm that when he replies. The Prime Minister wants a meeting, but she shows no signs—there was nothing in the Minister's speech, but perhaps that is too much to expect—of bringing any new thinking to that meeting. The Government are still completely wedded, as we have heard, to the concept of flexible response, despite the fact that one important element, one important rung on the ladder of flexible response, has been removed by the INF treaty, and despite the fact that there is now deep hostility, on the Right and on the Left, in the Federal Republic of Germany to battlefield nuclear weapons.

That hostility is not merely based on the fact that Germany has to accept nuclear risks. Of course, Germany has to accept nuclear risks, as do other countries in the Alliance. The hostility is based on the fact that the battlefield weapons are located solely in West Germany, on German soil, and there the nuclear war will be fought. Those weapons are the weapons most likely to be used first under the NATO strategy of first use of nuclear weapons, and they have a short range. As Chancellor Kohl's personal adviser, Dr. Werner Ruhe—we have given this quotation before and I do so again—recently said:

"The shorter the range, the deader the German."

Dr. Ruhe could also have said: "The shorter the range, the deader the British and American soldier," because this is not just an issue for the Federal Republic; it is an issue for the 55,000 British troops located and based in Germany. They will be affected by the use of battlefield nuclear weapons, the present range of many of which is such that they would not carry the shells anywhere near the inter-German border if the war were being fought on this side of the border. So it is an issue for us, but there no new thinking is coming from the Government.

New thinking is also required—the Minister touched on this, but no more—because NATO will soon have to enter into a new and different round of negotiations on conventional arms, and, I understand, it still has only a very hazy idea of how it will approach those negotiations.

The Prime Minister must make up her mind. She is obsessed with nuclear weapons; she loves them. She is obsessed with Mr. Gorbachev; she loves him. But he wants to get rid of nuclear weapons by the year 2000. The Prime Minister loves Ronnie, but Ronnie thinks nuclear weapons are immoral. She tried to act as an honest broker between President Reagan and Mr. Gorbachev, but neither believes in mutually assured destruction, and neither really believes in the metaphysics of nuclear deterrence. The Prime Minister must get her act together, or Mr. Bernard Ingham must get her act together, because at present the British Government do not know what the approach to these matters should be.

I turn to the negotiations on conventional weapons. Obviously, these negotiations are bound to affect the British Army, the role that it has to play and the weaponry that it will need in the future. The negotiations give the West the opportunity to improve still further the political dialogue between Eastern and Western Europe. They provide us with an opportunity to remove the mutual fear and distrust that have existed between Eastern and Western Europe almost since the end of the second world war. They also give us an opportunity to secure significant reductions in those Warsaw pact weapons which NATO and the NATO Governments have publicly maintained they are concerned about and which have provided—at least in public—the justification for many of NATO's nuclear weapons.

If the Governments of the NATO Alliance still persist—we had an echo of this in the Minister's speech—in exaggerating Warsaw pact superiority in conventional forces, a matter on which the Government have been one of the most cynical and shameless offenders, the Alliance will find itself, if it keeps on trying to believe its own propaganda, in a terrible tangle in the conventional talks. It will fail to secure the reduction in Warsaw pact forces and weapons which it says it desires, and which I hope it really desires, and it will have lost another political initiative in Europe to Mr. Gorbachev. For the reality is that while there is Soviet supriority in some weapons, it has never been as great as Ministers have tried to make us believe.

Sir Antony Buck (Colchester, North): There is set out in the admirable White Paper on defence—with true Tory logic, covered in blue, which I am glad of—a table giving a comparison of NATO and Warsaw pact forces, a table with which the right hon. Gentleman will be familiar. Is he now disputing that? Is he disputing the fact that the Russians and the other Warsaw pact countries outnumber us in tanks on the central front, with 16,700 as opposed to 7,800 NATO tanks? I do not concede that Ministers exaggerate the disparity. It is set out in the White Paper, and I have never heard it disputed before.

Mr. Davies: I have a great regard for the hon. and learned Gentleman, but he should not quote the last defence White Paper, because it was really merely an election manifesto for the Conservative party.

Sir Antony Buck: Answer the question.

Mr. Davies: I shall deal with the hon. and learned Gentleman's point. There are on both sides of the House hon. Members who are members of the Western European Union. Perhaps I may refer the House to a recent assessment by WEU. These are difficult comparisons and assessments, which depend on geographical territory and so many other things, but I believe that the recent WEU study has come as close to a realistic and sensible comparison as has been attempted so far.

That assessment uses a military comparison in what WEU describes as divisional equivalents, taking account, of course, of the differences in size between the Warsaw pact and NATO divisions. The Warsaw pact has 104 divisional equivalents which are deployed on the central front or which can be readily mobilised, including those in European Russia. NATO has 76 divisional equivalents. That is a Warsaw pact advantage of less than 1·3 to 1—nothing like the 3 to 1 advantage that military men tell us is thought necessary for a successful offensive across the Elbe, across the inter-German border into western Europe.

The report, which is very fair, also emphasises other factors which must be taken into account, factors which the White Paper of course does not emphasise. As the House well knows, the capacity to wage war depends primarily on industrial strength and technological skill. If

[Mr. Davies]

we take merely the seven WEU countries—the United States is not a member—we see that they have a far greater gross national product than the Soviet Union and the other Warsaw pact countries, and they certainly have greater technological sophistication.

Let us talk about those tanks. The WEU assessment is that the Warsaw pact has a numerical advantage in tanks of 2 to 1. I would accept WEU's analysis before I would take one from the British Government just before an election, when obviously they were trying to heighten fears on defence.

Sir Antony Buck: The figures are much the same.

Mr. Davies: It is no good the Minister saying that the Warsaw pact tanks are a lot better now than they were a few years ago and that they have the marvellous reactive armour. I read about that the other day. I should not like to be in a Russian tank faced not only with Western explosives but surrounded by Soviet explosives as well, because reactive armour is just packages of explosives round the tank, so one gets blown up twice—once by one's own explosives, and once by those of the other side. So let us not hear too many blood-curdling speeches about reactive armour, which was invented by a West German in 1971. He could not sell it to NATO—and quite properly so.

Therefore, let us take the quality of those tanks into account. Forty-one per cent. of the total NATO tank force consists of 1980s models. The Soviet equivalent of the modern American M1 — I hope not the one the Government will buy to replace our existing tanks—makes up only 3 per cent. of the Warsaw pact total. Nearly half the Warsaw pact tank deployment are 1940s models. As the report points out, NATO scraps its own tanks or sells them to third countries. The Warsaw pact, with the long tradition of tank warfare within the Soviet general staff and the love of tanks, keeps its old tanks in service.

When it comes to anti-tank weapons, the report concludes that NATO has considerable superiority and far greater sophistication.

I return to the talks on conventional weapons. Over the past few months there have been a series of statements by Mr. Gorbachev, which have perhaps not always been fully reported in our newspapers, showing quite a shift in previous Soviet attitudes and putting the new talks on conventional arms reductions on quite a different footing from the previous talks, which have dragged on for 14 years without any progress. It is no good the Government thinking that they can postpone all the decisions until the conventional talks are concluded, because the existing talks have been there for 14 years and there is no problem.

These talks will be different. In Prague on 12 March Mr. Gorbachev said, in effect, that he was prepared to accept—although he may not have been conceding—that reductions in conventional arms would have to be made by the side that had the advantage. He indicated his readiness to remove elements of what I would call inequality, for which the jargon word, which we have to use, is asymmetry. He was prepared to accept that if there was asymmetry the side that benefited from it should give up its advantage.

On 18 March, in east Berlin, he said something else. A few years ago, if an Opposition Member had mentioned twice in his speech what the general secretary of the Soviet Communist party had said, there would have been howls of derision from Members on the Government Benches. Now they listen respectfully and intently. What their innermost thoughts are I do not know, but they have to listen, because Mr. Gorbachev is a bosom friend of the Prime Minister and, as she has told us, she trusts him implicitly. So I make no apology for quoting what a close friend of the Prime Minister said.

On 18 March, in east Berlin, Mr. Gorbachev proposed talks on conventional arms reductions from the Atlantic to the Urals. In effect, he accepted the view of many in Europe that stabilisation of the military situation required that the western military regions of the Soviet region be included as well. Of course, that also has implications for western forces and western materiel located far behind the central front area of the Soviet Union.

On 11 June the Warsaw pact, in a communiqué, stated that the military doctrines of both sides should be based on defensive principles. Again, no doubt that would bring howls of laughter from many military audiences. Perhaps I should quote what Mr. Gorbachev said on 19 December in a conversation with Franz Josef Strauss. He is reported as saying:

> "On the whole, it is necessary not simply to agree on eliminating imbalance, but to reduce step by step the military potential down to the level required only for defence and insufficient for waging offensive action."

Hon. Members may not believe that that statement was significant. It is perhaps easy to dismiss it, but, as our Defence Ministers know very well, bearing in mind what Soviet military leaders have written over the years about strategy, especially in Red Army publications, and bearing in mind, too, the views of all generals everywhere throughout the ages about strategy, that was a remarkable statement. I hope that NATO leaders will realise that they are embarking on something different. The conventional arms reduction talks will not be easy if NATO fails to react constructively and imaginatively.

How much scope there will be for balanced reductions of forces on both sides I do not know. It is difficult to say. It will depend on the negotiations. Someone suggested a trade-off of tanks for fighter bombers. I do not know about that. Others, such as Senator Sam Nunn, talk about withdrawing troops behind each side of the inter-German border. I do not know. I concede that in the end the Soviet Union may have to accept some asymmetrical reductions in certain weaponry, such as tanks and artillery.

In his reply to the debate, can the Minister tell us whether the artillery operated by the British Army in Germany, which can fire conventional and nuclear shells, will be included in the conventional arms reduction talks? At Question Time today I asked the Secretary of State whether British Tornado aircraft carried nuclear bombs, conventional bombs, French air-launch cruise missiles or American air-launch cruise missiles, and whether those aircraft, or fighter bombers—however they are described—would be included in the talks. We received a very hazy answer. Perhaps we can leave that question for another debate, but let us have an answer to the question about artillery. Are all the artillery pieces, whether they fire nuclear or conventional shells, to be included in the talks? I do not see how they can be excluded, but let us have it confirmed by the Minister, because no doubt the Ministry of Defence has been involved in drawing up the complicated negotiating brief for the talks within NATO.

To secure asymmetrical reductions in Soviet forces, there are a number of proposals that NATO could and should put forward. Mr. Gorbachev cannot carry his general staff with him in getting rid of two thirds of his tanks without a quid pro quo from NATO. First, I believe that NATO should be ready, within the context of an agreement, and not outside it, to drop the whole idea of follow-on forces attack and to reject firmly the nonsense of Air/Land Battle and Air/Land Battle 2,000. Secondly, NATO, and in particular the British Government, should agree to hold simultaneous, multilateral talks on the mutual reduction and elimination of battlefield nuclear weapons.

There is no logic in the Government's position. We have been told time and time again that these weapons are needed to destroy concentrations of Soviet armour. Why not talk about them at the same time as the negotiations aimed at reducing those concentrations of Soviet armour?

The Prime Minister had better think about that. The political repercussions in Germany will be considerable if the Prime Minister and the other NATO Heads of Government are seen to be opposed to talks about their removal. The one thing that unites Franz Josef Strauss and Herr Honecker is the belief that these weapons should be removed by mutual negotiation. It is no good Western commentators and politicians making speeches accusing Mr. Gorbachev of trying to drive a wedge between the Federal Republic and its NATO allies, and then giving him such a splendid tool with which to do so.

NATO should be prepared to renounce its policy of first use of nuclear weapons. Again, as it has been explained to us, that policy was meant to compensate for the imbalance that was perceived in conventional weaponry. As I have tried to argue, it has become increasingly unrealistic, even more after the INF agreement. An agreement to reduce conventional weapons asymmetrically makes first use unnecessary. Therefore, why not offer no first use to secure better Soviet reductions in conventional forces?

The British Army will always do its duty proficiently and professionally. The Government have a corresponding duty to provide it with the wherewithal to do so, but they also have a duty to fashion their strategy in such a way that the British Army is not put in a position where it can be annihilated on the battlefield.

5.19 pm

Sir Antony Buck (Colchester, North): I hope that the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) will forgive me if I do not follow his many trains of thought. I shall not deal with broad strategic issues, which seem to me to be more relevant to a debate on the White Paper than to a specific debate on the Army. This debate is in response to an assurance given when the Ministry of Defence was reorganised so that there were no longer Ministers for individual services. I was doubtful about the reorganisation, but we were given the assurance that there would be debates on the individual services so that we could focus on the affairs of each of the armed forces in turn.

Although many of the points made by the right hon. Member for Llanelli apply to a strategic debate rather than to a debate on the role of the Army, I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister will deal with some of those points when he winds up.

This is the first time that I have heard doubts about the figures set out in the White Paper as to comparative forces and the balance between NATO and the Warsaw pact countries. I have not previously heard doubt cast on the tables dealing with the balance of forces, set out on page 62, annex A of the White Paper. A gloss can be put on them, suggesting that the quality of our tanks is superior, but I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister will deal with that serious allegation that the figures are wrong, because the figures are important, and I have not previously heard them disputed. The Warsaw pact countries have, on the western front, no fewer than 16,700 battle tanks, whereas NATO has 7,800. Opposition Members are putting in doubt significant figures, and I shall be obliged if my hon. Friend will deal with that issue.

One advantage of a single-service debate is that we are able to home in on each of the armed forces in turn. I am proud to represent a constituency that has a substantial Army presence. The main barracks are distributed between my constituency and that of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House, the right hon. Member for Colchester, South and Maldon (Mr. Wakeham), who is, I know, equally proud to represent a constituency with military connections. We both take considerable interest in what happens in Colchester in regard to units that are based there permanently and visiting "resident" battalions.

No one who has had the opportunity of meeting our young soldiers at first hand could deny their enormous quality. All hon. Members will agree that our soldiers are extremely fine young men and dedicated professionals. It is up to us to ensure that they are given proper equipment. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to dispose in due course of the points raised by the right hon. Member for Llanelli.

My right hon. Friend the Leader of the House and I have been able to observe at first hand the military units in our constituencies. As a former Minister for the Royal Navy, and chairman of my party's parliamentary defence committee, with the co-operation of the Ministry of Defence, I have been given the opportunity to visit our armed forces in many theatres, and I value those opportunities.

Undoubtedly, the most difficult task of our armed forces is the sustained burden that they bear in Northern Ireland. All our armed services bear a burden there, but the Army, the Ulster Defence Regiment and the Royal Ulster Constabulary bear the main burdens. I do not believe that any armed forces but ours could have sustained, with such self-discipline and with such propriety, those enormous burdens for such a prolonged time. From time to time a young soldier may overstep the mark, but that is hardly surprising when one considers what they have to put up with in Northern Ireland.

I have been in an armoured personnel carrier and have been driven along the Falls road, being stoned all the way. I have seen something of the burdens that our armed forces have to sustain. When hon. Members debate the armed forces, we should always pay proper tribute to the burden sustained by our armed forces in Northern Ireland. I am sure that hon. Members on both sides of the House would endorse that.

We admire the professionalism of our armed forces in their role in Northern Ireland and in BAOR. I look forward to my hon. Friend dealing with the question of equipment there. Such superb young men as our armed forces deserve the best equipment. I hope that the Front Bench will give us an assurance about that.

[Sir Antony Buck]

I have had the opportunity to see our armed forces in many parts of the world, through the co-operation of my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench. I have visited them several times in Northern Ireland and I have also been to Belize. That was an interesting venture. I saw our armed forces in operation in a place that the soldiers described in very unparliamentary terms. The climate there is not idyllic, but it was a fascinating visit. The presence there of our Harriers is significant. Our battalions there have the opportunity for valuable training in jungle conditions, and they undertake it with great professionalism.

I hope that my hon. Friend will deal with the issue of recruitment into the Army and tell us about current trends. I should like to know how many applications are being received for premature voluntary release and whether there is an outflow. When our Government first came to power, there was a massive outflow from what could be called the middle management of the armed forces. Sergeants, colour sergeants, lieutenants and captains were getting out of the forces—perhaps, as a former Navy Minister, I can use the expression—at a rate of knots. The first thing that the Government did was increase pay in the armed forces, and that helped to stop the rot. I should like to know the current situation for recruitment into the Army and applications for premature release from the armed forces.

Mr. Churchill (Davyhulme): I share my hon. and learned Friend's concern about the way in which the forces were paid under the previous Administration. It is a great feather in the cap of the Government that we have honoured all the Armed Forces Pay Review Body awards. I hope that we will continue to do so. Does my hon. and learned Friend share my concern that during the past three years there has not been full funding from the Treasury for the pay awards? Indeed, there has been a cumulative deficit of 11 per cent. Does he agree that it is time that the Treasury took that on board? If the forces are properly paid, that will be at the expense of the defence equipment budget.

Sir Antony Buck: I have considerable sympathy with what my hon. Friend has said. No doubt my hon. Friend the Minister will wish to deal with that point. The Government are entitled to considerable credit for dealing with armed forces pay immediately on coming into office. They did not even wait for the Queen's Speech. I remember raising the matter with the Prime Minister. I said that I hoped that in the Queen's Speech the question of armed forces pay would be dealt with. She said that it would not, and I looked cross, whereupon she said, "We are not waiting for the Queen's Speech; we are announcing it tomorrow." So it was done at once, and that was quite right. But now things have dropped back in the way that my hon. Friend has just indicated, and I have no doubt that in winding up the Minister will wish to deal with the matter.

In conclusion, I reiterate that I enjoy having an Army constituency to represent. I reiterate that we in the House are, and have cause to be, enormously proud of the sheer professionalism of our armed forces, including the Army. We are under a duty to see that our soldiers are superbly equipped, and I hope that the doubts which have been raised about that will be dealt with by my hon. Friend at the end of the debate. We who give our troops a very difficult task to do are under a duty to debate Army affairs regularly and to pay visits to the troops.

I hope that, with the co-operation of those on the Front Bench, those who are particularly concerned with defence matters will continue to be able to benefit from visiting our armed forces. Strangely enough, in a masochistic sort of way, the troops like being visited by us politicians. We give them such difficult tasks that the least we can do is pay close attention to the admirable feats which they are performing on the nation's behalf.

5.31 pm

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): The hon. and learned Member for Colchester, North (Sir A. Buck) is very experienced in military matters and his views are respected by hon. Members throughout the House. He happens to be an old political sparring partner of mine from our student days at Cambridge and we have clashed very often on wide issues. I should like to take up some of his points, but I hope that he will forgive me if I do not deal with the wider issues that he has dealt with.

I share his views on the quality of our soldiers and I want to take up that point, although I suspect that I shall be a bit more critical of the Army and of the Ministry of Defence than he has been. I want to speak about bullying in the Army, but first I want to comment briefly on the British nuclear test veterans, because I understand that the National Radiological Protection Board report will be published on Thursday and of course it is a matter of great interest to see what that says about the Army and events in the past.

Cabinet papers published recently under the 30-year rule indicate that the safety of British soliders who participated in the Pacific island nuclear tests was not a high priority in those days. Regardless of the conclusions of the NRPB report, which is basically a statistical exercise, I think that the only way to remove the searing sense of injustice felt by the nuclear test victims is to have a judicial inquiry into their claims. I hope that the Minister will give sympathetic consideration to the holding of a judicial inquiry.

I wish to speak about the difficult question of bullying in the Army, because, although progress has been made, we are nowhere near solving the problem and much remains to be done. Army bullying became a public issue in 1987 because of the revelations of vicious, cruel and degrading conduct, which was proved at courts-martial. The humiliating ordeals suffered by some soldiers shocked the public and posed serious questions for the Ministry of Defence.

We all want and need tough, well-trained, disciplined soldiers. We are proud of the Army, but we have to recognise that the power structure of the forces and the type of training required to produce tough soldiers create fertile soil for bullying. Officers, commissioned and non-commissioned, rightly demand an automatic response to authority. The close community life within units creates an admirable esprit de corps, but at the same time it readily breeds intolerance of individualistic behaviour or of someone who is felt to have let the side down. These are vital factors in army life, but they are reasons for vigilance against bullying, not for acceptance of it.

The recruits of today are not the 18-year-olds and upward of wartime Britain; they are 16 and 17-year-olds, younsters who join to escape unemployment, learn a trade

and make a constructive contribution. They have the right to civilised treatment along with tough training and their parents have the right to an army that takes over parental rights and exercises them with the care and attention the parents themselves would put into it.

Paradoxically, bullying has remained a public issue partly because of the Army's praiseworthy, vigorous attempts with courts-martial to stamp out the worst excesses of brutality by NCOs and sadistic initiation rights by soldiers themselves. It is a paradox, but it is true, so the MOD should be praised for what it has done with courts-martial, but that has kept this issue to some extent on the public stage.

In addition, the abolition of section 10 of the Crown Proceedings Act 1947—and I pay tribute to all those who played an important role in that—led to a new interest in personal ill treatment, which resulted in many letters being sent to me. Significantly, it was often parents who wrote. Even more significantly, many wrote anonymously or were unwilling to have their names revealed.

I will quote from a letter from a mother who wrote about the bullying of her son and explained why she and her son were unwilling to be identified. She had discussed the question with her son, and he had argued that

"to relate those events which have happened, are happening and also those of which he is aware would, if not in themselves actually identify him, certainly throw suspicion on all those concerned."

She went on to say the following:

"It became distressingly obvious during the course of his leave that he is deeply troubled. He, unusually, was quiet and did not speak of the Army or his new units as I would have expected. What did come out of one conversation however is that he has two NCOs who are blatantly abusing their rank. His real fear of the consequences if he breaks the silence is more acute than I had ever imagined."

That letter, written with such vivid honesty, goes some way towards explaining why, on this issue of bullying, anonymous letters cannot be dismissed, as they usually have to be, otherwise the truth may remain obscured by fear.

I appreciate, of course, that some people may exaggerate and that some may even fabricate a case, as happened with the letter about the Queen's Dragoon Guards. I would like to repeat my apology to this fine regiment for naming it before investigations were made, and I would add that the Army has shown itself to be as gracious in accepting apologies as the House of Commons customarily is.

So I accept that a few of the letters are unsound. Nevertheless I have received and sent on to the Ministry of Defence an outpouring of deep anxiety and acute concern.

The response of the Ministry of Defence has been admirable but, in my view, inadequate. The Under-Secretary of State has categorically stated that bullying is not tolerated in the British Army, and I welcome that categorical statement. The Adjutant-General, Sir David Mostyn, has been equally firm and has told all commanding officers of the need for continued vigilance and for firm disciplinary action when ill treatment or bullying is proved. I warmly welcome these actions by the Minister and by the Adjutant-General, and undoubtedly there is now more vigilance on the part of commanding officers and their staff. Yet the advances will be only temporary if comprehensive action is not taken.

Just as a doctor cannot cure unless he diagnoses correctly and understands the nature of the complaint, so the Army will not eradicate bullying unless it recognises the whole spectrum of unacceptable behaviour and until it appreciates that bullying and fear go hand in hand. Fearful young soldiers—and nobody knows how many there are—need an impartial, independent person such as an ombudsman to whom they can turn. The Ministry of Defence apparently believes that this would have an adverse effect on the Army's own efforts to look after its soldiers. I disagree. The good COs, whose immediate responsibility this is, will continue as they do now. The less effective ones, who are oblivious of what is going on or condone mistreatment, could be jolted into early preventive action.

I propose an ombudsman not as a panacea—there is none available—but as the best and most important step that can be taken in the present circumstances. There may be resource implications, but a message should go from this debate to the Secretary of State and to the Chancellor of the Exchequer that cash must be found for new initiatives to eradicate bullying from the Army. The welfare of the men is as important as the maintenance of machines.

I hope that, when he replies to the debate, the Minister will feel able to assure the House that he will reconsider my proposal—and tell us of any other constructive proposals that he may have in mind—and thereby signal a shift in gear in the Ministry's attack on bullying in the Army.

5.44 pm

Mr. Neil Thorne (Ilford, South): The whole House will have listened with great care to what the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) has told us about bullying in the armed forces and particularly in the Army. I was very glad to hear him say that he appreciated what the Ministry of Defence was doing to ensure that this type of behaviour was completely eradicated from the services. It has no place there and it must not be allowed to exist. We must expect that commanding officers and others will always be vigilant in this regard, and I would expect them to be at the forefront in this.

I am not entirely convinced that the right hon. Member's suggestion of an ombudsman is right, because, if officers and warrant officers are doing their job properly, such a person should be entirely unnecessary. I hope that this action by the Ministry of Defence will ensure that we have seen the last of the bullying in the armed forces for a very long time to come.

We must, of course, keep the matter in perspective and recognise that bullying happens elsewhere too. I heard not so long ago of similar cases in the fire service, and it certainly happens among apprentices in other trades and businesses. But it is unacceptable behaviour in the late 1980s and it must not be allowed to exist anywhere. I am therefore delighted that the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South has, after considerable study, acknowledged that the Ministry of Defence is taking the matter extremely seriously, and we hope that that is the end of it.

I also listened with great interest to what the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) had to say, particularly about the role of the Army in Germany. When he opened the debate my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary used a

[Mr. Neil Thorne]

quotation from the Duke of Wellington about how much more acceptable it was to have our forces fighting battles on foreign soil than on our own. We must not forget that. Our forces are in Germany principally to defend us here and not to defend the Germans. The defence that they provide for the rest of Europe is incidental to their defence of this country, which is why they are there.

The Minister then went on to talk about nuclear weapons and mentioned no first use. I want to address my remarks particularly to this subject and to the nuclear deterrent. Since the last debate on the Army we have gone a considerable way towards removing certain nuclear weapons from the field of battle, and we all, I think, accept that that is a good thing—that the sooner this can come about, the better. We will, however, be quite wrong not to acknowledge our debt to nuclear defence over the past 45 years, during which time we have had some extremely good defence on the cheap. It has cost us something like 10 per cent. of our national defence budget to save a very considerable sum on conventional weapons. If we had not had that type of defence, our expenditure would undoubtedly have been much greater.

If, as we approach 2000, we expect nuclear weapons to form a much less important part of our defence, we must address ourselves to the alternatives, one of which is national service. One of the advantages of nuclear defence is that we have been able to rely on a response which meant that, if we were attacked in any way, we could and would be prepared to respond with nuclear defence. That is why it is so important that we do not agree to no first use. If we accept no first use we must have parity in conventional weapons.

The right hon. Member for Llanelli said that he did not agree with the figures given in the Government's White Paper for the forces held by the Warsaw pact countries, as opposed to those of the NATO Alliance. He felt that the enormous disparity in those tables was inaccurate, and not nearly as great as shown. I do not share his belief. I think that the figures are accurate and I shall listen with interest when my hon. Friend the Minister replies to the debate. I hope he will be able to say more about that.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): Would the hon. Gentleman accept that what my right hon. Friend was saying was that there is a difference in numbers, but that the quality of weapons on both sides needs to be taken into account—as well as other strategic and tactical matters of disposition of weapons. If one audits the quality of the weapons in that way, one sees a much closer parity of conventional forces on either side.

Mr. Thorne: I accept that those factors must be taken into account. Nevertheless, there is still an enormous disparity; we must be aware of it and ensure that we compare like with like. The right hon. Member for Llanelli ridiculed some of the recent developments in the Soviet army. I cannot go along with that, because I felt that he was not comparing like with like. So one must be careful; the White Paper shows an enormous disparity, which is a cause for considerable concern.

I am far from satisfied that we have the necessary arrangements for carrying out adequate verification of nuclear weapons. We all remember the scenes on television not so very long ago that showed what happened to a major in the United States army who was prying too closely in his capacity as a verification officer examining Russian installations. He was shot dead by the guard. If that is what happens in Europe, what can we expect of verification in the enormous areas covered by the Soviet Union? That is a serious problem.

We must also bear in mind chemical weapons—nuclear weapons verification alone is not enough. Whatever we do, we must examine the alternatives and thank our good fortune for the high quality of British service personnel—regular and reserves. My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Sir. A. Buck) has already given credit to those who serve in the services part-time, as well as doing their daytime jobs. However, we are losing a good deal of talent because of the enormous demands placed these days on young people who are trying to match the capability of those in the regular forces. I am delighted that the Home Service Force can offer an alternative which is less exacting than the Territorial Army. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to make good progress in enlarging that force as soon as possible, because we must build up our reserves in that way.

People with experience of life in the armed forces are now disappearing because national service went so long ago. To make up for that, we must try to keep the talent we have and ensure that as many people as possible have this type of experience. Between the two world wars many people had real experience of the Army and kept us in good shape for 1939—largely at their own expense—by learning about military affairs. But we are short of such experience now, so we are not as well off as we were in 1939.

The reserve forces that we have are of extremely high calibre, but the number of people who have basic knowledge is diminishing, and I want that problem addressed. Many of our NATO allies still retain national service; those who do it carry forward their experience, which can be revised at fairly short notice.

In some countries that do not have the nuclear deterrent, particularly in Scandinavia, there is not only national service but, following that, a home defence force, so that people are posted from national service to home defence units. Until their sixtieth year, they are expected to serve in civil protection units. That is normal practice in Scandinavia and it ensures that such countries have a reservoir of personnel with the necessary knowledge and experience.

I was delighted to hear the Minister announce that Jersey is to recruit an engineer unit. I hope that Guernsey will not be far behind and will make its contribution in the near future.

People who serve the country in the armed services have a special job and we should be especially grateful to them. While they protect us from every eventuality, we owe them a great deal of care and should look after their interests. My hon. Friend the Minister will remember that, just before Christmas, I raised the matter of armed forces pensions for people who left the services at a time when there was a pay freeze. One of the examples I gave was that of a lieutenant colonel who was retiring. If he had retired two years earlier as a major, he would have drawn a considerably higher pension than the one he eventually received.

A number of service personnel were asked by the Government of the day to stay on in post because there was a shortage in their discipline, and they readily agreed

to do so. When they were eventually asked to go, they found themselves considerably worse off financially. We should not allow that to continue. We should not say that it was perpetrated by a Government of a different political complexion and that it was an example of what happened when the other lot had their chance. We should be prepared to correct the matter now and ensure that no one is penalised because he carried on serving his country and is now drawing a lower pension, not for one or two years, but for the rest of his life. That should be corrected as a matter of urgency, and I hope that my hon. Friend and his ministerial colleagues will support my demand to the Treasury as soon as possible.

I turn now to the future of the Gurkhas. For more than 170 years, we have had the support of the Gurkha units in the Army. My hon. Friend the Minister knows that the Select Committee on Defence now proposes, at my suggestion, to carry out an inquiry into the future of the Gurkhas. This is a new departure for the Committee because Select Committees usually report and criticise the Government for action that they have already taken. This will be the first occasion on which the Select Committee on Defence will be investigating a matter and publishing its conclusions in advance of any decision by the Ministry. I hope that that works well and that my right hon. and hon. Friends at the Ministry will find it helpful. Indeed, I hope that they will be able to act upon the Committee's report, which I hope will be published later this year or early in 1989.

I make a special plea that, when my hon. Friend replies, he says something about the role of the helicopter in the Army. If our forces are to have a modern infantry role we must match what has been done by other armies in NATO and in the Warsaw pact. Undoubtedly, we have been extremely economical with the number of helicopters that we have deployed. However, if we were honest we would have to admit that to fulfil our commitments we need about 100 additional combat helicopters to make up for the existing deficiency. I realise that to economise in such a way is an easy option, but we must consider this matter carefully. We must ensure that we are not cheating on our defence by inadequately providing ourselves with the necessary equipment. I hope that my hon. Friend will give careful consideration to this matter and I hope that he has happy news to report.

6.1 pm

Mr. John Cartwright (Woolwich): To begin with, I should like to mention two constituency issues that are of considerable concern to the people of Woolwich.

The first relates to the long-running saga about the headquarters building of the directorate general of defence quality assurance. That unit has been based at Woolwich Arsenal since the 1960s and it has survived a substantial period of review and examination concerning possible relocation. Many of us felt that the uncertainty about the headquarters building had been settled a couple of years ago when a final decision was given that it would stay at Woolwich. Indeed, a great deal of work had already gone into providing architectural drawings and designs for a new office building within the Woolwich Arsenal complex.

Unfortunately, after the present Secretary of State took office, he decided that, before making a major financial investment, it was prudent to examine other possible locations for the headquarters of that important operation. I perfectly understand that, but the difficulty has been that that decision has put the whole thing back in the melting pot. We have had a further period of considerable uncertainty. I am sure that the Minister appreciates that that uncertainty has had a worrying effect on the work force and the management. I hope that an early decision is reached. Indeed, I hope that that decision will be in favour of retaining defence quality assurance at Woolwich. When the Minister reviews the matter and makes the crucial decision, he must bear in mind the generations of service that the people of Woolwich have given to the Army.

The second local issue is the state of military buildings of historic interest. Sadly, many of those have been allowed to decay and are in an extremely poor condition. Indeed, they are a terrible indictment of our neglect of some of our important history.

I pay tribute to the Minister for the Committee that he has set up to consider the problem. I am aware that that Committee has already visited the Woolwich area and I am extremely glad of that. I believe that it would be helpful to the House if the Minister could tell us how it will be possible to preserve the buildings and, in some cases, to bring them back to the state and condition that they deserve. I should be grateful if the Minister could tell us how we shall find ways of using them for the community's good and how we shall retain such an important element of our heritage.

Mr. Dalyell: Has the hon. Gentleman had the opportunity to visit Fort George? Although I agree with the hon. Gentleman in general terms, the Ministry must be congratulated on its part, along with other conservation bodies, in the restoration of Fort George.

Mr. Cartwright: I have not had the opportunity of seeing Fort George. In my constituency at the Woolwich Arsenal there is a wonderful piece of restoration, the brass foundry, which is one of the original Woolwich Arsenal buildings. Unfortunately, that building is simply used for storage by the National Maritime museum at Greenwich. That beautiful building is not available to the public. I want all such buildings to be preserved and maintained but also, as far as possible, available for the public to enjoy. They are part of our heritage.

We must consider future recruitment and manpower arising from the problems of demography. I have already raised this issue in previous Army debates. There is widespread understanding that the numbers of young men in the population has been declining since 1981 and will continue to do so. Indeed, by 1996 the number of 15 to 19-year-olds will be 77 per cent. of the present level and only 73 per cent. of the 1981 level. The number of young men will not rise above 80 per cent. of the present level until the end of the century and, as far as it is possible to predict, will never return to the current level. That poses a major problem for the armed forces because they must recruit a higher proportion of young people to maintain their present level of manpower.

The recruitment drive will occur at the very time that there is other competition for skilled manpower from other employers. Without doubt there will be problems for the armed forces. They will have to face the problem of the extra cost involved in improving the pay and conditions of those whom they employ or face the problem of simply not having the necessary manpower. That problem does not affect this country alone; it affects a number of western

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European countries, in particular the Federal Republic of Germany. However, those other countries have conscription and have been able to tackle part of the problem by extending the period of conscription. Such an option is not open to us. It will be interesting to know the Government's views on this matter and their proposals to deal with a problem that will be with us until the end of the century.

We must consider battlefield nuclear weapons and their strategic place given the changing circumstances that we face after the INF treaty. We all understand that the impending removal of longer and shorter-range intermediate nuclear weapons will inevitably concentrate much more attention on short-range tactical nuclear weapons, especially battlefield systems.

In the past few weeks there has been some interest, and indeed excitement, about the Montebello decision. I am rather puzzled by that because I do not believe that any of us who followed the Montebello discussions were in any doubt about what had been agreed. At Montebello there was a clear agreement to reduce the number of NATO warheads in Europe by 1,400 to a total of 4,600 by 1988. However, there was an accompanying agreement that the reduced stockpile would involve modernisation and that the weapons that were retained were to be improved to provide greater range, improved accuracy, better survivability, better safety and security. In other words, the argument was that we would have a smaller NATO nuclear stockpile in Europe, but that it would be safer and more effective. I find it hard to argue with that general approach, which seems to make absolute sense. When one applies the general principle to individual weapons systems it is sensible to review the situation against the present background because, after the INF agreement, the prospects are different from those apparent in 1983 when the Montebello decision was taken.

I have always felt that battlefield nuclear weapons are the most dangerous of all nuclear weapons, because they are uniquely designed for war fighting. They cannot be referred to, or regarded as, weapons of last resort. They are there for use in a battle and — this applies particularly to nuclear artillery—they are based very far forward. That means that decisions about their possible use would have to be taken at a very early stage of a coventional conflict. For those reasons, battlefield weapons inevitably lower the nuclear threshold. There are many examples of military men who have taken the view that, once that threshold has been crossed, none of us knows what will flow from it.

I can, therefore, understand the argument that we must follow the first two zeros—the zero agreements on the longer-range and shorter-range intermediate nuclear weapons — with the third zero, which encompasses a negotiation on the battlefield and short-range systems. However, as we have been reminded by the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies), the military argument for battlefield nuclear weapons is that they have a deterrent effect, and that they prevent the massing of Soviet armour on the central front. There is, therefore, a natural reluctance on the part of the military to negotiate those weapons away when the perceived threat remains.

Like the right hon. Member for Llanelli, I am attracted to the idea of linking progress in negotiations on battlefield nuclear weapons with progress in negotiations on the conventional arms front. That strikes me as one way of ensuring progress. However, I cannot be quite as optimistic as the right hon. Gentleman appeared about the prospects for the conventional arms negotiations. We know that the new forum to discuss those issues will be very different from that of the MBFR. It will cover a very much wider area, from the Atlantic to the Urals. Its general approach — to try to secure stability and security, at lower levels of arms deployment — is one that we would all endorse, but I do not believe that we should underestimate the problems.

There has been some difference across the House about the issue of Warsaw pact superiority in terms of conventional defence. It is hard to dispute the existence of that superiority, but its extent is a matter for legitimate debate. One of the difficulties is the method by which the relative strengths are calculated. There is at present no agreed basis on which such calculation might take place. I have recently seen a study by the Atlantic Council of the United States, which set out the problems of trying to agree a basis for calculating the strength of each side in Europe. If we consider NATO and the Warsaw pact, for example, we do not count France and Spain in the NATO forces, because they are not part of the integrated military command. However, it is hard to expect the Soviets to assume that there will be no assistance to NATO from the direction of Spain and France. If Spain and France are included in the figures, that will add some 20 divisions, some 2,000 tanks and 700 tactical aircraft. Whether those countries are to be included is thus a very important issue.

If there is to be conflict in Europe, it cannot be assumed that the non-committed or neutral nations will sit quietly on their hands and play no part in it. The Swedes, the Finns and the Swiss have effective forces which must be involved to some extent in the calculations. There is also the question of what proportion of the forces are to be counted. Should it be only those in place in Europe, or those that are capable of being transferred into Europe in time of conflict? Should it be only troops in active service, or should reservists be included?

There is also the issue of equipment. Front-line forces no longer equip their men; they man their equipment. Equipment is obviously extremely important. The question has already been raised in the debate of what sort of tanks we should count. Should it be only modern, effective tanks, or should we count the aging systems held in reserve? Should we count defensive as well as offensive systems?

Those are all difficult issues, and, as other hon. Members have said, it is a question not only of quantity but of quality. As many systems have not been tested in warfare, it is very difficult to judge the quality of one tank or one aircraft against that of another, and it is certainly difficult to assess the quality of individual forces. How, for example, do we judge Spanish and Portuguese forces against Polish or Romanian forces? There are also the problems of the back-up of defence industries, the geographical asymmetry and so forth. I am merely trying to argue that, when we approach the difficult issue of conventional arms negotiations from the Atlantic to the Urals, agreeing the forces belonging to each side that are to be counted in those negotiations is far from straightforward.

That leads me to believe that, while there is certainly a case for linking the negotiation on battlefield nuclear weapons with progress in conventional arms control, it is likely to be a lengthy process. We must recognise that some

European countries are so anxious about the destabilising effect of nuclear artillery, in particular, that they would much prefer to see those systems taken out and negotiated separately from conventional systems. We must be clear about what NATO strategy is to be. If there are divisions within the member nations of NATO, they will undoubtedly be exploited by the Soviet Union.

There is a wide measure of agreement within the NATO Alliance that the security of Europe, for as far ahead as we can see, depends on a mix of nuclear and conventional deterrence. The problem for NATO is to decide and achieve the maximum agreement on the balance between the two, and the make-up of the individual parts of that deterrence.

It would be useful to hear the Government's views on this important issue, and also to hear how they intend to influence the development of a NATO negotiating position in the testing time that lies ahead.

6.16 pm

Dr. Alan Glyn (Windsor and Maidenhead): I congratulate the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) on representing his constituency interests so well. I should like to take up many of his points during my speech, because I have considerable sympathy with them.

We now have a professional and efficient regular Army. However, the necessity for conventional forces has become more important — we hope because the dangers of atomic warfare are gradually receding. We must always remember, as the hon. Member for Woolwich pointed out, that until we are sufficiently strong we must retain our present strength until the reduction is complete. We must retain superiority.

To be efficient, an army must first be mobile, and secondly, as the Minister said, it must have proper communications. Those communications, however, must not only be between units of our Army; they must also be between our allies in other NATO armies.

The right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) doubted the relative strengths of the two forces, and also called into question the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1987". I do not believe that all this matters. The hon. Member for Woolwich spoke of France and Spain's inclusion, and that of non-committed nations, and the age of Soviet equipment. Most people would agree, however, that the Soviet side has a considerable force, which is very much stronger than the NATO Alliance, together with France, Spain and any other nations. That is unquestionable.

I do not think that it matters whether equipment is old or new, or whether or not it is behind the Urals. The balance is loaded against us. We have to start off with that premise.

Our Army is called upon to perform many duties. My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Colchester (Sir A. Buck) referred to Belize and the Falklands, and we have forces on loan to various parts of the world. They have a varied and interesting role to play. The worst role is that in Northern Ireland, where our forces work in conjunction with the Ulster Defence Regiment and the Royal Ulster Constabulary. I believe that the bomb disposal people are the bravest of the lot. To defuse a bomb in cold blood is one of the bravest things a man can do. It is easy to go over the top but it is much more difficult to do something in cold blood. The Minister paid a tribute to the people who devote their lives to that task. The Army in Northern Ireland does a good job but no army can ever do its job if its hands are tied. Therefore, one has to give our soldiers some latitude.

My hon. Friend the Minister talked about the central front. I was a little worried about that. He said that the central front may move but that it will not affect West Germany. That causes the conundrum to which I have referred before. There is the difficulty of what East Germany would do if West Germany was invaded and what West Germany would do if it was called upon to invade East Germany. We do not know. I have talked to officers in the West German army and their views differ according to whether they have relatives in East Germany. It is an unknown factor with which we have always to reckon.

My hon. Friend the Minister mentioned the importance of search. He was a soldier and he knows the importance of reconnaissance. He knows how important it is to find out where the enemy is. I was interested in the new devices he mentioned and in the communications systems to which he referred. I want to emphasise the importance of being able to communicate not only between units of our own forces but between the units of other forces in western Europe.

My hon. Friend mentioned the T64B and the T80 tanks. That illustrates — I am pointing this out to the hon. Member for Woolwich — the fact that the Soviet army has been developing a large number of techniques which add to its capability and which, to some extent, replace the old tanks that are going out of service.

The Russians have an immense reserve force. I believe that they have about 1 or 2 million active reservists on their reserve list. The Russians have historically always had a large reserve army. Even in Tsarist days, Russia was full of people walking around in uniform. Perhaps they simply liked the uniform.

My hon. Friend the Minister referred to the Challenger tank. He said that 5th and 6th regiments would be coming into service, followed by the 7th. I am worried about tank replacements. The Army wants 500 new tanks at a cost of £700 million. When choosing a tank we have to balance two factors. First, there is the question whether they will be produced in this country, and, therefore create employment, which is important. Secondly, it is necessary to have a tank that is efficient and which has parts that are interchangeable with those of our allies. When one goes to war it is essential to have interchangeable parts. If one breaks a sprocket and the tank breaks down and if other units do not have appropriate spares, one will find that the tank is out of use. I should like to see us producing a tank in the United Kingdom that has parts which are interchangeable with our NATO allies. That applies to weapons as well.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne), who also has military experience, mentioned helicopters. The infantry is becoming more mobile and is better able to operate with tanks. I hope that it is also on the same wireless frequency. That is important. The Saxon and the Warrior are useful but the helicopter is, as yet, under-employed.

I should like to ask the Government how they are getting on with chemical agent monitors. I should also like to ask how they are getting on with regard to nerve gas. We know that the Soviet Union has 300,000 tonnes of chemical and biological weapons. It is essential that our Army has sufficient protective clothing to use in the event

[Dr. Alan Glyn]

of the Soviets embarking upon chemical or biological war. As they have such a superiority, I am sure that they may be tempted to use it.

The importance of our reserve force is immense. We have to have a good Territorial Army. The hon. Member for Woolwich pointed out the importance of demography. We cannot have conscription so we have to increase our Territorial reserve forces. There is one thing that holds us back. It is easier for people who work for large firms or conglomerates to take time off to participate in Territorial Army activities, but it is difficult for the self-employed or those working in a small business. We have to find some inducement to get those people to give up their fortnight's leave. Perhaps we should give them some extra leave in exchange. It is of national importance. They are providing a service for their country and, incidentally, for their company because they are learning discipline and many other things.

I was a little worried about the issue of women. During war we have all seen the importance of women in the armed forces. I understand that there are not enough people to train them, and I am worried about that. Women can do so many jobs. Home service is important and the Government have not paid sufficient attention to it. I am glad that my hon. Friend the Minister has announced that there will be a 20 per cent. increase in the home service.

I do not want to take up any more of the House's time, but there is one more issue to which I would like to refer. It is the purely domestic problem of the rebuilding of Victoria barracks in Windsor. I was told in a parliamentary answer on 4 July 1985 that completion was due for 1989. So far, the drains have been completed and there is some grass planted in the centre barracks. I do not know whether that is to prevent it from being used as a car park. As a garrison town and the home of the Sovereign, we have a duty to rebuild the barracks. My own regiment, the Household Cavalry, has an extremely good barracks there. It is right that the Footguards should have their barracks in Windsor. Traditionally, the monarchy, the Household Cavalry and the Footguards have been located there, and, as a Household Cavalry man, I should like to see the Footguards back in Victoria barracks at the earliest opportunity. I hope that when my hon. Friend replies to the debate he will say a few words on that matter.

6.30 pm

Mr. Bruce George (Walsall, South): If people have the energy to read the debates that we have had on this subject in the House over the past 10 years, they will notice a remarkable transformation in East-West relations. I was a Member of Parliament in the mid-1970s. It was the era of détente. As we proceeded through the 1970s we heard here and outside a shrill hostility to the Soviet Union. The emergence of the cold war was reflected in debates in the House throughout the 1970s and up to the mid-1980s, and until recently there has been confrontation between the parties and a perception of East-West relations on the part of the Government reminiscent of earlier and sadder periods.

If anyone had predicted a year or so ago what would happen in East-West relations, he would have been dismissed as being amenable to psychiatric treatment. The changes in East-West relations have been truly remarkable. We are living in exciting times. The problem lies in achieving a proper sense of balance, not being carried away by euphoria and devising security policies for countries within the Alliance that will be valid a decade hence. That is exceedingly difficult to achieve in any circumstances. We are living in fluid times, so the problem is even more difficult.

We are living in an era of change. We have seen the signing of the momentous intermediate nuclear forces agreement, which I hope will be ratified by the United States Senate. If the circumstances of SALT II were replicated, the consequences for NATO would be catastrophic. Existing trends in the Senate give one cause for optimism that it will ratify the agreement.

We have seen a decline in the rhetoric of confrontation. There have been unprecedented developments in the Soviet Union. We have heard much talk about further arms control negotiations in the pipeline. Most important of all, we have seen, in many countries in the Warsaw pact and in NATO, old-established principles of security being re-evaluated. Political parties with established principles of security are having to re-evaluate them in the light of changing circumstances. Much is in a state of flux with regard to security policy.

Changes in the Soviet Union impinge on NATO. The main thrust of my speech will be about how these changes will take place, be assessed, recognised, accommodated and adapted within the NATO Alliance, which most hon. Members wish to see survive, because it is the essential principle of our security policy.

Since Mr. Gorbachev's accession to the post of General Secretary, he has made some remarkable changes in Soviet domestic society, which now appears to have primacy over foreign relations. The words glasnost and perestroika have almost entered the English language. One must ask to what degree those reforms will be successful. We must ask whether the extremely impressive rhetoric that we have heard from the Soviet Union on defence and foreign policy will be translated into concrete action. There are signs of a transference between rhetoric and action, but it is dangerous to take too many decisions based on a reaction to what Mr. Gorbachev is saying. We must observe what is being done.

I advise hon. Members to read a book that was recently written by a Frenchman, Michel Tatu, who is probably the leading Kremlinologist in Europe. He argues that we should hope that the Gorbachev reforms will be successful, but he cautions that Mr. Gorbachev might fail. One problem that Mr. Gorbachev has with his "cabinet" which our Prime Minister has not is a degree of opposition. Therefore, it is by no means impossible that those reforms in domestic politics and international relations will be negated. It is by no means certain that Mr. Gorbachev will be around in five or 10 years' time to continue his policies. While I support a positive reaction to his initiatives, it is important not to become too carried away. Even if the Soviet Union becomes less revolutionary and less proselytising, as it appears to be doing, a non-revolutionary Marxist-Leninist Soviet Union can still pose a threat to the West. One must not become too carried away by developments in the Soviet Union.

Let us hope that Mr. Gorbachev's impetus is carried forward. Let us hope that the era of détente, in which he has played a major part, survives and that we do not return to the position of the 1970s, when the era of détente lasted a few years but dissolved. We must hope that this era will survive into the 1990s and beyond.

Equally important changes are taking place in the United States. With regard to foreign policy in the 20th century, the hegemony of Europe was undermined. It was not possible for European powers to achieve a balance of power that inhibited one of its own from securing dominance. That led to the reluctant incursion of the United States into European politics in the first world war. It then stepped back and left us to our own devices. Once again it became necessary for an external power, the United States, to remedy the balance of power which did not preval in the second world war. After that, the United States remained behind and became a global power—the protector of Europe.

Circumstances are changing, and the international balance of power is changing. No longer do we have the super-power hegemony that prevailed for much of the post-second world war period. The United States has neither the economic resources nor—among sections of Congress and the public—the will to remain the global power in the 1990s that it was in the 1960s and much of the 1970s and 1980s.

The problem with which we are faced, not only in NATO, but in Japan and other countries which have an affinity with the United States, is how to manage this decline. The Americans deny that there is such a decline, but the United States is clearly faced with the problem that faces us perennially—there are too many commitments for its diminishing resources. If its presence around the world will not be as complete as it was, we either say that the vacuum will not be filled, or that the rest of the democratic world will have to adjust to the fact that the United States will not be performing — many people welcome this — the global role that it has hitherto played.

Anyone who has talked to Congressmen will be aware of the growth of isolationism in Congress, which reflects and partly fuels the growth of isolationism in the United States. Therefore, it is important to ask the American public the inescapable question: is NATO still in the United States' interest? Is the maintenance of a large nuclear and conventional commitment to Europe still in its interest? Most people here consider that the answer is a very clear yes. We must be aware that changes are taking place as a result of that reorientation in the United States.

There are changes taking place in Europe. We are no longer economically, politically or militarily as prostrate as we were when NATO was founded. Europe's GNP is very impressive compared with that of the United States and of the Soviet Union. In future Europe should, and must, do more to secure its own protection than it has in recent years. It is important that we point out to the United States that the development of the concept of a second pillar of the Alliance must be seen within the context of NATO. It would be wrong to give the United States the impression that Europe is ganging up on it, because that would lead eventually to a diminution of the American presence, which we should try hard to avoid. Most members of the Government and most Opposition Members would argue, not for unarmed or semi-armed neutralism, but for Europe's playing a more significant role and having a greater impact on decision-making in NATO.

Changes taking place in the rest of the world impinge on NATO. For example, medium-rank powers are developing nuclear weapons, and wars are taking place which the super-powers cannot control. Anyone who thinks that the future of the world lies in the global competition between the Soviet Union and the United States is not paying due heed to the break-up of those powers' empires and to the emergence of new medium-rank and smaller powers outside their control.

All those changes are having an impact on NATO. What will NATO be in the 1990s? Will it survive? Will it have withered away because the threat to western Europe and the United States will have evaporated? I suspect not. Will NATO have outlived its usefulness, or cracked as a result of internal, if not external, pressures? Those of us who are inclined to support NATO are constantly lamenting the problems that it faces. Some have an apocalyptic vision of the future and envisage the collapse of NATO under the weight of crises. However, NATO has always been able to resolve crises. One must hope that external and internal circumstances give NATO the opportunity to reformulate its policies on nuclear weapons and conventional forces and to readjust its decision-making procedures. If the Alliance is to have the vitality to survive the difficult years ahead, it is critical that it should undergo a re-examination and modify substantially its policies and structure.

In the late 1980s NATO requires the emergence of a new Harmel report and an organisation of wise men to map out its future over the next few years. The Alliance is in considerable need of restructuring. Will there be changes in its nuclear policy? Despite the critique of the policy of flexible response, no serious alternative has yet emerged to replace it. The advantage of the policy lies precisely in its flexibility and ambiguity. The concept of flexible response has more or less served us for a number of years. If it is to be replaced, much more research needs to be carried out. It is easy glibly to say that flexible response is out. It is far more difficult to provide something in its place.

If one element of flexible response has been impaired as result of the INF agreement, it is surely important to strengthen its conventional element. The irony is that, although we have heard much from the Minister about what is being done to enhance our conventional capability, and while it is easy to detect the rhetoric of improvement throughout the Alliance, the reality is that, given the financial pressures on all Governments, it will be exceedingly difficult to maintain our conventional capability, let alone expand it. All Governments face that problem. We need to re-examine our reliance on nuclear weapons and realise that arms control negotiations, if sensibly pursued, will diminish the requirement of first use, or indeed early use, policy. However, that can be an expensive option, because it will mean a considerable improvement in our conventional capability.

I hope that NATO will seek, not only an accommodation with the Soviet Union but ways of reconciling the security policies of different parties within the member countries of NATO. I am worried about the disharmony that exists within NATO. In recent years the various Socialist, Social-Democratic and Democratic-Socialist parties in the NATO countries have put forward an approach to security that is at variance with established NATO policy. I hope that the present state of flux will give NATO the opportunity of a rapprochement with the political parties that helped to found NATO but which have diverged from its policy. That rapproachement needs to be found, because unless security policy is underpinned by substantial political support it becomes vulnerable.

[Mr. Bruce George]

The changes that take place in future will include developments in arms control. Perhaps the INF agreement will make Isaiah's hope of beating swords into ploughshares look a little less unrealistic than hitherto. However, one thing is fairly clear. The 14 European nations that belong to NATO do not have identical arms control policies. Two of the 14 counties are nuclear powers; a number of the others permit nuclear weapons on their soil; others will accept nuclear weapons in time of crisis; and some do not accept nuclear weapons, but accept American nuclear protection. The different perceptions of nuclear weapons are reflected in different attitudes to arms control.

One thing is fairly obvious. With the possible exception of the French Government, the Governments of European NATO countries wish to be perceived by their electorates as working for arms control agreements. Arms control has come to be seen as an integral part of security policy, but beyond general attitudes towards arms control policy the Reykjavik near-agreement 18 months ago had quite a profound effect. European Governments largely wish to ensure the continuation of the policy of nuclear deterrence which remains a bedrock of Alliance security.

For Europe, in practical terms, that means pursuing 50 per cent., not 100 per cent., reductions in strategic systems. It means accepting—albeit reluctantly in the case of a number of Governments—a zero-zero INF agreement. It means deferring negotiations on tactical nuclear weapons and, for most European Governments, it means taking conventional arms control negotiations very seriously. According to an American ambassador, Jonathan Dean, Europe

"has concluded that the East-West confrontation has passed its peak and is in decline, a decline which should be hastened."

Coupled with anti-nuclear sentiment among the public and many opposition parties, NATO Governments will continue to face important challenges and the need prudently to balance arms control and defence policy.

Conventional arms negotiations are clearly inevitable. We have heard much about the balance of power and the conventional balance in Europe. There is only one thing more dangerous than overstating Soviet capability, and that is understating it. The problems are immensely complicated. My right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) eulogised the report of the Western European Union. The hon. Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge (Mr. Stokes), the author of that report, must be very pleased, as this is one of the few occasions on which something that he has done has attracted support from an Opposition Front-Bench spokesman. However, I might add that that report was not accepted by the Assembly of the Western European Union.

One can pick any report on the military "balance" that apparently sustains one's own argument. My view is that Soviet conventional superiority is considerable and that any arms control negotiations take that into account. It is not a question simply of head-counting—or rather tank or ship-counting—because it depends largely on where the weapons are situated. A fact that has not emerged yet is that it is not simply a matter of saying, "How many do we have? How many do they have? What is their quality?" The key question is where the weapons are located and the length of time that it will take to achieve the military balance at the point of contact that looks quite neat in a journal.

The geographical problems of getting the reinforcements from North America are far more formidable than the problems that the Soviet Union faces in moving conventional forces from other parts of its own territory. There are great problems in conventional arms negotiations which I hope will be surmounted.

One contentious issue is that of out-of-area activities. For the West, the United States has been the world's policeman — a role that it picked up with some reluctance from the United Kingdom in the 1940s and 1950s. However, that role is coming to an end and it is important that we should be prepared for that. That is not to say that the United States will not remain a global power. It means that the United States will rely more on its allies, either within treaty organisations, such as NATO, or with the countries with which it has bilateral treaties.

It is dangerous to hide our faces from what happens outside the NATO area. That does not mean that Europe should have the will to wander anywhere throughout the world — clearly, military power directed at a problem can make that problem infinitely worse — but it is important that we realise that if we want to have an influence on United States policy outside the NATO area we can do so only if we have capability, presence and involvement. As a result of the South-West Asia impact study, one way was devised in which Europe has agreed to take some compensatory measures. If the United States acts out-of-area there will be some support, such as over flying rights.

What has been happening in the Gulf is very important. In the United States last summer, when hysteria was at its height, many Congressmen had the idea that the Armilla patrol had been operating in the Gulf since 1980. The fact that some had just suddenly discovered the Gulf meant that they were oblivious of the fact that allied Governments actually had naval bases in the Gulf region. Even a report from the Pentagon, written by Mr. Weinberger, did not mention the fact that the Armilla patrol had been operating in the Gulf since 1980. Pressure built up during the early summer. Many people in the USA saw European involvement in the Gulf as almost a touchstone for continuing to have American support troops in Europe and for NATO.

Therefore, it was wise of Europe to react in the way that it did. One suspects that if one asked why various European nations committed naval forces to the Gulf, the answer would be that it was less for the protection of their own shipping, and more for political purposes — to placate the United States and prevent the growth of hostility towards Europe from reaching such a point that it would have disastrous military consequences for NATO.

Of course, forces could not be sent there under the auspices of NATO because, under the treaty, NATO's terms of reference would preclude that. Therefore, the Western European Union and unilateral and bilateral decisions to commit ships there were resorted to. The Gulf operation by Britain, France, the Netherlands, Belgium and Italy, together with the fact that although West Germany's constitution apparently forbids out-of-area activity it is compensating by sending ships to the Mediterranean, is a belated recognition of the fact that events outside the NATO area can have serious

ramifications for Western Europe, not simply in terms of buying off American opposition, but because what happens out there affects us.

Therefore, it is important—it may be unpalatable to many people—that we do not exclude the possibility of further action out of area. I hope that Europe never has the remotest need to operate outside the NATO area. It is as much as we can do to operate successfully within that area. However, we need a capability that may have to be deployed, although that does not mean that it will be deployed.

I do not know how the Government will sustain their commitment to NATO nuclear modernisation, replacing Nimrod, and deploying forces throughout the world, with so many of our naval and armed forces units in the Gulf and the Falklands. One wonders how the Government will manage the increasing commitments with diminishing resources.

We have been in NATO since 1949. I hope that the day will come when that Alliance will be superfluous, but I suspect that it will be needed for many years to come. We must play our part as a nation in that Alliance, deploying our resources competently and efficiently. However, that Alliance, which has served us well, is undergoing change. I only hope that we have military personnel, politicians, diplomats and others who can manage those changes well. Unless those many changes are properly analysed, accommodated, resolved and a restructured Alliance devised for the 1990s, the potential danger for the European members of the Alliance are severe. Therefore, I hope that the changes will be well managed and that our Alliance will be as vital and necessary in the 1990s as it has been since 1949.

6.56 pm

Mr. Ian Bruce (Dorset, South): As the House knows, there are massive numbers of forces personnel in my constituency. In fact, the Army has two bases at Lulworth and Bovington, where the armoured corps has most of its tank ranges and trains many soldiers in the use of armoured personnel carriers and armoured vehicles generally.

Close to my constituency—looking after my western border — the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, West (Sir J. Spicer) contains the rifle range at Chickerell. In addition—although I would not want to be ruled out of order by mentioning it at any great length—we have a naval air station on Portland as well as the Admiralty research establishment which has many Ministry of Defence procurement jobs. Therefore, south Dorset is quite crowded in terms of numbers of service personnel.

As a man of 40, I have little experience of armed forces matters. I am glad that that is so and that so many of our countrymen have not needed to fight for their country or be called up. All hon. Members have paid tribute in this debate to the dedication of the young men and women who are training for a conflict that we hope will never happen. However, in a constituency such as mine, with a large number of forces personnel so close to civilians, the further we are from a conflict, the more little moans start and become greater moans.

I have already been contacted on various occasions about problems such as rifle ranges. My hon. Friend and I have several excellent forces' rifle ranges within hearing distance of our constituencies. It is not long before people start wondering whether so much ammunition should be fired and whether family Sundays should be disturbed. Blast damage may be involved. Apparently, if a double glazing unit fails in south Dorset, for many years there has been a ready pound from the Ministry of Defence to put it right, but occasionally the Ministry resists that. The public seem to think that the Ministry should always be ready to pick up the bill.

In a debate last week, we considered the problems of gun clubs and self-loading rifles. Many of my constituents trained with the forces and, after leaving, wished to pursue their skill in arms as civilians. A good point made to me by some of those people is that gun clubs have always been able to train people and keep them up to the mark with the normal service rifle. If the measure that we debated last week is enacted, we would prohibit rapid-fire weapons, which tend to be the standard issue of NATO army forces, so they would not be able to train with that weapon. We should consider that point in respect of our home affairs.

Although there have been excellent speeches from both sides of the House in this debate, I find it strange that there is such unanimous support for NATO. It is the first time that I have heard a speech by the hon. Member for Walsall, South (Mr. George). He said that we would all prefer not to have the NATO Alliance, but that we realise that we will need it for decades to come.

Before I became a Member of this House, I had to listen to members of the Labour party—I do not know where they are today—who constantly denigrated the fact that we are part of NATO. One would have thought that the two alliance parties would accept that NATO is part of our defence strategy, yet they have been arguing about whether to include NATO in their constitution. The Liberal Benches are empty, yet for most of this afternoon's debate 20 per cent. of the SDP was present, including 50 per cent. of the Owenite wing. It may be uncharitable to say that, because the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) and the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) have strong constituency interests in this matter, they would favour a strong defence alliance, but it is something which needs to be said.

Opposition Members have commented on the quality of Soviet forces. Our forces are extremely fine and it is interesting to note the quality of our peacetime professional Army. I went behind the iron curtain when I visited Czechoslovakia. Things tended to be badly run and looked very scruffy until one saw a member of the Czech or Soviet armed forces. It would be wrong for us to think that they are just a lot of vodka swilling conscripts who could not launch an armed attack. The quality of their forces is very high and is given great emphasis in that society.

I have not been involved with the armed forces, so I did not worry too much about our defence strategy until I was asked to go and speak, in debates with self-styled peace campaigners, against prospective Labour parliamentary candidates and prospective Liberal candidates. I came out of those debates very fearful for the future of our country because those people seemed to dismiss the necessity of good defensive forces to deter attack and ensure that we do not get into a hot war.

I am almost 41 years old and I have never felt the threat that I am about to be called up and brought into military service, but one need only look around the world and analyse the various conflicts to know how they started. Almost without exception, from Adolf Hitler to the latest

[Mr. Ian Bruce]

conflagrations in the middle east, they started when one side felt that it had overwhelming superiority and could rush its forces into another country.

I agree with the concept that, if we want peace, we must prepare for war. When they are in their listening campaign, Members of the Labour Front Bench should listen to many of their dyed-in-the-wool supporters. I distinctly remember carrying out a survey, not as a member of the Conservative party, which involved a couple of guys in Halifax market. I questioned them about their commitment and what they wanted out of life. They appeared to be natural supporters of the Labour party, but I discovered that they had been in the armed forces and were involved in the Falklands conflict. They were absolutely certain that, if there was an armed conflict in which British soldiers were involved, they wanted Margaret Thatcher to lead the country. The Labour party is alienating a part of its possible electorate by not assuring those people a proper defence of the country.

Defence has implications for employment, and the Ministry of Defence has a massive role to play in this. I have lived in the north of England and now live in Weymouth in my constituency. In my constituency, employment is a difficult matter because we are so far from the lines of communication. Traditionally, the Ministry of Defence has always been there and, despite small difficulties, it is very welcome. It is a matter of great concern that, as a result of studies regarding the Ministry's procurement arm, it might suddenly move many people, thus creating great difficulties within the constituency. As we heard earlier, the Ministry of Defence must consider the greater good of the community.

The Ministry of Defence must reconsider its regional policy. Many of the jobs in the armed forces are created in areas which have almost no unemployment. There can be great difficulty in housing people in high-cost areas when it would be much better to base those people elsewhere.

I wish to mention a very poignant reminder of times gone by — prisoners of war of the Japanese. When I came to my constituency, I was approached by a number of people who, many years ago, had had to fight for their country and were captured by the Japanese. They had suffered a great deal and their health was permanently impaired as a result of diseases contracted in the jungle, where they were cruelly imprisoned. As they grow older, they are now suffering even more. When the war was over, decisions had to be made about compensation to which people were legally entitled. The Japanese should think seriously about what they could do unilaterally to help those people who, frankly, still hate them. Those people have a growing need for recompense.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): What does the hon. Gentleman think about the British Government's assistance to the Japanese, for example, in sending them plutonium from nuclear reactors? Given what he has just said, does he think that that is a sensible policy?

Mr. Bruce: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his intervention, but since the second world war the Japanese have been exemplary in showing that they do not wish to use nuclear weapons and things of that nature. One might have expected a country with such enormous economic power to have pushed for military might, but, to a great extent, it has said that it wishes to remain peaceful, and I welcome that. However, that section of the British community which has suffered at their hands would consider that recompense from the Japanese, who they feel harmed them greatly, would outweigh greater recompense from the British Government.

I welcome the Army's attempt to achieve better understanding with the community through open days, community work and so on. Members of Parliament on both sides of the House should talk and listen to the armed forces to find out what their work is about.

Finally, I must reiterate that there should be all-party support for NATO. Clearly, there will be differences, certainly between nuclear and non-nuclear policies, but the message should go out from a united House of Commons that we will defend ourselves and ensure that we play our part in maintaining the peace of the world.

7.11 pm

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): Last week I received the latest edition of "Courage" from the War Widows Association of Great Britain and I was struck by its chart of pensions to war widows in Europe. Britain came near the bottom of the league.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) asked how much the Ministry of Defence pays in pensions to war widows and he was told that a Falkland widow receives the grand sum of £2,709 per annum. The Government are incredibly mean in that respect. Dutch war widows are three times better off than their British sisters and German war widows receive even more than the Dutch.

A letter from the War Widows Association of Great Britain last week says:

"It is with some concern that this Association learns that, due to an error in the Retail Price Index, pensioners were underpaid last year. Though this is being remedied by a grant of £8 per head next month there will still be a small balance —£9 million—over. We understand that it is suggested that this sum may be given to charities. Surely this could be better used to help elderly war widows—some of whom have only their war widow's pensions."

In 1985 the association suggested a small increase of about £2 a week which would incur a further expenditure of only £5,200,000, but that was rejected out of hand by the Chancellor.

The association goes on to say:

"Could not some of this surplus £9 million be used to help those elderly war widows? Some of them have had no holiday for years—and others have never had a new winter coat. This is a sad reflection on this country's care for them. Without their husbands' sacrifices where would this country be today?"

That is a terrible indictment of the Government's treatment of war widows. Last spring, the Dutch war widows donated clothes to British war widows. What a disgrace. What meanness from the Government.

The situation of war widows is especially bad when it is compared with the wholesale waste in other areas of the Government's defence programme. I mentioned many examples of that in the recent debate on the Defence Estimates. Hundreds of millions of pounds on individual projects — billions of pounds in total — go down the drain. Let me repeat a few examples that relate to the Army. When the SP70 artillery project was scrapped by the Government £200 million went down the drain — £100 million straight from the British taxpayer. A pittance from that would have made the war widows better off. The

Government appear to be considering the procurement of an alternative to the SP70 artillery system which is likely to cost as much again—£200 million.

BATES—the Army's artillery command computer—has incurred expenditure of at least £200 million and is going nowhere. That is double the original estimate and costs are still rising substantially, yet it is nowhere near completion. That really is a case of Marconi milking the Ministry dry. The Ministry is a pushover for defence monopolies in such matters. It was reported in the press that the Ministry of Defence is currently investigating £3·5 billion of public expenditure. That is the sort of privatisation that the Government is going in for. It is robbery from the public purse.

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): Is it not better to cancel a project when it is clear that it is not getting anywhere, rather than do as the Labour party did when it was in power, and keep going on with something that clearly will not reach a conclusion and so waste even more taxpayers' money? The Nimrod project is a classic example of that.

Mr. Cohen: Vast amounts were wasted on the Nimrod project by this Government. The Government spend £200 million before they even consider whether a project is leading anywhere, and that is a scandal. Such money would be much better spent on the war widows.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Does my hon. Friend accept that a disturbing feature of these lavish contracts, which would be criticised by every Tory Member if a local authority were carrying them out, is that distinguished generals and admirals join the boards of many of the companies concerned, as do senior civil servants, permanent secretaries and deputy secretaries from the Ministry of Defence, which perhaps facilitates some of those contracts?

Mr. Cohen: I agree with my hon. Friend. I am particularly worried when a top civil servant, who has been involved in a waste of money, now has a senior auditing position under the Government. He must come forward with results, or some of us will not be very happy.

Let us compare the waste in land and housing with the meanness shown towards war widows. The Ministry of Defence has 16,000 empty houses. Nearly 20 per cent. of its housing stock is empty and a quarter of that has been empty for over a year. Yet Britain has a homelessness crisis. The Ministry of Defence has over £50 billion worth of land. That is at 1982 values and we know what has happened to the value of land since 1982. Prices have rocketed. No one can tell me that some of that land could not be released for homes and hospitals. Yet, far from being satisfied with its existing land holdings, the Ministry of Defence is trying to get more from the National Trust and other owners of beauty spots in Wales and Cumbria.

Another big source of waste is the Falklands, now costing £400 million a year. Some of the money now going down the drain could have been used to resettle those living on the islands. They could have had about £1 million in their pockets and the taxpayers would still have been saved millions of pounds. But the Government have made no attempt to reach an agreement with the democratic Government in the Argentine or to reach a settlement, perhaps one by which those living in the Falklands could have stayed, while we were relieved of that enormous, ridiculous cost.

When hon. Members try to tackle the waste of money they receive an irresponsible response from Ministers. For example, I asked the Government to list all their overspending of £1 million and more. "No way" was the reply, "but we report to the Comptroller and Auditor General when it goes over £250 million." What nonsense, and how irresponsible of the Government not to report to hon. Members when there is overspending on projects. The sum of £1 million is still a sizeable amount.

As I have said, the Ministry of Defence is a pushover for the defence contractors, and it seems to me that it is a pushover for any speculator, to judge from the report about its attempts to move to Millbank. A speculator bought the property just before Christmas for £80 million, and because he could not use it for housing he decided to rent it to the Ministry for £20 million a year. Either there is something corrupt going on in the Ministry of Defence, to help out a speculator who probably helps the Conservatives at general elections, or it is totally incompetent. That money could be put to much better use. That waste must be compared with the appalling meanness to the war widows.

In the short time available to me I want to go on to the question of battlefield nuclear weapons, which very much affects our armed forces. If such weapons were ever used our armed forces in the front line would annihilated. That is why the Germans do not want them; they would be annihilated as well. Even if only one or two of those weapons were used, the rest of us would be irradiated to a much greater extent than happened after Chernobyl. Yet the Government are surreptitiously and stealthily expanding the numbers of battlefield nuclear weapons.

A British American Security Information Council report published this week shows that in the mid-1990s—arising from the Montebello agreement reached four years ago, about which the Government have been extremely disingenuous—there is to be a big expansion, including an increase in the number of battlefield nuclear weapons.

It is worth getting some quotations from the report into *Hansard* to show how the Army, for example, will be affected. Under the heading

"Short Range Ground Launched Cruise Missile",

we read:

"According to its presentations to Congress in 1986, the US Army is continuing to develop the Joint Tactical Missile System with the US Airforce to be fired from the Multiple Launch Rocket System (MCRS). 'Joint Tactical Missile System (JTACMS) is a deep strike cruise missile being developed jointly with the Air Force.'"

The Army systems

"'will be superimposed on the existing MLRS force structure.'"

The report adds that

"In 1987 the US Department of Defense sought to lift the Congressional prohibition on a nuclear warhead for the JTACMS,"

Therefore there will be an increase in the number of those missiles for the Army.

With regard to warheads, the BASIC report refers to the programme called "Follow-on-to-Lance". It says:

"In 1987 the US Senate lifted its ban on the study of a nuclear warhead for the Army Tactical Missile System . . . According to Senator Kennedy lifting the prohibition 'allows the Army the possibility of developing a nuclear ATACMS"—

army tactical missile system—

"'as a potential follow on to the Lance-tactical missile'"

so as to have more theatre nuclear capability in Europe.

[Mr. Cohen]

The report also talks about artillery, a matter that directly affects the Army. I wish I could read out to the House the whole of an extensive part dealing with enhanced radiation or neutron weapon capability that could be used in the new artillery warhead that is to be produced. The Americans are pulling the wool over people's eyes, because they define their enhanced-radiation-capable shells and other components as not being enhanced radiation weapons. However, they will have neutron bomb capability in the W82 shell, a 155 mm projectile that the Government are pressing on with.

What we see from such reports is that certainly no reduction in nuclear weaponry is planned, despite the intermediate-range nuclear forces agreement, which gives the impression of achieving reductions. The Government are not interested in reductions. They want to have compensatory measures and much more. They never put before the British electorate that they would have a massive build-up in the guise of modernisation. By the mid-1990s there will be, according to the report, a huge stockpile of about 4,600 new nuclear weapons in Europe, which will enable the Government to get rid of some of the obsolete stock. Those new nuclear weapons will be much more dangerous and deadly in many ways. They will be more devastating and more accurate, but, more worryingly, they will be more usable. That is what the Pentagon report entitled "Discriminate Deterrence" is all about. The *International Herald Tribune* said of it:

"Highly accurate nuclear and conventional missiles have reduced the possibility of an all-out Soviet assault in Western Europe but increased the risk of limited nuclear strikes, possibly involving the superpowers in Third World conflicts, according to a Pentagon report.

To maintain stability, the report says, the West should concentrate on high-technology weapons capable of delivering surgical nuclear strikes."

The *Herald Tribune* goes on, quoting Mr. Fred C. Ikle, Under-Secretary of Defence for Policy, that:

"'Improving U.S. and Soviet ability to knock out military installations with long-range, small-warhead nuclear weapons adds up to the most important military development since World War II. . .The 30-year revolution in accuracies has more cumulative impact than the initial qualitative leap from conventional explosives to the A-bomb'."

The newspaper adds that the Pentagon report says that

"The West . . . must turn to those 'politically usable' nuclear weapons".

That is the approach the Government are taking alongside NATO and inside NATO, with their change from the more obsolete weapons to the new ones—making them more usable, more likely to be used.

There is another great advantage to such weapons. They are excluded from the arms talks, so the Government can get away with it. If the weapons were ever used it would be appalling for our Army and dangerous to the world, and they are not what the people of the West want in any case. As a first stage we should be going in another direction, guaranteeing no first use of these battlefield nuclear weapons. That would help the mood for a nuclear reduction agreement and stimulate the Soviet Union to make concessions.

Then we should begin negotiations in earnest for battlefield nuclear zero in Europe. We can get an agreement. It would have to be asymmetrical, as the INF agreement was. In the INF agreement the Russians gave more. In this case we would have to give more because we rely more on battlefield nuclear weapons in Europe. We also want them so that we can use them in the Third world. A battlefield nuclear zero agreement could easily go hand in hand with cuts in conventional forces. Again, such an agreement would be asymmetrical, with the Russians giving more. They have offered to give more but, because we are keen on using battlefield weapons, we have not taken those negotiations seriously.

We could get agreement in both spheres with extended joint verification procedures and restrictions on military manoeuvres. Large-scale attacks by either side would be impractical. That would be a major step towards peace. That would be the way to release the vast amount of unproductive resources currently wasted in propping up entrenched military vested interests. Those resources would be released for the worldwide welfare of mankind. That would be far better than the nuclear narcissus approach and the macho military role which the Government so eagerly promote. The Tory nuclearphiliac approach is inappropriate for the real needs of the people.

7.31 pm

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): I am delighted to be able to make a brief contribution to this year's Army debate. It is a very interesting debate. We have had the geopolitical overview from the hon. Member for Walsall, South (Mr. George), which I found interesting; indeed, I have much in common with his views. We have had from the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) his theories of forced resettlement of Falkland islanders. Were such an idea to be mentioned in connection with many parts of the world, I suspect that it would not be a popular view for the hon. Gentleman to express. Perhaps the House will forgive me if I do not attempt to follow the hon. Gentleman's arguments with regard to nuclear forces because I wish to take a few minutes to discuss a matter which is fairly parochial and relevant to my constituency.

During the debate on this year's Defence White Paper, I paid tribute to the Royal Engineers in this, the bicentenary year of their royal charter. If I do not repeat my plaudits this evening, it is simply because such repetition would be otiose. However, the corps plays a most important part in the life of my constituency. I was pleased that my hon. Friend, in opening the debate, referred to the Royal Engineers' considerable contribution throughout the country and throughout the world during the year. In Kent their help through the heavy snows of last January and through the effects of the hurricane in October were invaluable. My hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks (Mr. Wolfson), who is in his place, would also like to pay tribute to the Sappers for their efforts at that time. We also applaud their courage and skill shown in their work with the disposal of explosive ordnance.

The matter which I wish to raise with my hon. Friend is bound up with that great military establishment, the Royal School of Military Engineering at Brompton in my constituency, and with the former royal naval dockyard and base at Chatham, which is also predominantly in my constituency. The matter which is greatly exercising the concern of my constituents and of my local authority, Gillingham borough council, is in stark contrast to a point made by the hon. Member for Leyton—the disposal of land declared to be redundant to the Ministry of Defence, in whose tenure it has been vested for almost 300 years.

On two occasions I have shared my concern and that of my constituents with my hon. Friend the Member for

Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope) in his role as Under-Secretary of State for the Environment responsible for the Property Services Agency. As a result of those debates on 15 December 1986 and 10 April 1987 my hon. Friend visited my constituency on 29 April last year to view the land in question. In so doing, he followed in the footsteps of my hon. Friend the Member for Pendle (Mr. Lee), who visited the same land when he was Under-Secretary of State for Defence. My aims and efforts in articulating my concern have been simple, and I shall come to that in a few minutes.

First, I must define the areas of land for which the Ministry of Defence and the PSA, acting as estate agent for the Ministry, have expressed predatory planning aspirations. There are presently extant and at different points in the planning process three planning applications for residential development, and there is the likelihood of a fourth application on different pieces of the same large area of land in the Ministry's tenure. I say tenure rather than ownership, because the PSA has continually been challenged to prove the Ministry's title to the land and has consistently refused so to do, leading to the suspicion that the Ministry, aided and abetted by a prevaricating and obstructive PSA, may have doubts about its ownership and, therefore, its right to sell the land.

The land constitutes different parts of the Brompton Lines conservation area, which was scheduled in 1965 by the Government as an ancient monument. I need not remind my hon. Friend that circular 23/77 assures us that it is Government responsibility to ensure that ancient monuments are preserved.

The three planning applications for residential development relate to land known respectively as the Great Lines, Lower Lines and East Camp, and the Garrison No. 2 sports ground. The first application has been refused by Gillingham borough council and is now the subject of an appeal. The second application is likely to be approved, subject only to the PSA agreeing the access conditions put down by the council.

It is the third application, concerning Garrison No. 2 sports ground, which is causing a great deal of trouble and concern locally. This sports ground was declared surplus to the Army's need in 1978 and was leased to the borough council for 10 years. Since then 10 sports clubs have played cricket, hockey and football in some 300 matches a year and it is an important sports facility in the area. With no consultation, the PSA served minimum notice on 7 September 1987 that the lease will not be renewed when it expires on 8 September 1988. The notice was followed smartly on 14 October by an outline application for residential development on approximately 6·25 hectares of this mature sports ground on which county cricket and, indeed, hockey of international standard have been played in the past and may be played again this year. The council will determine this application next week. It is likely that this determination will be in the negative.

I do not wish to rehearse again, because it would be tedious for the House, the arguments I have rehearsed with my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment. I certainly do not want to get into the complicated legal position which is being searched out by the council. My reason for raising the matter today is the frustration which I and the council feel at the hostile planning applications being submitted by the PSA on a scatter-gun basis, without sensible consultation with the council.

There is much land in the tenure of the Ministry of Defence, as one would expect in a town so closely associated with the Royal Navy and the Army for almost 500 years. The people of the Medway towns are pleased to have served and hosted the forces of the Crown for so long. They have a very great affection for the Royal Navy and for the Sappers. They have also enjoyed the great open space provided in their tight urban environment by the Brompton Lines. That is why they are resisting the development of the Lines so fiercely.

I wish to bring to my hon. Friend's attention the difficulties that arise in the matter of land disposal out of the split responsibility between the Ministry of Defence and the PSA. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State can say he has declared, as he is bound to do by the Government's policy, land redundant to the MOD's needs, but my conflict is with the PSA over the manner by which it seeks to dispose of the land. The PSA, for its part, claims that it is acting only as the Government's estate agency and is bound to seek the best price for the land, and that involves probing the development potential of the land.

The problem is that neither the MOD nor the PSA seems to be prepared to sit down with the local council and consider the matter in the round, to discuss all the MOD's landholdings likely to be surplus to the Army's needs, and to agree a comprehensive plan for development, or otherwise. There is even a perfect vehicle for such consultation, the inelegantly abbreviated SMALC—the Services Medway Area Liaison Committee. However, the PSA, which is present or represented at SMALC meetings, seems not to want to view the holdings in the round. Indeed, the recently appointed PSA consultants, Messrs Edward Erdmann, rejected just such a strategy at a meeting with the council only last week.

The problems Gillingham is presently encountering with the PSA in the matter of the disposal of land surplus to MOD needs arises from an unwillingness of PSA, and perhaps MOD, to consult with the local community. I suspect that that may apply to other areas were the MOD may be seeking to dispose of land for which it no longer has a use.

I conclude by inviting my hon. Friend to commit his Department, in co-operation with PSA, to opening a thorough-going review of land, surplus or likely to be surplus to the Ministry's needs, with Gillingham borough council, Rochester-on-Medway city council and Kent county council, thereby avoiding a bruising war of attrition which may well lessen the affection of the Medway towns for the services. For those of us who take pride in having the Army as a highly valued constituent, that would be a sad day indeed.

7.42 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): In my experience in relation to the disposal of land, the Ministry of Defence has been very constructive and helpful, although it may vary from one part of the country to another. I have to put it on record that I have had nothing but helpful letters from the Minister and his colleagues on individual cases. I stick to my view that the services have handled individual matters with compassion and good sense.

With reference to what was said about heritage, I wish to congratulate the Department on what it has done at Fort George and say that the Scottish command seems to be running extremely satisfactorily under the distinguished

[Mr. Tam Dalyell]

tenure in office of General Sir Norman Arthur, who has been a great success as GOC. I also believe that bullying has been greatly exaggerated in the papers. It is very rare. The level of civilisation in the services is increasing, and it is unfortunate that one or two incidents have been highlighted in the press. I join my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) in paying tribute to the bomb squads.

I have given the Minister short notice of a question about what happened at Porton, and the problem of the Building Design Services and the contaminated vaccines. I understand that more than £1 million will be paid to the Ministry of Defence, because the Building Design Services did not meet DHSS standards or United States Department of Defence standards. I have long been interested in Porton. Can the Minister say something about that?

I made an intervention in the opening speech in relation to end user certificates. I shall say exactly what concerns me about arms exports. Arms are finding their way through Asia and certainly to the Afghan border. My hon. Friends the Members for Blyth Valley (Mr. Campbell) and for Edinburgh, Leith (Mr. Brown) came back with pictures of British Blowpipes. Yet again, the question arises as to how they got there and Government policy on that issue.

In regard to arms exports, I draw the Minister's attention to the remarkable television programme, the dispatches programme, "Gunning for Government". It raised the case of 60,000 Indian rifles. I have one precise question. Mr. Frank Turner is central to the problem which is well-known to the Minister of State for Defence Procurement. Do the Government accept what was said in the programme? Was there a special relationship with named personnel in the Ministry of Defence? If the Minister cannot answer that question, perhaps he can write to hon. Members about it. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) and the hon. Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) are extremely active about this matter, and I am asking for a letter to try to establish the facts.

I speak about military intelligence with some anger, because last night I saw the Prime Minister, in her interview wth Mr. Dimbleby, say that ordinary people wanted to keep the nation's secrets, and implied that the press and certain politicians did not. I certainly yield to no one in wanting to keep the nation's secrets secret in so far as they relate to potential enemies. I have never believed in parading the nation's secrets just for the hell of it. But there is another side to that when so-called secrets relate not to potential enemies but, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) put it, to our own people.

I do not think that the Prime Minister can blame anyone other than herself for that. She insisted, against the pleas of the Civil Service, on making a statement on Anthony Blunt. She insisted on making a statement on Sir Roger Hollis against the wishes of senior civil servants. Sir Charles Cunningham and Sir Philip Allen and other senior civil servants were quite appalled.

Many of the present troubles go back to 23 April 1985, when there was an ambiguous statement on the late Sir Maurice Oldfield. I was a friend of Sir Maurice Oldfield —I do not pretend to have been a close friend—and I can say that, whatever hon. Members think about intelligence chiefs, Sir Maurice Oldfield, more than any other man, kept Britain out of the Vietnam war by persuading Harold Wilson that it would be unwise to accede to Lyndon Johnson's request "to put in a battalion of bagpipers". Sir Maurice Oldfield was, at that time, head of the intelligence services for the far east and knew a great deal about Indo-China, and — according to my then boss, the late Dick Crossman — was instrumental in persuading Harold Wilson not to accede to the American request.

Against that background and more, in the summer and earlier, I encouraged Anthony Cavendish to write that now notorious volume. I certainly shall not quote from it. The issue is the alleged illegality of military intelligence against our own people. That is why hon. Members raised this afternoon—Mr. Speaker will undoubtedly make a judgment on it—what was said in the courts:

"Sir John Donaldson, Master of the Rolls, yesterday said that law-breaking by the security service . . . was in the public interest and the courts should take a pragmatic view about its activities. It is silly for us"—

he said in the Courts of Appeal—

"to sit here and say that the security service is obliged to follow the letter of the law. It isn't real."

And he said further that it was essential in the public interest for MI5 officers to break the law in some ways and that such breaches could, or would, never be prosecuted.

What is the Government's attitude to this? I think the sooner they make a statement to the House the better. It is a double public issue. It is, first, a question of in what circumstances the security services break the law. It is also the rather different question, which would be out of order in this debate, of the Executive versus the House of Commons, because it becomes a matter of House of Commons rights. It affects Government Members as much as Members of the Opposition. It is a central issue as to the rights of the House, because Parliament is supposed to make the laws and no one, we thought, had the right to break the law.

The doctrine that has been promulgated by the Master of the Rolls is entirely new and I think that someone had better make a statement on it pretty soon.

On Cavendish, I am concerned about one thing. He talks about the smears by the intelligence community on Ted Short and there was the whole question of the forgery to his bank account which did such harm at the time. Those of us who were here in the mid-seventies know how damaging it was. There were smears on Harold Wilson and, indeed, on Ted Heath.

I am no admirer of Peter Wright. On behalf of the National Executive Committee of the Labour party at my party conference, replying with the authority of the National Executive, I referred to Peter Wright as in many ways a fantasist. But these goings-on do not arise only from all that Peter Wright has written. There is also Colin Wallace, whom some of us who started by being very sceptical tend to believe, and this was echoed by a far more heavyweight figure, Anthony Cavendish.

So I really do think that there has to be a public inquiry, not least in the light of the remarkable book "An Affair of State" by Philip Knightley and Caroline Kennedy, which really is spine-chilling in its implications. It is a description of the Profumo affair, which certainly dominated the House of Commons when I first arrived here. It is a defence of Stephen Ward.

Incidentally, I am making a very non-political speech, because I think that every one of us, as a Member of the House, must look at these things in a very objective way.

I go on from that to raise another issue which is connected, and that is the intelligence services' role in what is alleged to have been the destabilisation of the Australian Labour Government. I am not making a party political issue of this, because there is none to be made. The truth is that it was an Australian Labour Government and a British Labour Government, so this is a House of Commons issue as far as the security services and military intelligence of this country are concerned.

I first became interested when I went to Australia, to Woomera and Innisfail, in 1969 and first learnt of the importance of Pine Gap. I am giving away nothing because a lot of this is in print in a remarkable book "The Ties that Bind", by Jeffrey Richelson and Desmond Ball, on intelligence co-operation between the United States and the Commonwealth countries, including Australia and New Zealand. There is no question of trying to use names that have not already appeared in print. The issue is that a duly elected Australian Prime Minister was tossed out of office, and the allegations are that British military intelligence was instrumental in getting rid of Gough Whitlam.

If this was true, do the records show that it was known to any Minister of the United Kingdom Labour Government of the time, whom I supported? Precisely what communications were there in 1974 and 1975 between British and American intelligence on the security risks allegedly posed by the Whitlam Government? What communication was there in 1974 and 1975 between the director of the Central Intelligence Agency, William Colby, and the head of MI6, Sir Maurice Oldfield, on the question of a security risk supposedly posed by the Whitlam Government? What is the role of the MI6 liaison officer at the Pine Gap base near Alice Springs? What is the role of the MI6 base at Kqwandi, south of Darwin? Is the function of these bases fully known to the Australian Government? Did British intelligence at any time pass on information which was used directly to brief the Governor General in 1975, Sir John Kerr?

I must repeat that in no way am I breaking any kind of intelligence secrecy, because it is all in public print. That is an additional reason why, either in writing or in some other way, we should get an explanation from the present Government of what happened.

Tonight there will be a television programme on this issue by two remarkable journalists, John Pilger and Alan Lowery. Pilger is interviewing, among others, John Trento, who is a senior intelligence expert from the United States. Pilger says:

"What are some of the specific examples you would give to substantiate what you say?

Trento: Well, how about a call from the CIA to MI5/MI6 saying we have a security problem in Australia? We have a security problem with the Prime Minister. He's endangering national security for the United States and the Alliance. What's the evidence? The evidence is he is making noises about our bases, he's making threats; those bases are absolutely essential to the survival of the Alliance. That plants a seed in the British intelligence community.

Pilger: Are you saying that such a call took place?

Trento: Absolutely. More than one call. Dozens of calls. It became a part of the policy. Now what caused the Brits to act? What caused the English to act? What caused Kerr to act? I don't think you could say the CIA forced Kerr to sack Whitlam, but I think that decisions were made that led to his sacking—based on what the CIA was telling the English.

Pilger: You have it on good authority that those calls took place?

Trento: I have it on authority at the highest levels of the US intelligence community that there was genuine concern over the loss of those bases.

Pilger: So this is a direct implication of MI5 and MI6 with the overthrow of the Australian Government?

Trento: No, I wouldn't call it an overthrow, they made a recommendation . . .

Pilger: All right then, with the demise . . .

Trento: They made a recommendation for the demise, yes. They made a recommendation. I think Whitlam was perceived as a danger. And in a way, it allowed a duly elected Prime Minister to be tossed out of office. It's all scary really, when you think about it."

That is going to be seen by some millions of people tonight on ITV, and I think that there has to be some explanation from the Government.

Page 154 of "The Ties that Bind" shows that SIS calls to ASIS, the Australian intelligence services, were 697 in 1974, and by 1975 they had rocketed up to 1,211 reports. That again requires some explanation. What we are really talking about is the demise of the Australian Government. Somehow Parliament has to come to grips with this and give those of us who lived through that time some explanation.

Finally, I wish to raise another topic. In Lübeck, the north German port, in the second week of January, a lady called Christine Gabrella Endrigkeit was arrested on suspicion of having planted the bomb in the La Belle discotheque, which was the excuse given by the Reagan Government for sending aircraft and the excuse given by our Ministers for allowing American aircraft to leave British bases to bomb Libya.

I quote particularly the answer of the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. He said:

"On the Berlin bombing, there is no evidence implicating Syria or any country other than Libya in the bombing of La Belle discotheque last April."—[*Official Report*, 24 October 1986; Vol. 102, c. 1505.]

I can most succinctly put it by quoting from the *International Herald Tribune* of 12 January under the headline, "A Woman is Arrested in Berlin Disco Attack" by Robert J. McCartney, Washington Post Service:

"The police arrested a West German woman Monday who the authorities said was strongly suspected of having planted the bomb that exploded in a West Berlin discotheque on April 5, 1986, and killed three persons, including two US servicemen. Ten days later, the United States launched a retaliatory air raid on Libya. The US administration said that it had conclusive evidence that the Libyan government ordered the discotheque attack, in which 204 people were injured. But West German sources familiar with the case said that the new clues that had led to the woman's arrest have strengthened the suspicion that the discotheque bombing was carried out with Syrian rather than Libyan backing. In Washington, a spokesman for the State Department conceded Monday that new evidence suggested that another country might have been involved in the bombing of the discotheque. The woman arrested Monday, Christine Endrigkeit, 27, is suspected of having planted the bomb on the orders of a convicted Arab terrorist who has been linked by a court to Syrian officials in another West Berlin bombing, judicial authorities said. Investigators now find a possible Syrian connection more interesting than before in the light of the evidence implicating Mrs. Endrigkeit, a West German source said. US officials said Sunday that the latest revelations could cast doubt on the hypothesis that Libyans ordered the bombing of the La Belle Discotheque."

If that is true, it has considerable implications for the quality of the military intelligence of this country. This

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House was absolutely assured, time and again, that the Government had complete evidence that the outrage in Berlin in 5 April 1985 was all about the Libyans, that they were absolutely certain of it; and that was the justification for the launching of those aircraft from Upper Heyford, Lakenheath and wheresoever. If we find that there was no such evidence, if it transpires that all these things that have been said about the manipulation of evidence by the Colonel Oliver North situation and other things appearing in the West German press are true, then we must think again. I have asked Ministers here why they think that they know better than the Bundeskriminalamt, why they think they know better than the Nachrichtungsdienst — German intelligence — and why they think they know better than the Verfassungsschutz — German home security.

If we are going to have this kind of certainty, that we know better than the authorities in West Berlin, it is high time that we started to produce our evidence.

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): I apologise to the House—I have just come in—but I have heard what the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) was saying. He will realise that his great ancestor, who founded the Royal Scots Greys, took a more simplistic approach, because when he invented the discipline of this Scots regiment he made 46 of the 50 offences punishable by capital punishment without trial.

Mr. Dalyell: I know that that ancestor escaped from the Tower of London, God bless him—one of the few to have done so — but that is not very relevant to this debate.

What is very important is that, if we are going to base major decisions, such as the bombing of women and children in Tripoli and Benghazi, on intelligence sources, we had better make absolutely certain that those sources are accurate. The Government ought to take the greatest interest in what has happened in Lübeck because, if it is shown that all this is about Syria but not about Libya, an explanation will have to be given to the House.

8.4 pm

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): Because of the time restriction, I shall limit my remarks to the role of the Army in Northern Ireland. I wish to pay tribute to the members of the security forces who operate in the Province, where they face a callous and implacable terrorist organisation. In opening the debate the Minister was very generous in his praise of members of the regular Army and the Ulster Defence Regiment, who serve the people of the Province. For the past two decades, soldiers as well as police have performed their duties with courage and restraint, despite terrible atrocities. Many regular soldiers and members of the Ulster Defence Regiment have been murdered in the course of the terrorist campaign, and members of the Ulster Defence Regiment have been murdered when off duty and at least some of them were murdered in front of their families.

It is not unnatural that, in the face of threats and provocation, some members of the security forces have responded angrily on occasions; but they are rare exceptions. The young British soldier who has served in Northern Ireland is a real professional and, perhaps because of his service there, he is a better fighting man than the soldier of any other regiment in any other part of the world. It is perhaps worth noting that there have been no allegations of bullying of soldiers serving in the Province. No doubt this is due to the camaraderie that is developed when they face the common enemy, the Provisional IRA or any other terrorist who might operate against service men.

The security forces operating in Northern Ireland have won the admiration of decent people everywhere, and I compare their methods to the authorised and unauthorised actions of the armed forces in Israel during the current riots.

The Provisional IRA has a powerful and skilful propaganda machine which spreads lies and allegations all over the world. Sympathisers are found in all places and all walks of life. They are quite happy to knock Britain and criticise the security forces in Ulster. That is why it is so important for the Army and for Her Majesty's Government to augment their information services with people well experienced in the media and public relations.

As I understand it, the Anglo-Irish Agreement was designed, among other things, as a manifestation of the united determination of the United Kingdom and Eire to work closely together to defeat the Provisional IRA. It is, therefore, nauseating to encounter hostility from Dublin whenever a soldier actually crosses the long, complicated and winding border separating Northern Ireland from the Irish Republic; a border which, I may say, is not always clear to people living in Northern Ireland.

For instance, a British Army reconnaissance plane accidentally flew across the border for a short distance into the Irish Republic at the end of December—that at least was the report. The incident, innocent as it was, prompted a vigorous protest from Dublin, which regarded the intrusion as a major diplomatic affair. In response to the protest, an apology was duly and humbly sent to Dublin from London.

I cannot understand the reaction of the Dublin Government. I thought that we were all fighting the common enemy, the Provisional IRA, which is a threat to Dublin as much as to this country. It is inexplicable that the Dublin Government should demonstrate such anger when an accidental crossing takes place by either a soldier or an Army plane. Such protests must cast doubt on the amount of co-operation that exists between the security forces on either side of the border. Indeed, it must alarm those who are responsible for security operations in Northern Ireland.

Security is deteriorating in the Province. I draw the attention of the House to the remarks made at the special news conference last week by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, who issued a grim warning to the people of Northern Ireland that a new, terrible and horrible campaign of terrorism was likely to be waged by the Provisional IRA there—a terrorist campaign that would be funded and armed by Libya. Colonel Gaddafi has never forgiven the Prime Minister for allowing the United States air force, based in Britain, to be used for the bombing of Libya. I listened with great interest to what the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) said about the Libyan matter. So, in addition to their own problems, the Ulster people must bear more horrible suffering.

The Libyan intervention puts the conflict in Northern Ireland in an international context. Terrorism is international, and the battle being waged in Northern Ireland should be viewed with concern by the other NATO

countries and the United States of America. Each of them, as part of the defence of the Western world, should be urged to do everything humanly possible to counter IRA fund raising and propaganda in their countries. Money collected by Republican sympathisers in any of those countries—and in the United States in particular—will be used to buy bombs and bullets to kill British citizens and soldiers.

It is reported that four boatloads of arms, including SAM missiles, have been landed in the Irish Republic during the past year. Those armaments came from Libya, and I understand from press reports that they are now believed to be in bunkers waiting to be transported from the Irish Republic into Northern Ireland. It was only by chance that the boatload that was caught was discovered to have arms and ammunition aboard. That is extremely worrying. The French stopped the boat because they believed it was carrying drugs. Why did the intelligence service—we are all told that it is extremely good, and no doubt it has collected some good information over the past 12 months—not have information about those five shipments of arms?

Why have those stored arms not yet been discovered by the Republican Government in the Republic? What steps are now being taken to ensure that if any attempt is made to move them across the border they will be stopped by British soldiers? I do not have too much faith in the activities of the security forces on the other side of the border. If the Provisional IRA will soon have SAM missiles in use in Northern Ireland—that is a possibility —will the security forces there be able to deal with the new menace to helicopters, planes and ordinary civilian aircraft flying between Northern Ireland and Britain?

The Minister referred to the establishment of new headquarters for the Army in Northern Ireland to cover the border area. That was good news—it was released last week—but I want to know whether more soldiers will be provided for service in Northern Ireland to ensure that the new headquarters do not drain away soldiers from other parts of the Province, thus allowing the Provisional IRA to commit atrocities in areas that do not enjoy the same level of security.

This debate takes place after a massive bomb explosion in Belfast today. Yesterday the IRA attacked a police-Army patrol, and a police officer has since died as a result. Perhaps the Minister will look into a report that I have received that the missile that was thrown—reported on the tape as having been a grenade — was able to penetrate the armour plating of the Land Rover in which the police officer was sitting. Can the Minister tell me, either now or in a letter, whether the IRA has acquired armaments that can pierce the plating on Army and police Land Rovers?

During the Minister's opening speech I intervened to ask whether the bomb disposal team at times operated across the border with the consent of the Irish authorities. I believe that that is so, and I want to know how often it has been so employed with the consent of the Dublin Government.

Another matter for grave concern is the murder of contractors employed by the Army in Northern Ireland. The considerable development that was taking place in Palace barracks, Holywood, in my constituency, was brought to a halt last year when the contractors, a large United Kingdom company, pulled out after threats made by the Provisional IRA. Will the work be completed by the Ministry of Defence using the Army or local contractors? Will it be done by the original completion date? I assume that a penalty clause was included in the original contract. Have damages been paid by the international firm concerned for abandoning the contract? Can the Minister assist the House by saying whether the same contractor will be used in future for other defence work?

A word about the Territorial Army, in conclusion. Other hon. Members have referred to it today. I had the privilege of serving for some years in the Territorial Army, and I have nothing but the greatest admiration for the commitment of its men. I hope that the Government will always recognise and reward their efforts in the proper way.

8.17 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): This debate covers a wide range of issues to do with the Army. One of those is the fact that it is in control of tactical nuclear weapons, which is a serious matter because their use can escalate into a nuclear war, in which both sides are extinguished and the notion of the defence of freedom is illusory. We should remove them. They must not be used, and if people talk about the threat from the Soviet Union I remind the House that the Soviet Union is headed by a man who was greeted by the Prime Minister and regarded as a great leader. Special discussions were held with him when he came for a meal and a chat during refuelling at Brize Norton, when the Prime Minister poured lavish praise on him.

One cannot have it both ways: either the Soviets are a threat making invidious attacks on our defences — including, presumably, the Prime Minister's intelligence defences—or Mr. Gorbachev is the sort of leader that the Prime Minister describes. I would hesitate to be a member of the Government who criticised the Prime Minister's judgment, because such a person would not stay a member of the Government for long. When people say that we must have nuclear weapons against the threat, I point out that no member of the Government has yet been able to answer the question why, if it is so important for us to have nuclear weapons, 135 nations have pledged themselves not to have them in the United Nations nuclear non-proliferation treaty instead of following our example and having them. How long will the United Kingdom go on, year after year, spending vast sums of money on Trident, on updating Polaris—at a cost of £300 million or so — and on retaining the deployment of Lance tactical nuclear weapons by the Army, while telling those 135 nations—I assume we say this—that it is good of them to sign the non-proliferation treaty and keep their promise not to deploy nuclear weapons? Those self-same nations keep asking the nuclear powers when, under clause 6 of the treaty, to which we are a signatory, we shall carry out our promise to get rid of nuclear weapons. Therefore, there is an overwhelming argument against the Government's deployment of tactical nuclear weapons and the development of Trident.

The members of the armed forces who control the weapons of mass extermination have onerous responsibilities. Should any loony in the Government give orders to fire such nuclear weapons I hope that such people would refuse. The Minister may think that that is seditious, but I believe that the threat of mass extermination is one of the most horrible, anti-humanitarian ideas that anyone can hold. Indeed, on that basis we criticised Hitler during the

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second world war. However, the nuclear weapons that we deploy have far greater killing powers than the gas ovens that Hitler used.

Given the onerous responsibilities of the members of the armed forces, what about giving them a few rights? What about giving them the right of representation? They should have the opportunity to put forward their points of view. Perhaps those views differ from those held by the Minister and perhaps those members of the armed forces do not wish to be used as pawns, given the possible use of weapons of mass extermination. What about giving them trade union rights in common with other workers? Even within the confines of the Government's legislation they have not yet made it illegal to join a trade union—they would like to, but that would fly in the face of the behaviour of every other civilised country throughout the world.

If the Minister thinks that such an idea is outrageous I shall quote, in support, a February 1984 report from the Common Market. I do not like the Common Market and I believe that it is a big burden around our necks. However, the Government subscribe to that organisation and the Government and the Prime Minister believe that it has manifold virtues.

The EEC report of February 1984 pointed out that some member states have provided professional organisations that have a right to be consulted, but have no negotiating rights. Those member states are Belgium, Germany, The Netherlands and Luxembourg. In the Federal Republic of Germany there is the right

"to form associations to safeguard and improve working and economic conditions . . . guaranteed to everyone and to all trades, occupations and professions . . . The right to form associations is therefore a fundamental right under the constitution. This right may not be restricted for soldiers by laws concerning military service"

In The Netherlands the report states:

"As in the Federal Republic of Germany, officials and servicemen are not entitled to take part in negotiations. However, the associations must be consulted when the legal status of servicemen is affected by ministerial rulings etc. A central consultative committee has been set up for this purpose with the Secretary of State as the chairman. It meets twice a month and discusses all legal conditions and provisions which affect servicemen and the policies, guidelines and general principles of the personnel programme. There are subcommittees dealing with matters relating to the army, navy and air force which meet once a month"

For Luxembourg the report states:

"Article 11(5) of the Constitution of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg guarantees the freedom to form trade unions by law.

2. Servicemen are allowed to organise or join non-political unions. The majority are members of the Syndicat professionel de la force publique which is part of the Conféderation générale de la fonction publique"

For Denmark the report states:

"Article 78(1) of the Danish Constitution gives the right to freedom of association. Pursuant to Article 85, this right may be curtailed for servicemen"

Paragraph 3 of the report concludes:

"Servicemen therefore have the same negotiating rights and the same right to conclude agreements as all other government employees. There are various groups of professional organisations for serving officers, reserve officers and serving soldiers. These associations negotiate on general pay and working conditions with the Ministry of Defence. They voluntarily renounce the right to strike."

Therefore, the notion of trade union rights for members of the armed services — we are discussing the Army tonight — is not as outlandish as some Conservative Members would have us believe. Conformist Governments such as Denmark, the Federal Republic of Germany and Luxembourg — all Conservative Governments — permit serving members of the armed forces to engage in trade union negotiating rights and join professional associations. Why should we not give this right to members of the British armed forces? After all, they have greater responsibilities and they may have larger areas of concern because they are conducting exercises, guarding, examining, and checking weapons that have a greater destructive power than anything we have ever known. It is not unreasonable to ask that we should listen to their representations.

The third modest item that I wish to consider is some rather curious expenditure item that appears on page 10 of the Defence Estimates for 1987, Vol. II. At the bottom of page 10 it discusses:

"Local administration communications etc. in the United Kingdom".

The expenditure on those items for 1987-88 will amount to £1·5 billion. I find that extraordinary and I would like some more detail from the Minister—I do not mind if the Minister writes to me about this. Let us compare that sum with the war and contingency stocks, which are important should we embark upon a conflict. A number of Conservative Members have talked rather lovingly about war and the need for the armed services because of the possibility of war. As the phrases were rolled out there was an almost lingering affection for war. However, the war and contingency stocks for the Army amount to £139 million. That is a lot of money, but when one compares it to £1·5 billion for "Local administration communications etc." one wonders what sort of area those items cover. Is there anything secret going on or something subversive that we should know about? In view of the fact that the total defence budget is £19 billion, I am especially keen to know what the £1·5 billion has been spent on.

My hon. Friends have already mentioned some of the contracts that are connected with the procurement of equipment for the Army. They are right that those contracts are lavish by any standard. I hope that we will have greater scrutiny of those contracts. When people such as General Sir Harry Tuzo retire from the Army they are able to find comfortable positions on the boards of such contracting firms.

In the Exhibition Hall in the Committee Corridor at the top of the stairs there is an exhibition on UNICEF—the United Nations International Children's Fund. I picked up its pamphlet which stated that between 1947 and 1985 it had used $3·73 billion — roughly £2 billion. Our annual defence expenditure amounts to £19 billion. UNICEF has used its money for 373,000 health centres, 1 million schools and teacher training institutes, 770,000 child nutrition centres and 387,000 family and child welfare clinics. We have been talking about incredibly sophisticated defence equipment to guard against our mythical enemy. However, the enemy which the Government have postulated was met at Brize Norton and we are all chums now. In comparison to such sophisticated equipment and expenditure UNICEF has helped to install 876,900 water supply systems. The developing world is unable to turn on a tap to provide a supply of pure water. We should consider the supply of water a priority instead of the massive £19 billion that is spent by the services on the procurement of equipment.

There has been some reference to Northern Ireland, which is indeed an important subject. There are two forces in that sad Province. One is the police—the RUC—who are there as an impartial body, as are the police in this country, not committed other than to keeping the peace and the laws that our Parliament produces. The other is the Army, which is there to supplement the police, because the Government believe that it is necessary to control the division of opinion that has erupted over many years into a serious loss of life.

The role of the police is put forward as impartial: to keep the law, and to present people to the courts to produce justice. I am very concerned about this, even after the Attorney-General's statement yesterday that RUC members who had killed others were not being prosecuted. My hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) expressed strong reservations about that. Is it because the police and the Army have been mixed up?

I have in my hand a buying order from the RUC central stores in Sprucefield, Lisburn, county Antrim, to QED Design and Development Ltd. of Borough Green, Kent. The order is for a curious number of items — for example, parka jackets, British Army; trousers, Army denim, green; shirts, army, lightweight, green; face veils; and fatigues.

Why should the RUC want items that are standard issue for the British Army? This is a very curious set of events. Surely one of the means of keeping the police as an impartial force for law and order is to make them distinct and separate. I should have thought that one of the Government's policies was to keep the Army back from actual conflict: to diminish confrontation and introduce a civilian force, the police, to maintain law and order. Yet the police are ordering items of Army equipment.

My hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) asked a number of questions about those interesting items. The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland said:

"These items are for use in training or operations in the field where circumstances or bad weather conditions so require".—[*Official Report*, 15 December 1987; Vol. 124, c. 481.]

We understand that members of the RUC need a raincoat in bad weather. But does the reference to

"training or operations in the field"

mean that they go out on operations disguised as members of the British Army? If that is so, Parliament should be told and the practice should be halted forthwith, because it is very dangerous for all concerned. Does it mean that members of the RUC were involved in some of those operations in Army uniform that Stalker was investigating when he was taken off his duties and the cover-up started?

I hope that the Minister can give a clear answer to the questions that have been raised. No such answer has so far been given to parliamentary questions put by my hon. Friend the Member for Workington, who has followed these matters assiduously. There is, for example, the question of surplus weapons: what does the Army do with all those old guns that have been replaced with modern equipment to maintain it as an efficient fighting force? In the past, some of them were sold to QED Design and Development Ltd, which seems to have done a prosperous trade in the killing fields. Lucky QED obtained a contract to buy a number of pistols — several thousand, as a matter of fact — from the Ministry of Defence, that righteous Government body which has such good standards to which we can all subscribe.

QED obtained the contract. It was going to sell the guns and make a profit of about £450,000, which is not a bad deal. But then the MOD decided to change its policy, and I am asking the Minister what its policy has been changed to. We know that, before obtaining this contract, it sold surplus arms to dealers for its friends to make a fast buck selling arms anywhere where a profit could be made. That is the enterprise culture. It does not matter if people in other parts of the world are slaughtered: it is all part of the enterprise culture. Presumably, QED was not going to sell the weapons to be displayed as antique weapons in the front rooms of people living in Acacia avenue or Tunbridge Wells. It was going to sell them, possibly abroad, for use in killing people.

The changed policy may mean that the MOD has decided to sell all those arms itself. Perhaps it can make more profit. Perhaps the enterprise culture is now spreading to the MOD, which thinks that it will be able to sell all the surplus guns at a larger profit — which, perhaps, can be spent in the NAAFI. But what has the policy changed to?

We know that the MOD suddenly became sensitive about the issue. In order not to go to court, it decided that it would be better to buy off QED, which had a clear contract in its hand for the purchase of guns from the MOD. In the Estimates on Defence Procurement 1982-83, class I, Vote 2, is a curious item. It is not an item that the Government explained when they were saying to local authorities, "You cannot have money for social services. You are spending too much on education", and telling the National Health Service, "Be more efficient. Get consultants working faster in the operating theatres. Get more operations out—and, if people have to wait, hard lines." They did not say, in the background to all those cutbacks, that to stop a case from going to court they would give QED the profit that it would make on the purchase and sale of guns.

In the Estimates is an item:

"Settlement of a sale contract cancelled due to a change of policy . . .£450,000."

That £450,000 was simply handed over because of a "change in policy".

I look forward to the Minister's explanation of those double standards. The Government cut local authority services — decent, worthwhile services that particularly affect the poor, the mentally handicapped and the generally needy in society — but, when it comes to the arms trade, there is a change in policy: "Do not let us fall out; let us not stick to our words; let us use the taxpayers' money to keep everyone quiet, and put in a little item about the settlement of a sales contract being cancelled due to a change in policy."

It is time that the Minister of Defence and the Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Services gave us a few more details about the change of policy, and about how many more contracts have been dealt with in the same way. The MOD, with all its personnel—its thousands of employees — will not reveal to Parliament all the contracts below £450,000 which have been paid out due to a "change in policy". It would be very expensive to find that information. I suspect that that is bland economy with the truth. The Minister has an opportunity to explain that

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tonight and I hope that he will take advantage of it. I suspect that after remarks tonight people outside will be waiting with bated breath for that explanation.

8.39 pm

Mr. Hugo Summerson (Walthamstow): With your permission, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will not attempt to follow the remarks of the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer). I do not intend to talk about local authorities. I will return the debate to the Army, NATO and the nuclear deterrent, which I believe are inextricably linked.

A total of 95 per cent. of our defence spending is related to NATO. We provide 70 per cent. of the front line forces for the Atlantic and Channel commands and 56,000 men plus tactical aircraft for the central front. We need to maintain a wide range of nuclear and conventional forces to deter aggression on every front.

What aggression? Is there aggression? The history of the Soviet Union's efforts to expand its influence and the build-up of Soviet military strength in Europe make it essential that the West should not lower its guard. We must ensure that we do not unilaterally deliver ourselves into a less secure world. As progress in nuclear disarmament is made, so progress in making a more equitable match in the conventional arena must also be made. We are faced with an enormous preponderance of Soviet arms. We are outnumbered in tanks, tactical aircraft and artillery.

In those circumstances, is it right to spend money on Trident if it means that there will be less money available for the Army and the other armed services? We should bear it in mind that the money devoted to Trident would provide us with two more armoured divisions — 300 tanks. There are two points to be made. First, in terms of deterrence against aggression, the men in the Kremlin will not bite their fingernails in anguish over the retaliatory capacity of two extra armoured divisions. Secondly, without Trident we are exposing ourselves to nuclear blackmail, in which case we may just as well not have an army at all. Therefore, the answer is that we do need Trident.

My only misgiving is that four Trident submarines may not be enough. I would be happier with eight. The Labour party should ask our soldiers and the British Army of the Rhine what they think about a policy of unilateral nuclear disarmament which would leave them facing nuclear weapons with nothing comparable in return. It would be like waving a fly whisk at a charging tiger.

I want to contrast the figures for NATO forces and Warsaw pact forces. In 1985, the Warsaw pact's total troop strength was 6·5 million, 80 per cent. of whom came from the Soviet Union. There has been an increase of 400,000 in 10 years. It is nearly 1·5 million more than NATO troop strength. The Soviet Union produces 3,000 new tanks a year and NATO produces 1,500. Faced with those facts, what does the Labour party do? It says that it wants to reduce our spending on defence to the European average. Our spending today represents about 5·5 per cent. of gross domestic product. The European average is 3·3 per cent. A reduction to 3·3 per cent. would mean a cut in our spending of 40 per cent. Is that enough for the Labour party?

I have seen nothing to persuade me that the Soviet Union under Mr. Gorbachev is any different from the Soviet Union under Andropov, Brezhnev or Khrushchev. It is true that Mr. Gorbachev has a nice smile and that Mrs. Gorbachev has a nice dress. Communism has neither.

We need our highly trained Army. We must find the resources to ensure that it can continue its admirable work. We must guard the integrity of NATO — that extraordinary free alliance of 16 free nations, each of which has seen for itself that its security is best guaranteed in conjunction with others. I pay tribute to the Army, to its highly developed quality, to the dedication of its men and women and to the vital role it plays.

8.44 pm

Mr. Bernie Grant (Tottenham): Many problems facing the Army have been discussed in this debate. However, there is one issue that has, perhaps not unexpectedly, been given no attention. It is an issue of the utmost gravity and is just as important to the esteem with which our armed forces are held by the people of this country. I am referring to the ugly phenomenon of racism in the Army.

Many right hon. and hon. Members will have read the recent article in *The Observer Magazine* on Sunday 24 January. It exposed in the most public way yet the routine and institutionalised racism that exists in the armed forces. Some Labour Members have known about that for many years. We are grateful to the author of the article and the magazine for exposing what I suspect is only the tip of the iceberg. I call on black people in the services to contact me if they have any complaints to make about racism in the armed forces, however small.

There is nothing new about racism in the Army. It goes back many years. For literally centuries the United Kingdom has been happy to enlist black people to fight and die for this country but not to acknowledge their contributions or reward their courage in the normal way. The article says:

> "NCOs in the Guards who say, 'We're not having niggers', do not know their own regimental history. There were, according to Sir Walter Scott, six black trumpeters in the Scots Guards in 1679; a black drummer fought with the Household Cavalry at Blenheim in 1704; and black musicians served with the Coldstream and Grenadier Guards up to the middle of the last century."

That is some of the history of black people in the Army, but there is more.

How often, in reminiscing about the first and second world wars, is the contribution that black people made to the victory recognised? For example, according to *The Times* of 11 June 1919, during the first world war 1 million east Africans were drafted into the Army and 100,000 died as a result. More often than not they were used in the front line on the orders of white officers who saw them as expendable. The casualty figures are there for all to see. For example, in the King's African Rifles, of those killed, British officers numbered 66, British NCOs numbered 47 and Africans numbered 1,198. Of those wounded, British officers numbered 194, NCOs numbered 59 and Africans numbered 3,553. The total losses in east Africa alone were calculated at 300,000.

Similarly in the second world war, the British recruited in the Caribbean, India and Africa in large numbers and the casualties were similarly disproportionate. How many of them are remembered? How many of them were honoured with medals or decorations? The record will show that comparatively few received any honour.

For many years the contribution of black people has passed without comment, as in so many other areas of British society. Black people are confined to the ranks. They are seen, literally, as cannon fodder and forgotten when the need for them has passed. There are many recent examples such as the Asian Sapper, Pradeep Ghandi, from Brent who was killed in the Falklands war. How often is that mentioned in the discussions about the problems of our multi-racial society?

There is a serious problem in the Army which has been aired in the House in the past by my right hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) and others. To date that problem has been called "bullying". This House needs to be told by the Minister how much of it is really racism. Does the Minister know the meaning of the ugly term, "niggerbaiting"? I suspect that he does not or that he does not want to know.

The Army is not attuned to the problems of racism in its ranks. It would prefer to hide them under the carpet.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): Will the hon. Gentleman accept that one of the most popular men in my regiment was Sergeant Mattatoga from Fiji? He was a coloured soldier who served with some distinction in my regiment. He was probably one of the most popular soldiers that we had.

Mr. Grant: If he was so popular, he should have been a colonel or another rank. There are individual soldiers who are able to progress, but the majority of them do not.

It seems commonplace that black soldiers are subjected to racist abuse and undisguised race hatred. According to the article in *The Observer Magazine*, one black recruit to the paras was asked by his sergeant:

"What are you doing here . . . nigger? I joined the Army to kill . . . people like you."

The article points out that, of an estimated 5,000 black service men and women, there were a mere handful of black officers. There are very few senior black NCOs.

Black recruits are dissuaded from joining certain regiments, such as the Grenadier Guards. Although one black person has recently been allowed to join, I am told that he has been subjected to racial threats and abuse. The article in *The Observer Magazine* says:

"With the arrival last year of Private Richard Stokes at the Second Battalion Grenadier Guards it is now a token one. According to his white adoptive father, Brian, Private Stokes has had a nasty baptism, including a knife threat from a Welsh Guards corporal, who told him: 'We're not having niggers in the Guards, and an ugly moment when he arrived in Northern Ireland and every man in the mess walked out."

The interviewer spoke to the soldier who said, "I'm not a racist." When he was asked why there are no black men in the Guards, the soldier said:

"the Guards protect the Queen and you should never have any black Guards because no black man can ever be a true Englishman."

According to that independent research, that is the position in the Army. But what does it do about it? What does the Minister do about it? Do Ministers know what is going on? If they do, what are they doing about it? Are the Government encouraging racism by their silence in this regard?

What we need to hear from the Minister are some reasonably firm answers that something will be done. For example, I should like the Army to keep ethnic records on the promotion of black people. It keeps ethnic records with regard to recruitment. That policy should be extended to deal with promotion, discipline and other matters.

Black soldiers must contend with the insult of less experienced and less competent soldiers being promoted over their heads. The article in *The Observer Magazine* gave many examples of that.

Does the Minister know how many black soldiers have left the Army, disparaged and disappointed by its failure to promote them? Are there exit interviews on black service people that give the reasons why they left? We should like to know whether those matters are logged.

The Minister is prepared to do very little about racism in the Army. When he leaves the House tonight, he should return to his advisers and draw up a thorough strategy to deal with the problem; it should then be brought back to the House for discussion. It should include making racism a specific disciplinary offence and establish a proper complaints procedure that will protect the complainant from further harassment. That is unlikely to be achievable unless the Minister is prepared to ensure that specific officers are designated with responsibilities for overseeing the strategy to combat racism.

In the meantime, the Minister should not be surprised if black people stop joining the Army. They will no longer tolerate this sort of treatment in the Army, just as they are no longer willing to tolerate it in society.

8.54 pm

Mr. Andrew Mitchell (Gedling): I am grateful for the opportunity to take part in this annual debate on the Army, although I do so with a certain amount of trepidation, conscious as I am of the wealth of expertise and military experience that surrounds me on these Benches.

My brief military service in the Royal Tank Regiment, and subsequently with the United Nations peace-keeping forces in Cyprus, afforded me a taste of Army life as a young commissioned officer, for which I shall always—at least in retrospect—be grateful.

I remember some specific, enduring lessons. I remember in particular my experience of the United Nations. As a force for keeping the peace, it is greatly underrated. In Sinai and Cyprus the degree of international co-operation and the ability to defuse potentially dangerous incidents all too often went unremarked. The position in Cyprus is much quieter now, but we still have nearly 1,000 troops seconded to the United Nations forces there, and to the multinational force in Sinai.

The support given by the British sovereign base areas in Cyprus to the United Nations forces there and in the Golan heights is essential to the United Nations effort, and is provided with the quiet efficiency, skill and expertise that one has almost come to take for granted from the armed forces. I gladly pay tribute to the work of the United Nations peace-keeping forces and the outstanding role that is played by Britain within them.

Since my brief sojourn in the Army, a great deal has changed. In 1976 the Army was deeply demoralised, underpaid and under-equipped. It is interesting to recall that in 1978 the total spent on the armed forces was £7·5 billion. This year it will be £18·8 billion. During the intervening period over 90 per cent. of the budget has been spent on improving the conventional defences of this country. Pay in the armed services is much better, but progress has not been achieved at the expense of the equipment budget. When I left the Army, less than 40 per cent. of the defence budget was spent on equipment. Next year, the comparative figure will be 45 per cent. There can

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be little doubt that the Government have taken the necessary steps to promote and secure our defence needs with a consistency of purpose, policy and philosophy that commands widespread support and acceptance across the country.

In assessing the role and needs of the Army and our armed forces, we inevitably focus on Europe. The centrepiece of our defence policy is deterrence and our role within NATO. Our main contribution to Europe's defence is through the BAOR. Europe today is, perhaps, in a greater state of flux and uncertainty about the future—and indeed of both nervousness and excitement at the possibilities that lie ahead—than at any time since the second world war.

The principal political characteristics of Europe have remained largely unaltered since the end of the second world war: a continent divided; the prospective battle lines well drawn and well known; and an Eastern Europe with clearly determined and defined goals and parameters. Many of us have felt a sense of security. After all, we have had Europe's longest period of peace under such an arrangement.

Three developments now challenge that state of affairs, and all of them may have a direct bearing on our future defence needs. All three could work equally to our advantage or to our disadvantage. Under Gorbachev, the clear thrust of Soviet policy is to reallocate some resources away from defence. With that policy change will come rising material expectations. The policies of glasnost and perestroika will significantly affect the relationship between Russia and her East European allies. Clearly, we need to approach Gorbachev's policies with an enlightened caution. If they survive and he succeeds, or vice versa, they will offer an opportunity to West Europe and NATO.

The second uncertainty lies in the future relationship between America and Europe. We should not forget that America's support for Europe is not set in concrete. The Americans spend about 7 per cent. of their GDP on defence, whereas we spend about 5 per cent. and the Germans spend about 3 per cent. It is interesting to note that the sum spent by America on keeping its troops in Europe is not unadjacent to the amount of its deficit. Rearmament spending under Reagan has not gone into Europe. It has gone into SDI and other projects not directly related to Europe. We should never take the American commitment to Europe for granted — especially in the year of a United States presidential election. Who knows what may be said or proposed between now and election day, on 8 November? We are indeed fortunate in the unflinching support that we have received from the Americans.

The third factor of change and flux in Europe to which I wish to draw attention is the state of the debate on the German question. In Germany, even Christian Democrat politicians have been reacting favourably to suggestions of a denuclearisation of East and West Germany. My hon. Friends and I who visited the German NATO forces last year could not fail to notice the intense interest in the German question and the inner-German border, stoked up by the change in Russian foreign policy, and the effect on that interest that the recent INF agreement and its potential successors have stirred in Germany. Of course we must take advantage of the new opportunities that now exist in Europe, but we must do so in the awareness of the absolute need to maintain the quality of our deterrent, no matter how the situation develops.

My second specific point concerns procurement. In recent years there has been a comprehensive modernisation of the Army's equipment. At the same time, one should be impressed by the initiatives being taken to secure better value for the taxpayer's money, in particular by the initiatives taken to promote greater competition, by the greater degree of co-operation and collaboration with our allies, and by the initiative to encourage small firms to compete for business. These three factors are extremely important.

The "Statement on the Defence Estimates" gives some interesting and, I find, rather disturbing examples of savings; for example, the competition for training missiles, where the price of the winning tender was 50 per cent. below the most recent non-competition-based price—50 per cent.! I accept that value for money in military procurement means something more than just price, but it is most important to open up competition in procurement, and it is long overdue. It came as little surprise to hear that the small firms advice division of the Ministry of Defence was approached by 300 companies registering an interest in competing within two months of that unit's being set up.

My final point concerns the Army's role as a trainer of the forces of friendly nations. The help that we give to Zimbabwe and Mozambique is well known, and I see from the Estimates that 650 servicemen have been involved in such work outside NATO in 23 different countries. Quite apart from promoting the stability of areas in which we may have national interests, by assisting with training and military advice we actively encourage and enhance trade —far wider than the arms trade—and commerce by this cost-effective and eminently sensible policy.

This debate takes place against the background of progress in the quality of our Army, progress in arms negotiations and optimism and opportunity in Europe. It is well timed.

9.3 pm

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton North): Because of the constraints of time, I shall confine my remarks to one subject. As the Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces is by nature an attentive man with an eye for detail, I would expect him to respond later this evening.

My subject is the allowance payable to service personnel for service overseas. The Under-Secretary will know that eight or nine weeks ago I visited Rheindahlen, Wildenrath, Munster and one or two other places. On that visit, I was saddened by the fact that the grievous resentment at some of the anomalous conditions related to the payment of the overseas allowance remained. I am even more concerned in that on a previous visit to Rheindahlen three years ago, that resentment was already evident. On our latest visit, we were told that a review was taking place.

I know that there are many complexities and I shall not rehearse them because we do not have the time—in fact, it could be the subject for a debate in itself. However, last night on television the Prime Minister made the plea to her interviewer that rather than set up a Royal Commission on the Health Service, which she has been looking at since 1979, because that would take too long, in the interests of speed she was ordering a review. Quite honestly, one is not

giving express consideration if one takes more than three years to consider the allowances that are paid to overseas personnel.

Therefore, I am seeking some prediction from the Minister of what our service women and men, commissioned and non-commissioned, black and white, can expect by way of resolution of this grievous cause for concern.

9.5 pm

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement rightly drew the attention of the House to the arrival of the new T80 in the Red Army. With its 135 mm gun and reactive armour, I put it to the House that it is the queen of modern tanks.

I should like to speak on a subject that is critical to the future equipment of our own Army and, indeed, to our Navy and Air Force — the research and development establishments. I should like to point to what, in my view, is the one really woolly passage in an otherwise excellent White Paper. Page 48 states:

"the Government shares the underlying concern of those who fear that necessary investment in defence R & D may crowd out valuable investment in the civil sector . . . it would be regrettable if defence work became such an irresistible magnet for the manpower available that industry's ability to compete in the international market for civil high technology products became seriously impaired."

Before I discuss the work of our defence establishments, especially the two related to the Army, I should like to explode that thesis. Just under one fifth of our national research and development expenditure is spent on the defence sector. However, we can consider a more basic statistic: the total proportion of graduates in science and technology leaving our universities in 1986 who went into Electronic Engineering Association companies, which do most of the work, was only 2·5 per cent. There is, indeed, a shortage of scientists and engineers in this country who choose to go into civil research and development. However, that has nothing to do with the fact that a small number choose to work in defence research and development.

From the Army's point of view, the two principal establishments are RARDE whose satellite MEXE produced the design for the most successful bridging equipment that the world has ever seen, and the Royal Signals Radar Establishment at Malvern, which is tri-service and has produced, among other weapons, the Rapier which, incidentally, resulted in £1·5 billion of exports.

Why are those establishments so vital for our armed forces? Although there are several reasons, I should like to focus on two. The first is blue sky research. In its excellent paper, published last week, the Department of Trade and Industry hit it exactly right in saying that the role of Government in research and development is to focus on the blue sky end. Whereas product development is best done by the private sector, very long-term research will not produce results for perhaps 15 or 20 years. We do not have companies in a pool as small as the United Kingdom economy that can afford to put large sums into such speculative work, but that is the work that will produce the products that our armed forces need in the 21st century.

The second reason why the research and development establishments are so critical — this is much more concerned with the here and now, or at least with the next few years — is because of the role that they play in supporting the project teams in the procurement executive. I have heard repeated attacks in the House on the Nimrod project. I wish to put it on the record once and for all that if successive Governments, both Labour and Conservative, had had the courage to listen to the Royal Signals Radar Establishment at Malvern, we would never have gone down the Nimrod route.

I welcome the Government's new competitive policy. I pay tribute to the Secretary of State because he had the courage to cancel the Nimrod project and, at last, get away from it. The Government's competitive policy will save us money and, indeed, has already done so in the past two years. These savings will remain possible only while we have the capability, through our research and development establishments, to remain an educated customer. We are getting better value for money and more equipment for what we are spending precisely because we are adopting this policy.

What has been happening in our research and development establishments? Over the past six years, we have reduced the number of scientists in the Ministry of Defence from 10,000 to 6,400. This is not necessarily a bad thing, if we avoid duplicating work done by our allies, but, alas, it is not the dead wood that is being pruned. Civil Service rules prevent that. Instead, because of the relatively poor pay, in many cases it is the brightest scientists who are tending to leave.

At the same time, extramural funding — funding provided by the Ministry of Defence in the private sector —has fallen by 15 per cent. Meanwhile, the Red Army is rapidly closing the technology gap and, in the case of the T80, has probably overtaken us. There is an economic point here too. At present, we buy 80 per cent. of our equipment from the United Kingdom and three quarters of the balance has a United Kingdom element in it. We export £6 billion in arms. The Government have every right to claim some of the credit for our successful growth in defence exports by making our private sector more commercial.

Although making the private sector more commercial has improved the shop window, resulting in a considerable improvement in our arms exports, the sad fact is that this is based on the money spent on research and development 10 or 15 years ago. With the cut in our present research and development funding, I fear that this will not be the case 10 or 15 years from now.

What am I proposing? I should like to suggest a route which would fit very well with the Government's sound policy of competitive tendering within the procurement executive and would be highly cost-effective. We should assure ourselves that, in every area where we are buying equipment, we still have the critical mass of skills available to be an educated customer. I am assured by our friends in industry that this is still the case in most areas, but not, alas, all. We should concentrate the rest of our funds in those areas where we have a proven record of success.

In areas where we have been less successful, for example, artillery, we should be willing to arrange swop agreements with our allies, so that—as the Government did successfully by exchanging Rolls-Royce engines for Goalkeeper engines—we can guarantee that, when we have to import foreign equipment because we cannot afford to develop it ourselves, we balance it with an extra export.

[Mr. Julian Brazier]

What about the structure that we need to support this policy? There appear to be two options facing the Government in respect of research and development establishments. We could leave the present, cosy Civil Service arrangements or we could go for out-and-out handing over to the private sector. I propose that we should follow a middle course and go for a trading fund. This would keep the research and development establishments together as centres of excellence. It would enable them to prune the dead wood because they would no longer be subject to Civil Service rules. It would enable them to pay market rates to their best employees and, most important of all, for those who are worried about the civil sector being crowded out, as suggested in the White Paper, it would give a concrete, market-driven incentive to those who manage these research and development establishments to sell the spare capacity in their facilities to United Kingdom companies. At the moment, all the money from selling that capacity goes straight to the Treasury. As a trading fund it could be credited to the establishment's own account defraying costs. That is a much more market-driven approach than setting up the wretched Defence Technology Enterprises which desperately runs about trying to look for spare ideas.

Let me end with a statistic. We should be grateful to the Americans. We should be aware of the fact that their trade deficit, about which our Treasury is so worried, is very nearly equal to the figure they spend on keeping their armed forces in Europe. They are keen on collaborating with us on science and there is no way in which our Treasury could more please the Americans than by being willing to provide a little money out of central funds to ensure that we have the research and development facilities that our armed forces need for the 21st century.

9.15 pm

Mr. Sean Hughes (Knowsley, South): It is customary in debates such as this to pay tribute to the work and dedication displayed by the armed forces in these islands and around the world and I happily add my thanks to the gratitude which has been expressed tonight to all those who serve in our armed forces.

This year is the 300th anniversary of the so-called glorious revolution, which is seen as the cornerstone of our parliamentary democracy, not least by the acceptance of the principle that the Executive is provided with an army only with the consent of Parliament.

We see what happens in other countries, where the establishment cynically uses the army and the security forces to thwart or bypass the democratic process. We at least can take comfort from the fact that no such moves are even contemplated here.

I have an enormous respect for those who dedicate their lives to service in the armed forces. I may not always agree with the perceived view of their opinions, but I pay tribute to their commitment, dedication and loyalty. But it is the politicians who control our armed forces and it is they who are fair game whenever we come across their pomposity, arrogance or sheer stupidity.

This is the first Army debate of this Parliament, the third of the present Administration. Recently, the Prime Minister celebrated in distinctly regal terms the fact that "our" Government have lasted longer than Asquith's. Now Lord Liverpool's record is at stake.

I do not know what all the fuss is about. The Prime Minister passed Asquith's record some time in 1981. He had a single-party majority for only two years, whereas the Prime Minister has had one for almost nine years.

The Prime Minister's political longevity has one particular significance, and that is that it really is time that we started to discuss her Government's record against what the Tories promised, implied or preached in opposition or in the early heady days of government.

There seems to be a belief on the Tory Benches that they have cornered the market on defence, a view confirmed by some of the speeches that we heard this evening. Some Conservative Members seem to think that, because they represent the odd garrison town or have picked up the odd minor military title, somehow or other they are uniquely qualified to lecture the rest of us on our best interests in defence. It is time that belief was exploded.

One of the most obvious trends in the past three decades as regards the Army is the decline in manpower, despite the fact that the Minister, in his opening speech, referred to Wellington's strictures on the need for a large and efficient army. The Tory party's manifesto in 1979 expressed the aim to increase the strength of our armed forces. In 1983, that became an insistence on the need for strong conventional forces and in 1987 a promise to continue to increase the effectiveness of our conventional forces.

One might have thought that such loud promises to strengthen our conventional defences might have manifested themselves in arresting the decline in military personnel — but not a bit of it. So I began to think about what must be the reason behind the fall in numbers. After all, there must be a reason why the British Army now employs fewer privates than the total number of people, part-time and full-time, employed by the Sainsbury grocery chain.

In 1957, there were 233,177 privates. Ten years later, the figure was just over 81,500. That is easy to explain: national service had been abolished and our colonial commitments had been severely reduced. Countries such as Ghana, Malaya and Kenya had been granted their independence. By 1977, we were down to 67,613 privates. I suppose that we can explain that further decline: the previous decade had seen us shedding our colonial commitments to west of Aden.

But by 1987, the number of privates was down again, to 62,028. One might have thought that eight years of Conservative Government committed to strengthening our armed forces would have put a stop to the inexorable decrease in army manpower. One can hardly say that the shedding of colonial responsibilities was the reason — unless, of course, the granting of independence to the Gilbert Islands and the former New Hebrides accounted for the change.

However, I do not want to be accused of total pessimism. The number of privates may be down to 26 per cent. of the total 30 years ago, but at least my hon. Friends will be heartened to know that the number of generals is down to only 57 per cent. We should not be too cynical about that, because there are considerable market forces working in that direction. In the past 10 years, while a private's pay has increased by 174 per cent., a general's has increased by 246 per cent., which is not bad when we consider that 10 years ago a general was earning eight

times what a private earns. That helps to put into perspective the statement in the Conservative party general election leaflet, "Our First Eight Years", that "armed services pay has been restored to a proper level". It also helps to put into perspective some of the self-congratulation about pay expressed by some Conservative hon. Members early in the debate. But I digress.

It is not just the number of personnel that has failed to live up to the high expectations. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) mentioned in his opening speech, there have also been problems with equipment. I realise that the Government will bleat on about how they are spending more on equipment than we did when Harold Wilson or James Callaghan were in power, or probably more than would have been spent had George Lansbury or J. R. Clynes made it to No. 10. But that is not the point. We are entitled to judge the Government off their own standards, to judge them against the grandiose claims they have made.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli said, expenditure is declining and will continue to decline. Indeed, the City stockbrokers Kleinwort, Grieveson have forecast that between now and 1991 the equipment budget will fall by £240 million—and those will be the peak years of Trident spending.

Those factors, as well as some of the mismanagement that has already been referred to, will continue to diminish our forces' ability to play their NATO roles adequately. The quantity of new equipment will fall and the quality of existing systems will deteriorate. Shortage of time prevents my giving specific examples.

I ask the Minister to deal in his winding-up speech with the following two specific questions. First, were the further 16 Lynxes that he mentioned the same 16 as the Secretary of State announced last year would be purchased? Secondly, why is it only we and the Greeks whose army helicopters are run by the air force?

At the same time as the decline has been in progress —as my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, South (Mr. George) discussed in a characteristically thoughtful speech — we have maintained a series of treaty obligations involving military assitance. I realise that it is unlikely that there will be a conterminous outbreak of crises in all the locations to which we are committed. But it makes one pause to reflect on the demands which could be made at any one time on our armed forces, especially if a crisis in any of the farflung regions coincided with a crisis in Europe. That is why it is impossible to embark on any meaningful discussion of the role of the Army without setting it in the context of NATO's strategy of flexible response. *[Interruption.]* I hope that the hon. and learned Member for Colchester, North (Sir A. Buck) will allow me to develop this theme for a few moments. I am advised that the object of the use of nuclear weapons in a restricted and restrained way is to induce the enemy to take the political decision not to proceed and to withdraw. Put more briefly but no less euphemistically, flexible response simply maintains the nuclear option. This is a concept which deserves wider discussion.

The received wisdom is that, if the Soviets were of a mind to attack, they would not need to resort to first use of nuclear weapons because of their superiority in conventional weapons. Furthermore, there is a perception that Soviet Russia would not resort to the first use of nuclear weapons also because the Soviets would be only too well aware of how it would affect them, having learned the lessons of Chernobyl. Consequently, NATO's flexible response should maintain the option to go nuclear in the face of a Soviet conventional attack.

If this is NATO thinking, it is little wonder that they will not agree to a no first use agreement, since we see ourselves under the flexible response strategy as the only people who would ever contemplate the first use of nuclear weapons. Whichever way I look at this, I cannot help but see flaws.

If our perception of the Soviets is that they would not use nuclear weapons first, because they have the intelligence to appreciate how their use of their nuclear capability would affect them as the aggressor, is it not conceivable that they might develop a perception of us, however wrongly, that we might just have the intelligence to appreciate how our first use of our nuclear capability might affect us as the aggressor? I understand that this is known as the concept of self-deterrence.

Of course, if both power blocs have the determination never to be the prime mover, even if they refuse so to admit, there would be some attraction to this flaw in the strategy. "O felix culpa," as the eastern hymnist wrote. I do not think there is anything fortunate about this point. There is the obvious possibility of nuclear retaliation. If we ever carried out our flexible threat, they might respond flexibly. If General de Gaulle could ask whether an American President was prepared to risk Chicago for Hamburg, we are entitled to ask whether the British Prime Minister is prepared to risk Liverpool for a breach of the reindeer fence at Kirkeness in northern Norway.

Even more significant in the context of the Army debate is the unchallengeable fact that any movement towards nuclear control or reduction must involve a reassessment of conventional weapons. Under NATO's strategy of flexible response, if we enhance our conventional weapons too much, we reduce the credibility of the nuclear weapon in flexible response. In the past, we on these Benches have argued that, given the finite nature of our military budget, if we pour £10 billion into Trident or whatever, we will not have the resources to modernise conventional weapons.

It is more ominous. It is not just a question of our not having the material wherewithal to spend on conventional weapons; we would not have the inclination or the desire to spend on conventional weapons. The popular perception is that, because of the conventional imbalance, NATO needs to maintain the option of first use of nuclear weapons, but the reality is that the Government do not believe that, even if we had a conventional balance, we could trust the USSR to stay on its side of the border. So even if we negotiated such a balance, that would not be in our interest, according to the logic of this strategy.

It really is an incredible concept. It is the perfect example of what Galbraith called convenient reverse logic, a logic which proceeds not from diagnosis to remedy, but from the preferred remedy back to the requisite cause.

The doctrine of flexible response flies in the face of what the present Secretary of State for Defence said to the House of Commons 20 years ago:

> "It is absolute nonsense for anybody to say that it is impossible to imagine a conventional war. It may be very unlikely; it may be completely improbable; but it is certainly not impossible to imagine . . . Although I would say that at present I cannot envisage it, who can say that he could not envisage any form of conventional war in Europe in five, 10, 15, 20 years time?"—[*Official Report*, 10 May 1966; Vol. 728, c. 318-19.]

[Mr. Sean Hughes]

It is now 20 years later. Is that the thinking of the Secretary of State? If it is, logically we should be working towards a conventional balance to prevent a limited conventional war. That runs counter to the logic of the flexible response, because it raises the nuclear threshold, and makes Europe safe, as one general quaintly put it, for a limited conventional war to be fought.

What precisely is the Government's position? What is the role of nuclear weapons? The hon. and learned Member for Colchester, North clearly does not realise that, for the third time running, the Government won the general election and it is their policy that we are debating.

Sir Antony Buck: The hon. Gentleman referred to me. I am looking for a clear response or a substitute policy to the flexible response. Such a policy has not been spelt out. The flexible response policy was adopted by an earlier Labour Government, and I have not seen a substitute for such an eminently sensible policy.

Mr. Hughes: In my part of the world, that would be called a cop-out. It is the duty of the Opposition to probe and explore what the Government are doing. That is precisely what we are doing. We have a right to ask whether the role of nuclear weapons in flexible response, as the Government tell the public, relates to conventional imbalance or whether it is the be-all and end-all of military strategy.

There has been a reference to glasnost. We could do with some glasnost from the Government. I remember listening to our much-maligned Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the hon. and learned Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor), speaking in Committee on the Arms Control and Disarmament (Privileges and Immunities) Bill about a new era of openness. When such a man speaks of openness he deserves attention. He is certainly a distinguished—some would say the greatest living—exponent of the art of open diplomacy. Sadly, he was speaking about openness with the Russians and not with the House of Commons.

I realise that, by their twisted logic, the Government claim credit for the INF agreement between the United States and Soviet Russia, to which they were not invited and about which they were not consulted. An endearing feature of the Government is that, while they consistently refuse to accept responsibility for their own actions, they have developed a singular capacity for claiming the success achieved by others. It is like the self-decorated south American dictators who luxuriate in the reflected splendour of their national team's World Cup success—but even they do not say that they scored the goals.

The House has a right to expect Ministers to be more forthcoming about the implications of the doctrine of flexible response. I believe that the soldiers in the lines also have that right of expectation.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook) referred to the problem of the overseas allowance for troops based in Germany. I hope that the Minister will address himself to that specific question, although it is yet another niggardly reduction that hardly bears out the patriotic glory speeches often made by Conservative Members at times of stress.

One area of concern, for instance, is that members of the Territorial Army who are out of work suffer cuts in their social security money if they do more than 16 mid-week drill nights per year.

Growing concern has also been expressed by members of both the Government and the Opposition about armed forces pensions and especially the pensions of widows of those who have served in the armed forces. The hon. Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne), as he rightly reminded us, raised this matter before Christmas, and the point was emphasised in detail by my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen). Here again there is a feeling that the Government could perhaps do more than they are doing at present.

The problem of bullying has also been raised, especially by my right hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley). It was also emphasised by my hon. Friend the Member for Tottenham (Mr. Grant), who equated it with racism. Bullying, as we would all agree, is unacceptable wherever it is manifested, not least in the bizarre and extraordinary circumstances described recently. While we recognise that, as Kipling said, men in barracks do not grow into plaster saints, there is a feeling that something has gone wrong, somebody has gone too far, and responsibility is not confined to non-commissioned officers even if they were the most immediately involved.

Reference was made during Question Time to the Prime Minister's performance on "Panorama" last night. I want to refer to one sentence in that interview, when she said:

"You are not properly and adequately defended enough to deter an aggressor unless your things are up to date. Any potential aggressor will see that his are."

What becomes obvious in debates such as this is that she is not considering the Army in that, but only the nuclear weapon. Fortunately, it has become equally obvious that hon. Members, both Opposition and Government, do have the Army in mind. That is why appreciation of the services has been expressed on both sides.

9.37 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Roger Freeman): I very much admire the very witty debating style of the hon. Member for Knowsley, South (Mr. Hughes). I shall not follow him either in that style or in the sequence of the comments that he made, because I want to deal with the many questions that have been raised in the course of the debate.

Government Members — and I am sure that the Opposition join us in this — warmly welcome four additional contributors to the regular Army debates: my hon. Friends the Members for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson), for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier), for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) and for Dorset, South (Mr. Bruce). We hope that they will continue their excellent contributions in the future.

The right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) asked me a number of questions, which I shall try to answer. He began by saying that the rapid increase in expenditure on nuclear weapons since 1979 had been at the expense of expenditure on conventional armaments. He also said that he was not very good at mathematics. If he reflects upon the levels of expenditure in real terms since 1979, he will realise that his comment about expenditure cannot be right. Since 1979 the increase in real expenditure for the Army alone has amounted cumulatively to £4 billion. My

hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement mentioned the many new weapons that had been introduced and will be introduced in the future. For the next three years, beginning on 1 April, we shall see level funding in real terms for the armed forces.

The right hon. Gentleman asked about tanks and the replacement for Chieftain. As well as reviewing possible overseas options, the possibility of an improved version of the Challenger tank is under discussion with Vickers Defence Systems. No decisions have yet been taken on the timing of a Chieftain replacement, and the Ministry is continuing seriously to consider both the improved Challenger and other possible options.

The right hon. Gentleman also asked me about the replacement for the Abbott self-propelled howitzer. We have sought and obtained proposals from four companies for a 155mm self-propelled howitzer to meet our most pressing national requirements. This will replace the aging 105mm Abbott gun. These proposals are currently being assessed in the Department.

The right hon. Member then raised the question of the role of the United Kingdom mobile force and argued that the Government were trying to renege on this North Atlantic Treaty Organisation commitment. We are looking at re-role-ing the United Kingdom mobile force, but it will be subject to the agreement of NATO, and I assure both the right hon. Gentleman and the House that there is no question of a unilateral change, and no question of reneging on that commitment.

The right hon. Gentleman also asked me when the next NATO Heads of State meeting will take place, and I am happy to tell him that it will be on 2 and 3 March. The right hon. Gentleman then asked about dual-capable artillery and whether this would be included in conventional disarmament talks. All Warsaw pact and NATO conventional ground forces in Europe will be covered by the talks, including those in the British Army of the Rhine, so the answer is yes.

The right hon. Gentleman then raised a very serious question about the validity of the White Paper, and this was also referred to by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Sir A. Buck) and my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne). The Ministry of Defence has made a fair assessment of the number of conventional forces, both men and equipment, on both sides. The qualitative factors are, of course, difficult to assess, but the quality of Soviet armour and of Soviet equipment is improving all the time, and the somewhat complacent attitude of Opposition Members —or at least that is the conclusion one might draw— does not help in assessing the military imbalance.

My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Colchester, North paid tribute to the professionalism of the forces and asked a number of questions about recruitment, as did the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright). I am encouraged to see that the current levels of premature voluntary retirement from the Army are substantially lower than in 1978-79, with the exception of certain specialist——

Mr. Cryer: More unemployment.

Mr. Freeman: No, the reason is that the Government have consistently honoured the awards of the Armed Forces Pay Review Body. It is the consistent payment of proper pay to the armed forces that has reversed the situation that the hon. Gentleman's Government left us with. With the exception of certain specialist shortages, our Army is fully manned. Recruiting has generally held up well, and the average length of service has never been greater. In the past 18 months it has increased, for soldiers, from 4·6 years to just on six years. This is particularly reassuring and represents a vote of confidence in the Army. The improvement in retention is due largely to the recognition by those serving of the high priority given to fair remuneration, together with a policy of continued modernisation of equipment and improvement of the Army's combat capability. The 1987 recommendations of the Armed Forces Pay Review Body were accepted in full, and the consequent revised pay rates continued to maintain comparability with the private sector.

The hon. Gentleman asked me about the demographic trend and how it would affect recruitment. He is right to draw attention to this, but we are convinced that our policy of fair pay, and of fair conditions and allowances, which have as great a role to play as pay itself, should ensure that we keep ahead of the game and cope with the demographic trend and the smaller number of youngsters available to join the armed forces. It is a matter that we are determined to keep closely under review.

I turn now to deal in a little detail with the point raised by the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) about bullying. I think that the House would expect me to return to this subject as I promised in the debate on the Estimates. I know that this is an issue that has been of very real concern to the right hon. Gentleman, as it has to many hon. Members. It has been of equal concern to me and my ministerial colleagues in the Ministry of Defence, and to the senior commanders— both in the field and in the Department— who have responsibility for the welfare and well-being of the men and women who serve in the Army.

I have stated our position in previous debates. Bullying is a serious offence, whether committed by non-commissioned officers towards junior ranks, or by members of a peer group, soldiers towards each other. It forms no part of proper service life, and we are clear that it cannot be tolerated.

The Adjutant General and I have both met the right hon. Gentleman on a number of occasions, and I believe that he appreciates that we share his concern and have been determined to deal with the problem. We have been grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for his interest in this issue. He has made a number of constructive suggestions, which we have examined very carefully. We disagree about the extent of bullying in the Army. Recent cases, and the media coverage devoted to them, have suggested that the problem of bullying and ill-treatment is widespread. I and my senior Army colleagues do not believe that to be the case. Since January 1986, in an Army that numbers some 160,000 regulars—including some 20,000 under training —only 100 or so cases of alleged bullying, intimidation or ill-treatment have come to light, and some of those have related to incidents that took place at an earlier date. In 19 of the cases, investigations are still continuing.

The charges in 35 of the other cases have been substantiated, and have or will result in disciplinary action. I make no excuses for these cases, which have included several serious and degrading incidents, but I hope that the sentences awarded by the courts martial, and reported in the press, will serve to underline my assertion

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about the seriousness with which the Army regards the issue of bullying and the determination that exists to stamp it out. In the remaining 48 cases that have been investigated — very nearly half the total — the Army's inquiries have not substantiated the initial charges or allegations. Therefore, I do not believe that these overall figures reflect an endemic problem. Nor do I agree that these cases are only the tip of the iceberg.

We are not, and cannot be, complacent, however. As I have said previously to the House, the exposure given to this issue over the last year, and the concern to which it has naturally given rise, has led to the most serious self-examination throughout the Army. In July last year the Adjutant General wrote to commanding officers throughout the Army, requiring them to examine their own units in relation to bullying and intimidation, and to report back to him in early December with proposals and recommendations, both to deal with any immediate difficulties and to help obviate such practices in the future.

I undertook in the defence debate last October to report the outcome of this re-examination and our proposed action after analysing the replies to the Adjutant General's directive. There remains some work to be done. As ever, in a tight defence programme, we have to justify very carefully any demand for new resources, and its relative priority. I know that the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South understands that. I can tell the House, however, the general thrust of our conclusions and the broad areas in which we intend to make changes.

The general consensus in the responses from commands is that bullying and other unacceptable forms of behaviour are not prevalent; that, to the extent to which they occur, it is partly because the Army reflects changing standards in the society from which it recruits, in which the young soldier may at the same time be less tough physically than his forebears and yet more inured to the concept of violence, assault, and alcohol abuse — for example, through television and films; that the Army, for its part, needs to re-emphasise its responsibilities for man management, and to foster in officers and NCOs a greater awareness of their supervisory duties. That is, perhaps, particularly the case in off-duty hours, because changed patterns of barracks accommodation, the increasing trend of married officers and NCOs to live out, and soldiers' wish for privacy off-duty have to some extent led to some falling off in the level of supervision.

Another conclusion is that, in some cases, it would appear that the process of pursuing cost-effectiveness and efficiency has produced pressures at some levels of staffing which we need to re-examine to see whether a shift in the burden of unit administration can be achieved, again with the aim of giving junior and middle-level commanders more time to concentrate on their task of leadership.

Finally, it is proposed that welfare support to the chain of command be re-examined. In recent years much has been done in this area in relation to Army families, and we need now to extend more of these improvements to the single soldier.

The changes that we shall be considering as a result of these broad conclusions centre on six areas. First, at the recruiting and entry stage, we shall be looking at the scope for extending the medical examination process, with a view to more thorough screening out at that stage of young men who may not be robust enough to cope with the toughness of military training. Secondly, we shall be re-examining our already careful selection and induction training of NCO instructors to see whether there is scope for further improvement. Thirdly, we shall be looking at the scope for reorganising administrative commitments in training units, to allow officers and NCOs to devote more time to their supervisory responsibilities.

Mr. Rogers *rose*——

Mr. Freeman: If the hon. Gentleman will allow me, I shall finish.

This may mean that we need more junior officers and NCOs in the training depots. The individual training organisation is in any case the subject of a major study, which will take account of the conclusions I have outlined. Fourthly, we shall be considering the most effective deployment of our volunteers, who work with soldiers in army units. Fifthly, we shall review the content and degree of man management training on officer and NCO courses. More emphasis will be placed on that aspect, and we shall be revising the pamphlet that gives guidance on the principles and aspects of that skill. Finally, we shall formally ban all harmful initiation ceremonies.

I hope that that brief summary gives some suggestion to the House of the constructive way in which we are approaching this issue.

Mr. Ashley: The Minister has just made a major statement of policy and I warmly welcome the proposals made in response to the campaign because, although they may not be the complete answer, they are constructive and deserve to be warmly welcomed in all parts of the House. They will reassure the Army, and especially soldiers who have been bullied and their families. My interpretation of the policy is that it is a combined operation on bullying. When does the Minister expect to be able to implement the proposals?

Mr. Freeman: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for his intervention. I shall be pursuing all the recommendations—they represent a statement of policy —with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and my other colleagues. We hope to make rapid progress.

Mr. Rogers: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Freeman: I am sorry, but I have only a few minutes left.

Mr. Rogers *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. One at a time. I believe that the Minister is not giving way.

Mr. Freeman: My hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South raised the matter of the Gurkhas. We have repeatedly made it clear that there is a continuing role for the Gurkhas in the British Army after 1997. We welcome the interest that is being taken by the Select Committee and will read its report with great interest.

My hon. Friend also raised the question of Army helicopters, as did the hon. Member for Knowsley, South. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement has spoken about the conversion of 24 Brigade to its airborne role. He also mentioned the intention to order 16 Lynx helicopters— the same 16 helicopters that we announced last year— and reminded the House that 25 RAF EH101 helicopters will contribute to the air mobility role.

The hon. Member for Woolwich spoke about the future of the Woolwich garrison. I am grateful to him for paying tribute to the establishment of the new historic military buildings committee and the work that it can do. Although the future of the quality assurance directorate is not a matter for me—it is a subject of discussion within the Ministry — I can tell him that one solution that commends itself to the committee is the partial sale of the site along the river front, including the grand store, which will release a listed, valuable building for possible residential use. The site would be put into the hands of new owners who had the funds and the energy and foresight to develop it for the greater value of Woolwich.

My hon. Friend the Member for Windsor and Maidenhead (Dr. Glyn) asked about the Victoria barracks. My hon. Friend will be aware that the preparatory work has now been finished. Planning for the re-build is now almost completed and it is hoped to make a start on the site in September this year. If my hon. Friend cares to visit the site with me, and if we fix the date for 1 September, I assure him that that will have the effect of concentrating the minds of the planners most wonderfully. I look forward to visiting his constituency with him.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, South spoke about the use of ranges at the weekend. The hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) also raised this matter, and I owe him a written reply on the range safety working group. The use of ranges, particularly at the weekend by the Territorial Army, is safe and necessary. The Army wants to be good neighbours and if we come across legitimate complaints about noise we try to solve them.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) raised some specific constituency issues. He rightly said that disposals were a matter for the PSA and not for me. However, we have developed a new policy within the Ministry towards disposals and that has been applied at Deal, Eastney, Gosport and Dishforth. We place great emphasis on forward planning, so that we know precisely when we are to get rid of a site and how much of a site is to be disposed of. We also believe in co-operation with the local authorities and taking them into our confidence about the future of the sites. We seek their views. I should like to join the long list of Ministers who have visited the Great Lines, Gillingham, and hope to pay it a visit very shortly.

I thank the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), not only for his comments about Fort George and how the Army deals with individual cases, and for setting the subject of bullying in proportion, but for his kind remarks about the GOC Scotland. He asked me a couple of direct questions affecting the Ministry of Defence, and was kind enough to brief me beforehand about one of them. If I may, I shall reply in writing to those two specific questions about the Ministry of Defence, or one of my ministerial colleagues will do so. The hon. Gentleman would not expect me to have the answers to such detailed questions immediately to hand. His more general comments will, I am sure, be read with interest by other Ministers.

Mr. Dalyell: I asked only for letters.

Mr. Freeman: I shall certainly pursue the points that the hon. Gentleman has raised.

The hon. Member for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder) raised some specific security matters concerning Northern Ireland. I shall call them to the attention of my hon. Friend the Minister for the Armed Forces, and I know that he will respond in writing.

The hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) suggested that we should look seriously at the introduction of trade unions in the armed forces. That, of course, was considered by the Committee on what is now the Armed Forces Act 1986 in the last Parliament, in which the hon. Gentleman did not serve. I had the honour of serving on that Committee, and I think that its conclusions were right. There is no demand for trade unions within the British armed forces, and no need for them. The hon. Gentleman cannot build a case on the limited examples that he cited. Our armed forces are politically independent. They have an independent pay review body, and there is no question of our introducing trade unions in the armed forces.

The hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr. Grant) suggested that there was racism in the Army, and appealed to soldiers to write to him so that he could take up individual cases. I listened to his remarks with interest, and I shall read the *Official Report* tomorrow. However, I must say to the soldiers to whom he has appealed that that is exactly the wrong advice. They are British soldiers, and they should take up any allegations with their commanding officers. That would be far more effective and would be in the best interests of soldiers in the British Army, whatever the colour of their skins.

The hon. Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook) asked me a specific question about allowances. I assume that he was referring to local overseas allowances, rather than to the more general package that has been under study by the MoD for some time. All that I can say about LOA — although I should be happy to meet the hon. Gentleman and discuss any specific points that he would like to put forward—is that it is a mechanical system, a non-taxable method of compensating service men for the extra costs of living in Germany. It is determined automatically by movement in relative prices and exchange rate.

Other hon. Members — I believe that they included the hon. Member for Leyton — raised the question of war widows. Since 1985 the Government have been assisting the Royal British Legion in a scheme whereby war widows are helped to visit their husbands' graves overseas. Assistance is provided in the form of grants-in-aid to the Royal British Legion. By the end of March this year some 1,200 war widows will have benefited from it.

I am also pleased to announce that the Government's help in the scheme is to be continued for a further five-year period, from financial years 1990 to 1995. The grant for 1990 will be £169,000.

The hon. Member for Knowsley, South put a number of questions to me, including the key question about the role of the Army in Europe and the British Army of the Rhine. He failed to convince the House that there has not been a substantial increase in expenditure on conventional weapons in the BAOR. If he thought to make that case — perhaps halfheartedly — he failed to prove it. Cumulatively, an extra £4 billion has been spent on the Army.

The hon. Gentleman completely failed to argue that there is conventional balance between the Soviet and NATO forces. The House will have read the White Paper. The figures contained in it were produced by the Ministry of Defence to present a fair assessment of the imbalance

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of conventional forces and Conservative Members will support the Government in making adequate preparations to deal with that conventional imbalance. That means pressing ahead with conventional disarmament measures. Until those measures succeed, we intend that battlefield nuclear weapons should remain and that our——

It being Ten o'clock, the Motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

Church of England (Legal Aid and Miscellaneous Provisions) Measure

10 pm

Mr. Michael Alison (Second Church Estates Commissioners, Representing Church Commissioners): I beg to move,

That the Church of England (Legal Aid and Miscellaneous Provisions) Measure, passed by the General Synod of the Church of England, be presented to Her Majesty for her Royal Assent in the form in which the said Measure was laid before Parliament.

I will not detain the House for long on this Measure. The purpose of a miscellaneous provisions Measure is to effect minor or, as I hope it will prove, non-controversial changes in the law. Part I of the Measure consolidates and amends the provisions relating to the ecclesiastical legal aid fund at present contained in three different Measures. Part II makes minor amendments to the law on several topics and Part III contains formal provisions.

The four clauses of Part I and schedules 1 and 2 revise and consolidate the existing statutory provisions concerning the Church of England's ecclesiastical legal aid fund.

At present three Measures and three items of subordinate legislation deal with legal aid. There is the Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Measure 1963, the Incumbents (Vacation of Benefices) Measure 1977 and the Pastoral Measure 1983. Alongside those are three subordinate pieces of legislation: the Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction (Legal Aid) Rules 1964, the Vacation of Benefices (Legal Aid) Rules 1978 and the Compensation of Clergy Rules 1970. That is a disparate collection of Measures and rules which vividly show the advantage of consolidation.

The ecclesiastical legal aid fund was set up by the 1963 Measure to which I have referred. Section 59 states that it was for the purpose of assisting in the payment of

"the costs of any complainant or accused person in . . . any legal proceedings . . . in respect of any offence under this Measure."

The two more recent Measures provide that legal aid may be granted for other sorts of proceedings. The sort of cases with which we are concerned are those relating, for example, to the parson's freehold or the compensation that might be payable to an incumbent displaced under a pastoral reorganisation scheme. The various Measures and regulations to which I have referred do not provide a common approach and practice in the administration of the legal aid fund.

Part I of this Measure together with schedules 1 and 2 consolidates, with amendments, the statutory provision. It deals with existing differences and includes further provisions. New rules made under clause 4 are being prepared and, in accordance with clause 4(4) and 4(6), they will require the approval of the General Synod and be subject to the negative resolution procedure in the House. The new rules will provide one set of legal aid rules providing a common procedure for applications for the grant of legal aid, the issue of a certificate, the control of proceedings and the assessment of costs.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): The right hon. Gentleman will be aware of clause 2(4), which gives the criteria by which legal aid can be granted and the assessment of means. Will he explain how, when assessing the availability of legal aid, it can be said that the means of a wife should be taken into account? She may be a material witness in the case or not a party to the application. For example, a vicar whose wife has left him may be an adversarial party. Have the Synod or the Church Commissioners considered such an analogous matter?

Mr. Alison: The hon. Gentleman will note the phrase in clause 2(4):

"the Commission shall consider the financial resources of the applicant".

The conclusion that it may reach following that consultation remains within its discretion. The sort of technical or human point that the hon. Gentleman has given will readily be taken into account and weighed in the most humane way by the commission in its discretion.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): The right hon. Gentleman says that he is sure that it will be all right. Parliament is telling the Church that, where a vicar is appealing on a matter that will require legal aid—it may be of an ecclesiastical nature and have nothing to do with his relations with his wife, from whom he may be separated —that it can examine, like the Supplementary Benefits Commission, whether the wife can afford to pay. Is the right hon. Gentleman asking Parliament to give a family means test provision where there is a legal aid arrangement that might protect a vicar from dismissal from his parish?

Mr. Alison: The Church of England asks us, in this Measure, to authorise the making of rules. The rules then made will have to come before the House for scrutiny and be made subject to the negative resolution procedure. The right hon. Gentleman will have a further opportunity to consider the rules as made. They will have to be subject to the ultimate assent of the House if prayed against.

Mr. Benn: I accept what the right hon. Gentleman says, but what if people object in principle, as I do, to the idea of a family means test for legal aid? The only way in which that could be clearly shown to the Church would be by declining to pass the Measure tonight.

Mr. Alison: The right hon. Gentleman has already made a helpful intervention and has sent up a signal, which will be duly noted. The rules must be fully endorsed and passed by the General Synod. It is not unresponsive or unaware of the interest that the House takes. The right hon. Gentleman's objection in principle to family circumstances being taken into account will be noted. I shall make it my business to ensure that the General Synod is aware of his sensitivities on this matter. It may be that the rules will be considered in the light of his comments.

The right hon. Gentleman is right. If, finally, in the light of all the criticisms and reflections made in the House and elsewhere relating to the rules and their consideration in the Synod—in the House of Bishops and Clergy, who are the most intimately affected by this, and to whom no doubt the right hon. Gentleman's point has already occurred — the rules come before the House with roughly what is here suggested in place, the only remedy available to the right hon. Gentleman is to vote against them when they are brought here in the form of a statutory instrument. He may then pray against them.

Mr. Benn: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for clarifying the matter. I am particularly grateful for the flattering suggestion that I have only to make an intervention for the Synod immediately to abandon the

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family means test, that he will undertake to refer my comments to the Synod and that it will no doubt yield immediately to what might be called the "Chesterfield objection".

However, the right hon. Gentleman did not answer my question. If we want to rule out the possibility of a family means test, the only way to do so is to defeat the Measure. If we defeat it, the Synod will have to reconsider the matter and bring it back without even an enabling provision. I am asking the right hon. Gentleman to give me advice as to how one could rule out, without having to listen to speeches or read *Hansard*, any possibility of a family means test.

Mr. Alison: The right hon. Gentleman has over-evaluated the significance that I placed on his intervention. I would certainly not claim that the General Synod is waiting agog for every word that drops from the right hon. Gentleman's lips. However, as his colleague in this House, I have my ears finely tuned to his remarks and I shall certainly make it my business to ensure that his views are conveyed to the General Synod. However, I am afraid that I cannot guarantee that the General Synod in its wisdom will not come forward with rules including what the right hon. Gentleman describes as a family means test.

Part II comprises nine clauses. Clause 5 amends the Extra-Parochial Ministry Measure 1967, under which clergymen are licensed to perform offices in institutions such as hospitals and prisons, to take account of the changes made in the law of marriage for households or detained persons under the Marriage Act 1983. The clause has been included in response to the request made by the Home Office, during the preparation of the Marriage Act 1983, that consequential amendments to the 1967 Measure be made by Measure rather than in the 1983 Act. The effect is to enable clergymen to solemnize certain marriages in institutions such as hospitals, prisons or places of learning.

Clause 6 provides for the name of a diocesan or suffragan see to be changed. As present, there is no machinery to allow this to happen and the clause gives powers to Her Majesty in Council to change the name of a see.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Will the hon. Gentleman tell the House whether the clause was prompted by the likely request for such a change? It was recently reported in the press that the diocese of Ripon was contemplating changing its name to the diocese of Ripon and Leeds or Leeds and Ripon. Are there any other such changes in the pipeline?

Mr. Alison: The hon. Gentleman is right in saying that the clause was prompted by the case to which he referred. I am not aware of any others but perhaps when the precedent has been set, others will wish to follow suit.

Clause 7 deals with the revocation of licences. A bishop, by right of his office, has always been able at his discretion to revoke a minister's licence to officiate in his diocese. Until 1964, a minister had no right of appeal. Section 10 of the Clergy (Ordination and Miscellaneous Provisions) Measure 1964 gave the minister a right of appeal and incorporated in statute the bishop's power to revoke summarily licences of ministers in his diocese. It was considered desirable to give a similar right of appeal to other persons licensed by the bishop — for example, deaconesses and lay workers. Section 10 of the 1964 Measure is being repealed and clause 7 is an enabling power for the General Synod to make provision by canon as to the revocation of licences of ministers, deaconesses, lay workers and readers.

Mr. Bermingham: Bearing in mind the fact that the right is now being extended to deaconesses, lay readers and other persons, and bearing in mind the views expressed by some bishops on what should and should not be practised by ministers of the Church, does not the right hon. Gentleman agree that it would be a little fairer if the reason for the revocation of the licence were given? I understand that by tradition, if a minister has his licence revoked, reasons are given for that revocation. Should we not write into the statute a provision that says that if a deaconess, lay reader or other person has his or her licence revoked, reasons must always be given? The person wishing to challenge the decision would then have something upon which to act and a ground upon which to appeal. Otherwise, they will find themselves doing something akin to swimming in a bowl of treacle.

Mr. Alison: It follows logically in the provision that is being made, both for the revocation of a licence and for an appeal against such a revocation, that that against which an appeal is to be lodged must be specified in clear terms so that an appeal is feasible. The very fact that those two notions go together demonstrates with logic that the nature of the charge will be made plain.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Will the right hon. Gentleman assist me by telling me whether there is any other appeal other than that to the archbishop following revocation of a licence by the bishop——

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): To God.

Mr. Banks: Well, from a sedentary position the hon. Gentleman says "To God". However, God works in mysterious ways and He might not necessarily deliver a judgment that is immediately helpful to the minister who has just had his licence taken away. Is there a more earthly appeal or any way in which a minister can, for example, go to an industrial tribunal or come to Parliament to make a further appeal?

Mr. Alison: I can speak with authority only within the ambit of the Measure and of canon law, which underpins and underlies it. So far as canon law is concerned, the archbishops at either end of the wicket are, as it were, the longstops of this match. The buck stops with them; they have the final determination——

Mr. Tony Banks: It is a funny old cricket match.

Mr. Alison: Well, although I am not a lawyer, there may be some scope in common law or natural justice for further appeal. However, I am not competent to pronounce on that. It is conceivable that common law might have a part to play in such matters. I can advise the hon. Gentleman only in the context of common law, because determination of an appeal is made by the archbishops.

As right hon. and hon. Gentlemen who will have been able to get hold of a copy of the Ecclesiastical Committee's report will have seen, the second paragraph of that report states:

"The relevant Canon approved by the General Synod would give ministers the same right of appeal as they presently enjoy, and the Ecclesiastical Committee accept the evidence

given on behalf of the General Synod that it would be unrealistic to suppose that the power in Clause 7 would in future be used in such a way as to remove or cut down the right of appeal."

Clause 8 is also an enabling power to make provision by canon as to the appointment and dismissal of organists and choirmasters. The right of appointment to the office of organist belongs to the incumbent. However, the parochial church council is responsible for the payment of his remuneration. The right of the incumbent to appoint and dismiss an organist is being retained, but provision is to be made by canon for the agreement of the parochial church council generally to be attained first, before an organist is appointed or dismissed.

Clauses 9 to 12 deal with minor amendments or improvements to various statutes made at the request of the Church Commissioners and the Church of England pension board.

Clause 13 amends the Parochial Church Councils (Powers) Measure 1956 so that money given at the service of holy communion should be disposed of at the discretion of the parochial church council and not of the minister and churchwardens as currently directed by the rubric of the Book of Common Prayer. The provision makes it possible for communion alms to be treated in the same way as the other money collected in church, which is already the regular practice of the majority of parish churches. It should be noted that money given at a holy communion service which is in the form of a covenant or other pledge in favour of the PCC is not, in any case, subject to the rubric.

In its report, the Ecclesiastical Committee was of the opinion that

"the case for Clause 13 is well-founded."

Mr. Harry Greenway: Could my right hon. Friend say how much, in proportion to the general total of alms-giving, comes from holy communion services? I believe that it is much more substantial than 50 per cent. and, therefore, that this is a most important Measure.

Mr. Alison: I cannot give my hon. Friend that information, but I shall seek to obtain it and communicate it to him. He will understand the difficulty about having a sure measure of this because of the wide and divergent practices in many parish churches. Many of them have the communion service as an integrated part of their main service of morning prayer. Others have it as an isolated and single service early or late in the day. It is difficult to get cut-and-dried information, but I shall try to do so and pass it on to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Tony Banks: Will the right hon. Gentleman indulge me by going back to clause 8, which he skipped over quickly? Why are we talking specifically about an organist or a choirmaster? Are there no other office-holders in a church whom the minister might wish to dismiss, or already has the power to dismiss? Why is it considered inappropriate for a parochial church council to discuss the reasons for the dismissal of an organist? Are the morals of organists particularly lax? We might be discussing an alleged improper relationship between him and a member of the choir. Of course, it might not be a him; it might be a her. Why are organists being singled out? Does the right hon. Gentleman know something about the sexual mores of organists which Opposition Members do not know? We should like to share that experience with him.

Mr. Alison: The hon. Gentleman is tempting me to draw a veil aside, which it would be quite improper for me to draw. I must remain comparatively Trappist in my response to him.

I am content to return to clause 8. The incumbent, or the minister, as he is properly described in the clause, does not have many individuals whom he might have the power, authority or occasion to dismiss. All members of his congregation are voluntary participants in the community, the parish and the fellowship of the Church. His own fellow-ordained clergy would be subject to the various appropriate canons and ecclesiastical disciplinary measures. Their disciplining would be taken out of his hands. Paradoxically, it boils down to the choir and the choirmaster, who are paid from funds which remain at his discretion.

The Measure seeks to make it the norm, or to reflect the broadly established norm, that it is natural for the incumbent to discuss with the parochial church council, which has the ultimate spending sanction at its disposal, whether the hiring or firing should take place. Particular sensitivity is reflected in the comments made by the Ecclesiastical Committee that there may be some occasions relating to a dismissal when it would probably be unhelpful, particularly when personal relationships were involved with the individual subject to possible dismissal, for the nature of the case to be widely discussed and circulated among a quite numerous parochial church council. It would probably be accepted by all in the parish that the discretion of the vicar was properly exercised without more general and widespread discussion.

Mr. Tony Banks: Surely the right hon. Gentleman knows that the more vulgar Sunday newspapers are usually full of stories of vicars running off with wives and boy friends and organists going off with choirboys. In those cases, the parochial church councils will have the disadvantage of reading about these events in local or national newspapers and not having the opportunity to discuss them and to make a decision. Surely they must know more about the facts than the journalists who go sniffing around church vestries to try to get hold of these stories.

Mr. Alison: The hon. Gentleman has not taken my point. Reports in *The Sun* and the *News of the World*, or whatever other papers may be thought likely to be interested in such cases——

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): Why only those two?

Mr. Alison: I can give the hon. Gentleman a much longer list, but I do not want to detain the House.

The very fact that an incumbent decides not to discuss a particular case with anybody, including the PCC, is probably the best remedy for securing that the PCC does not subsequently read about that particular case. Discretion is of the essence of this provision.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that at present the PCC has no locus in this matter and the purpose of the new Measure is to give it a new locus, subject to the exceptional case where the archdeacon intervenes? The Ecclesiastical Committee — it is a matter of public record — asked exactly the same question that my right hon. Friend has just answered.

Mr. Alison: I am happy to confirm my hon. Friend's interpretation. The PCC has no de jure involvement in the situation, but in most parishes and for many years past there has been a de facto relationship of close co-operation for the obvious reason that the PCC holds the purse strings. This measure formalises that partnership but makes provision, by the use of a particular word, for the incumbent, in certain circumstances, to dispense with the advice of the PCC in a dismissal case.

Mr. Bermingham: The right hon. Gentleman passed clause 10 at a gallop; that deals with section 31 of the Leasehold Reform Act 1967. Can the right hon. Gentleman explain where, for example, the church has a property which it holds on a long leasehold, whether the vicar, curate or somebody else becomes the tenant, why, in the terms of this amendment the church is surrendering its right to enfranchise that leasehold? The right hon. Gentleman may be well aware that if a person who holds such a leasehold is resident for more than five years, he has a right to enfranchise that leasehold. If that leasehold lies in the body corporate, for example the diocesan board, that right is lost. Would it not be better to allow the vicar or curate, or other servant of the church, to have it in his name during the course of his occupancy of a particular office and thus to exercise the benefit of section 31?

Mr. Alison: The hon. Gentleman talks in the language and the jargon of a lawyer. I suspect that he must have some legal knowledge. I would want to see in the cold print of the *Official Report* exactly the point he is making. On studying it carefully, I shall get in touch with him on his complex point. Suffice it to say that clause 10 amends the Leasehold Reform Act 1967 to take account of the transfer of the interests of the incumbent as landlord of glebe land to the diocesan board of finance by the Endowments and Glebe Measure of 1976.

The Home Office has been fully consulted on the measure throughout its progress through the General Synod, and the General Registrar Office and the Department of the Environment have also been consulted on clauses 5 and 10. When the Measure was given final approval by the General Synod at its February 1986 group of sessions, there was no vote against the legislation. The Ecclesiastical Committee stated in its report that the Measure is expedient.

10.28 pm

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): There has been some merriment in the course of the speech of the right hon. Member for Selby (Mr. Alison), but for those in the Church this must be an important Measure. It may not raise issues familiar to Members of Parliament, but it touches on pensions, legal aid — on which I raised questions about a family means test—the ownership and disposition of land and land rights, and the name of a diocese, which would certainly have as much interest in the Church as a change in our constituency boundaries. It deals with the revocation of a licence by a bishop. It deals with the question of the appointment or dismissal of organists or choirmasters. It deals with the disposition of funds coming in in holy communion.

Those are very important matters. They come before a House that does not by law require to be Anglian or Christian, and I do not believe that the House tonight, in a debate that perhaps is more jocular than it should be, should venture to enact such a Measure, for a very simple reason. I shall give the House that reason, first in detail and then in general.

If an organist is dismissed in Chesterfield and comes to me as his Member of Parliament and says, "I have been dismissed," am I to say, "Nothing to do with me"? He will say, "Not at all. You passed the Church of England (Legal Aid and Miscellaneous Provisions) Measure. Why did you pass it? It is under the authority of Parliament that I have been dismissed."

Or what about a minister who may be dismissed by a bishop, for all sorts of reasons? I will not go into them, but the Bishop of Ripon has recently made some statements about his attitude to the sexuality of those in his diocese. *[Interruption.]* Hon. Members may agree or disagree, but I do not see why Parliament should empower the bishop to sack a minister and then the minister be able to come to us and ask, "Why did you pass this law?" with the answer being," Because you are an established Church."

We do not in this House legislate for Catholic churches. We do not legislate for synagogues. We as Members do not have to be Anglicans. The Measure could go through tonight on the votes of humanists. According to Gallup polls, a quarter of the population of this country claim no religious affiliations whatever. Yet a House of Commons that has no knowledge of, interest in, or religious commitment to, the Church of England, is taking decisions that, although we may laugh about them, because they have a comic side late at night, are desperately important to the people for whom they would then become law of the land.

I raised this matter of the establishment on the bishops retirement Measure some time ago. The two Measures go together. On that occasion I did not divide the House; I shall tonight, if I receive support, aim to do so.

There was a provision in that Measure that the Church of England, with the authority of Parliament, could retire a bishop, which, among other things, would take him out of the House of Lords. The only person who can be removed from the House of Lords is a bishop forced to retire. Bishops, when they retire voluntarily, not being temporal peers, do not remain there. A bishop can be retired, and the bishop can revoke the licence of a minister. But the power to appoint a bishop rests with the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister does not in law have to be an Anglican. In law, the Prime Minister does not even have to be a Christian.

Mr. Harry Greenway *rose*——

Mr. Benn: I shall give way shortly to the hon. Gentleman, because he may have a point of substance.

The question I am asking the House to consider is whether we any longer seriously wish, as a House of Commons, to interfere in and legislate for the affairs of one Church only, in one part of the United Kingdom only. We disestablished the Church of Wales. We disestablished the Church of Ireland many years ago. The Church of Wales was disestablished by a 1914 Act. The Church of Scotland is not established.

Do we really want tonight to entrench in the legislation of this country detailed control of the affairs of human beings who have rights of their own that we tonight are taking away without knowledge or any possibility of amendment? Does not that raise wider questions?

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Benn: I give way to all those hon. Members who wish to intervene—by seniority. Perhaps they could sort it out for themselves.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Although the right hon. Gentleman is right in saying that in other parts of the United Kingdom the Church has been disestablished, the fact is that in England the Church has not been disestablished. So we have not only a right but a duty to examine these Measures.

Mr. Benn: I take the point. But I am, and always have been, a disestablishmentarian. It is a permissible view to take. If under 30 per cent. of the clergy, according to Gallup polls, for what they are worth, take the same view——

Mr. Harry Greenway *rose*——

Mr. Benn: I will give way to everyone in a moment.

If I want to bring about disestablishment and the separation of church and state, which is a legitimate political objective, one way to do it would be to refuse to pass the Measure. Then the Church would say, "We must be free to legislate." If the Church legislated, that would be part of the process. What the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) said is correct. Under law we have to legislate, but if we refused to legislate, the Church would have to decide for itself.

It would be just as if the Prime Minister were to refuse to appoint a bishop, which it is open to a Prime Minister to do; the Church would have to pick its own bishop. That would be one way of precipitating a separation of Church and state——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. I must remind the House that this is a very narrow Measure. It does not deal with disestablishment. Hon. Members must relate their comments to the legal fund and the provisions of that fund, which is the crux of the Measure that we are dealing with.

Mr. Bermingham: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Surely if we are discussing a Measure which deals with the question of the locus standi of a particular body, we are entitled to question the locus standi. Otherwise, surely we cannot discuss the matters relative to the question generally. I appreciate that your assistant clerk may be advising against me, but I say gently that I disagree with him.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman may well disagree with the Chair, but that is not what the Measure is about. The Measure is about legal aid and the provisions of that fund. It does not relate to the disestablishment of the Church. I am simply giving a warning. If hon. Members wish to go wider, their comments must relate to what is in the Bill.

I understand that the right hon. Gentleman was about to give way to the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway).

Mr. Harry Greenway: The right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) rightly said that all hon. Members, regardless of their religion, are entitled to speak upon the Church's position in relation to its employees, such as an organist. Does he accept that the spirit of these debates is that on the whole only hon. Members who belong to the Church of England participate? A great many hon. Members who belong to other churches do not take part in these debates simply because, although they have the right, as he does, they feel that it is outside their real interests and outside their moral interests.

Mr. Benn: If it is true, as the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South said, that we have a duty to do it, that duty applies to every hon. Member. The fact that the debate tonight may be confined to people of a particular religious denomination has no bearing. In the view of the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway), if a Jew or a Catholic were to become Prime Minister, that Prime Minister would not appoint a bishop. That would have exactly the effect that I seek, which is that Parliament should not intervene in these matters.

Mr. Harry Greenway *rose*——

Mr. Benn: I will not give way to the hon. Gentleman again. Other hon. Members will want to raise points.

I am serious in what I am saying. I have no wish to circumvent your ruling, Madam Deputy Speaker, or to leave the Chamber under circumstances preceded by a Division, so I will not get into any difficulties of that kind.

I ask the House seriously to consider, as we deal with what one might call the minor aspects of establishment, whether the manifest absurdity of what we are doing does not point to the liberation of the Church from the control of the state.

Supposing today I had been moving a ten-minute Bill to establish the Catholic Church, people would have thought that I was mad to suggest that Parliament should take over the Catholic Church; or to establish the Jewish faith, so that the Chief Rabbi would be appointed by the Prime Minister. He has been put in the Lords, but that is another matter, and that is another aspect of privilege. As far as I know, the Prime Minister did not appoint the Chief Rabbi; she ennobled him, along with a lot of others.

I believe that what is wrong in our system of government is the absolute corruption of patronage. I raised it today with Mr. Speaker on other matters—the power of the Prime Minister to appoint Ministers, to appoint bishops, to appoint judges, to go to war, to sign treaties, without any requirement to come to Parliament.

What we are discussing today is the implication of patronage. A Prime Minister appoints a bishop. A bishop then sacks one of the clergy in the diocese under the law that we are about to pass tonight. The man appeals, and they will not give him legal aid because his wife has some British Telecom shares. Are we really tonight to uphold the principle of state control of the Church? I believe not.

I hope that I am within the ruling that you have given, Madam Deputy Speaker, because I want to be a good parliamentarian. I have been here far too long to wreck that reputation now. But what I am saying is that there are lessons to be learned from individual Measures, and this Measure, in my honest judgment, confirms the view I have long held—that the Church should be free of the state.

It is easy to giggle and say that the hon. Member is favouring privatisation—I have heard that said in fun—but of course it is more than that. In other countries, where the Church is controlled by the state, we denounce it as a denial of human rights and the rights of religion. In Britain we just assume it is all right. It is quite sensible for an hon. Gentleman to be put up by the Church Commissioners to justify a Measure. We all nod and thank God there is not a Whip, and half a dozen Members come along and it goes through.

[Mr. Benn]

But it is more important than that, because there has been evidence of direct political intervention in the Church. I do not have to go into it, because I would be out of order, but the anger at the Archbishop's sermon on the Falklands, the Crockford's dispute, which led to a tragic suicide, the argument for the appointment of a stronger —*[Interruption.]* Well, the bishops——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is a superb parliamentarian, but he is now going wide of the Measure, I am afraid.

Mr. Benn: I do not wish to fall foul of your ruling, Madam Deputy Speaker, because I want the chance to develop a fair argument. But it is a fact that the relationship between Church and state, which has burbled on non-controversially for a long time, has flared into political argument in recent weeks. Therefore, we have to look at the implications of what we are doing.

Mr. Latham *rose*——

Mr. Benn: The rules of the House are that, if a Member does not give way, the hon. Member wishing to intervene has to resume his seat.

I am sorry to perform your function for a moment, Madam Deputy Speaker. I will give way in a second.

Madam Deputy Speaker: My attention was riveted on the right hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Benn: I find that very flattering, just as I do the fact that I understand that the Synod is going to amend its plans when its members read *Hansard*, according to what I was told a bit earlier on.

I am going to seek to divide the House tonight, first of all because I think this is a bad measure in regard to the family means test, but secondly because I think that no Parliament, looking at the argument that surrounds the relationship between Church and state, should reinforce that relationship by purporting tonight, not being a Christian body, to lay down laws for the Church.

Mr. Latham: Could the right hon. Gentleman answer two questions very briefly? First, has any significant number of people in the General Synod asked him to propose disestablishment in the House? Secondly, will he confirm that the present rules relating to the appointment of bishops were set in motion by Lord Callaghan when the right hon. Gentleman was a member of his Cabinet?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I have ruled that the first of those questions is out of order.

Mr. Benn: I did not know that an hon. Member had to be interrogated on his sources, but if it is of any interest to the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham), he will see from the record that I have been arguing this case seriously, beginning with a major lecture at St. James's, Piccadilly about five years ago, the text of which I sent to a number of bishops and clergy; out of that, and in correspondence since with the Archbishop of Canterbury and so on, I have put the case honestly and sincerely.

I wrote to the Archbishop of Canterbury just before Christmas, telling him that I intend to proceed—as I do, but it would be out of order to discuss it now—with an English Church Bill which my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) and I intend to bring forward in order to follow the precedent of the Welsh Church Act 1914, the text of which I have but which you will not let me read, Madam Deputy Speaker. I do not complain, however, because that would be beyond the point.

But I do know, from my correspondence on this matter which is quite extensive, that a very large and growing number of clergy in the Church of England are deeply worried about a relationship that they thought was cosy and innocent and which is now charged with political danger for them, arising from the patronage of this or any other Prime Minister.

As to Lord Callaghan, I do not answer for him, and I hope that I can anticipate what I shall be writing later on that matter, for those who cannot wait.

I have almost finished, Madam Deputy Speaker. I hope that I have not strained the rules of the House—I do not believe that I have. There is a libertarian element in the Conservative party—I am not trying to divide hon. Members on the Government Benches but there is an element there which believes, as I do, that the state should not control the Church.

When the Anglican Communion meets later this year, the only Church in that Communion throughout the world whose bishops are appointed by the Prime Minister will be ours. In no other episcopalian Church does that occur. It is a feudal anomaly, launched by Henry VIII because he would not have the Pope interfering. It is a feudal anomaly that turns up as a funny Measure that normally goes through on the nod but which tonight has become real because of the political pressures being put upon the established Church. I recommend the House not to accept the Measure.

10.46 pm

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): I shall not be tempted to follow the arch-leveller of Parliament too far along the primrose path. The right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) is an experienced parliamentarian, as both he and you, Madam Deputy Speaker, have attested, but the fact of the matter is that he is waging a campaign, as he would readily admit, for the disestablishment of the Church of England. In a strange, paradoxical way, the Measure before us tonight will make his task all the easier. Because it will do so, I have grave misgivings about it.

I should like briefly to refer to a very interesting and extremely perceptive letter that I have received from an experienced cleric, who wrote to me in these terms:

"I would respectfully submit that there are two points at least of the greatest significance in the Measure: first, that it is possible for the Church of England to legislate for the people of this country without their having a clue as to what is proposed. The average Churchwarden, Incumbent, Curate or Organist who is affected, for better for worse, by this Measure is quite wholly ignorant of what is about to become the law (unless you can stop it). You can test this innocence for yourself easily enough".

That is true.

He goes on:

"Secondly . . . it is a very undesirable development that many of these areas of law should be permanently removed from Parliamentary scrutiny, and for the future made a matter purely of delegated legislation by Canon: not even to be laid before Parliament as a Statutory Instrument would be, or the Rules made under certain other Measures are."

This really brings us to the nub of it. There are those of us who feel very deeply and passionately about the Church of England as by law established. This debate, in

a sense, is rather like Hamlet without the prince, because I have very much missed the presence of Mr. Enoch Powell, the former right hon. Member for South Down. He brought to our debates a depth of knowledge and passionate intensity that is much missed.

Tonight we are being asked to connive at a Measure that can have only one effect—to erode the influence of Parliament, to remove parliamentary control and to give greater autonomy to the General Synod and the bureaucracy of the Church of England.

Mr. Latham: We must get the facts straight. At present there is no parliamentary scrutiny of the dismissal of an organist by the minister. The minister can just dismiss him. All that clause 8 does is give new rights to the parochial church council.

Mr. Cormack: That may or may not be so. If my hon. Friend will allow me to develop my case, I shall do so.

My hon. Friend cannot deny—no one can—that we are willingly abdicating a degree of parliamentary responsibility. It may be perfectly reasonable that we should do that; it may be an entirely proper step to take; but if we pass the Measure, that is what we shall be doing.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Selby, (Mr. Alison), when introducing the Measure with his customary moderate lucidity, referred to the Ecclesiastical Committee. Some of us who serve on that committee feel that it is an unsatisfactory body for one fundamental reason — it cannot amend. It can deem a Measure expedient, or reject it. As hon. Members know, many measures that come before us do not divide the House on Second Reading, but are subject to detailed scrutiny and amendment in Committee. Many measures emerge from Committee much the better for that detailed scrutiny.

The Ecclesiastical Committee, on which many hon. Members serve and have served for many years, is unique in that it is a Statutory Committee of the Commons and Lords, bringing together—I exclude myself, but say this with some certainty — Members with enormous experience and commitment to the Church of England. But it does not have the power to amend. If it did, it would. Anyone who has sat on the Committee for any length of time—I have sat on it for many years—would know that we frequently deem a Measure expedient because we do not want to cause a confrontation; nor do we wish to cause great consternation in the Church, but we are often not wholly happy with the Measure before us.

My right hon. Friend was guilty to some extent of the sin of which we are all guilty from time to time—that of selective quotation. I want to quote parts of the Ecclesiastical Committee's report which he did not see fit to quote to the House. He quoted entirely accurately and properly from the second paragraph of clause 7, but he did not quote from the concluding words of the first paragraph:

"The Committee were concerned that the effect of the Measure was to remove a right of appeal at present directly conferred by Measure, and therefore under Parliament's control, and replace it by a power to deal with the matter by Canon, thus taking it out of Parliament's control".

That is why I said at the beginning of my speech that this Measure, if passed, is taking a step along the road to disestablishment. That is the road that the right hon. Member for Chesterfield seeks to take. Debates such as this are not party political and it is sometimes paradoxical that hon. Members find themselves — almost like Caesar's Gaul—divided into three parts.

Let us consider the report's comments on clause 13. In the second paragraph, the Ecclesiastical Committee said:

"The objects to which money collected in church is in general to be allocated are determined by the parochial church council jointly with the minister. That is provided by section (iv) of the Parochial Church Councils (Powers) Measure 1956. That provision is, however, expressed to be subject to the directions contained in the Book of Common Prayer."

I remind the House that the Book of Common Prayer is still the statutory Book of Common Prayer of the Church of England.

Mr. Latham: A statutory book.

Mr. Cormack: My hon. Friend reminds me, quite accurately that it is a statutory book, but neverthless, to many of us, it is fundamental.

Mr. Latham: Amen.

Mr. Cormack: I am glad that my hon. Friend echoes that sentiment.

The Ecclesiastical Committee report continues:

"That provision is, however, expressed to be subject to the directions contained in the Book of Common Prayer as to the disposal of money given at the offertory. The directions in question are embodied in one of the rubrics at the end of the service of Holy Communion, and that provides that such money is to 'be disposed of to such pious and charitable uses as the churchwardens' "—

in fact the Book of Common Prayer says ministers and churchwardens—

"'shall think fit.' The effect of Clause 13 of the Measure is that churchwardens would lose"—

I must declare an interest as a churchwarden—

"their ancient rights in this respect and money given at Holy Communion would be at the disposal of the parochial church council jointly with the minister, like all the other money collected in church."

No one can pretend that the changes are not significant alterations. They are steps along the road towards disestablishment. That is a perfectly proper road for certain people to advocate that we should tread. The right hon. Member for Chesterfield has an extremely consistent and honourable record in this regard. He has never disguised his feelings. The argument that he has put forward, year after year, has, in logic—if one accepts his premise—been entirely reasonable. However, there are other arguments, and I am sure that he would accept the logic and integrity of my arguments, as I accept his.

Mr. Tony Banks *rose*——

Mr. Cormack: I shall give way in a moment.

There are many of us who firmly and deeply believe in the position of the established Church and who very much regret changing its status by stealth. Who would deny that the Measure is, in effect, changing the status of the established Church by stealth?

I would welcome a full-blooded debate on establishment, and perhaps at some stage in this Parliament or in a future one that will take place. That debate is not taking place tonight, but it is perfectly permissible for those of us who see the Church of England, as a result of the Measure, taking steps along that road to say that it should hold, listen and take account. Parliament must realise what it is doing. We must realise that, if this Measure is passed, we are surrendering certain rights, passing over certain responsibilities and sacrificing a position. Fair enough, if that is what people want Parliament to do, but let us be in no two minds about what we are doing.

Mr. Tony Banks: It has been argued in the past that disestablishment started on its long road with, for instance, the repeal of the Test Acts and the Catholic Emancipation Act. We are still, perhaps, proceeding down that road. Will the hon. Gentleman tell us, as he is obviously opposed to this Measure, whether he will join us in the Lobby and vote against it? If so, it will be the first time that we have been in the same Lobby, and we shall be there for completely different reasons.

Mr. Cormack: The hon. Gentleman knows enough about my independence on a number of issues to be aware that it would not be the first time that we have been in the same Lobby. Whether we will be tonight depends on what others say in the debate. I simply want to put down a few markers.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is the hon. Gentleman joining the unholy alliance?

Mr. Cormack: Any alliance joined by the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) would be sublimated, not holy.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I understand the hon. Gentleman's objections to disestablishment, but can he tell us whether he honestly believes that in practice the Measure takes any steps down that road? It seems to me that the proposal for the alteration of the collection money does not alter that issue.

Secondly, has the hon. Gentleman any practical objection to, for example, the proposal that the funds collected during holy communion be distributed by the parochial church council rather than by the churchwardens? He does not seem yet to have made any objection to the content of the Measure.

Mr. Cormack: Either the hon. Gentleman has been slumbering, or I have been guilty of total obscurity in the argument that I have sought to advance.

I do not wish to transgress further on the time of other hon. Members on both sides of the House; nor do I wish to trespass on territory which you, Madam Deputy Speaker, have suggested is forbidden. Let me simply say in conclusion that we should realise tonight that if the Measure is passed we shall be giving up a certain amount of the parliamentary control, scrutiny and supervision—as well as parliamentary duties—that we now possess. I do not think that we should do that lightly. It is very important that, sooner or later—in my view, it is in everyone's interests that it should be sooner—we should examine, with total clarity and objectivity, the relations of Church and state; and, in particular, the position of the established Church.

11.2 pm

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): I hope to be a little briefer than previous contributors. Let me begin by thanking my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) for making out a powerful case for establishment, although anyone listening to him might not have fully realised that he was doing so. The case that he put tonight centred on a couple of clauses: first, clause 7, which Opposition Members take very seriously. After all, it is the reselection clause, and those of us who have to face that process are very interested in people's rights of appeal. He also made an important point about how any means test will be calculated for legal aid.

Had we had a disestablished Church, this Measure would not have come before us. We would not have had the benefit of listening to my right hon. Friend making his case, and obtaining an undertaking from the Church Estates Commissioner that Synod would at least listen to the arguments put forward, if not actually agree with them.

The other argument is one that I have had before with my right hon. Friend. It is a very simple argument about the Church of England. Because it is established, it belongs to the whole nation and that is why the House has every right to discuss it—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] Yes, it does. The Church is accountable to all the people who are elected to this Chamber. It is right that that should be so. When my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield brings forward his Measure for disestablishment I shall oppose it, as I have opposed every measure of privatisation. We shall see a national body handed over to a sect or the shareholders, and for that reason I will object to it.

Mr. Bermingham: My hon. Friend worries me a little when he says that were the Church disestablished there would not be provisions for legal aid and so on. Surely, then, the servants or employees of the Church would have the normal right to apply for legal aid, subject to the normal rules and not the sectarian rules contained in the Measure.

Mr. Field: Each time I hear my hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) intervene, I become more convinced that he must be a lawyer, as does the right hon. Member for Selby (Mr. Alison).

I want to make two other points about the way in which the Church brings forward these Measures. When pressed, the Commissioners had to say that although they are changing the status quo they can assure the House that nothing will change. Hon. Members from both sides of the Chamber have been concerned about people's rights when they face the possibility of losing their jobs. The right hon. Member for Selby said, "We can assure you that when the Church obtains control nothing will change." If nothing is going to change, why do we need the Measure in the first place?

The second point deals with clause 13. It shows the dangers of a body that wants to reform for reform's sake. It changes what should happen to collections at the eucharist. I have been briefed, as was the right hon. Member for Selby, by a vicar in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker). He pointed out the irony of bringing forward this reform tonight. In 1549, Cranmer directed congregations to put their offerings in the poor man's box, as it was then called. He said that those offerings should be used for the direct relief of poverty. Because congregations did not pay enough attention to that, the direction was brought back in 1552 and the churchwardens were asked to produce the box in front of the congregation so that they could be reminded of their duty to the poor, not just in theory, but so that they would give some of their wealth for the relief of poverty. Tonight we are discussing the abolition of the compromise that was put forward in the Prayer Book of 1662.

It seems ironic that when the Church is setting up the urban fund, it should also come before Parliament to ask us to abolish a much longer-standing relief of poverty. It is just a warning to the Church. When the right hon.

Member for Selby reports back to the Synod he will report back on the household means test, which concerns many people, not just my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield. He will also report on the temper of these debates and the difficulty that will be experienced in getting through reforms, a large part of which are unnecessary.

11.8 pm

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): I do not have strong feelings about establishment or disestablishment. However, I certainly echo the views of the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) who feels strongly that hon. Members who do not have the slightest honest interest in the Church of England ought not to be seeking to make powerful contributions to discussions on the Church of which he and I are members. I say that simply in respect of the fact that most colleagues in the House who do not have a close and living membership of the Church of England do not normally take part in these discussions, for honourable reasons. I do not deny anybody their rights. As the hon. Member for Birkenhead has often said, that is a point that many hon. Members should bear in mind, and I do not fear to say it.

Mr. Tony Banks: I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman's strictures apply to me. Is he saying that, because I am not a practising communicant, although I have been baptised and confirmed in the Church of England, I should not take part in the debate? I should tell the hon. Gentleman that I was a verger at one time.

Mr. Greenway: My point applies to whom it may concern. I shall be brief because other hon. Members want to take part——

Mr. Skinner: Chapel.

Mr. Greenway: Labour Members can all make their claims. The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is shouting, "Chapel," and God knows what. I shall let him shout.

Clause 8 will facilitate the dismissal of a church organist by the incumbent without the agreement of the parochial church council, if agreed by the archdeacon; I fear that clause.

The last Bishop of Dover said many a time that the devil often comes into church through the organ. That may be true. It is certain that many an organist has got up sides with his or her incumbent because they do not agree with the music on offer at church services, and tragedies have resulted.

I would cite, in the presence of my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham), the case of Oakham parish church, where there was, until a year or two ago, a superb, almost unsurpassed choir affiliated to the Royal School of Church Music. It would sing Stanford in B flat and Stanford in C as well as any other choir. The organist got uptight with the vicar; the vicar dismissed him and the choir walked out in support of the organist. The Church has been deprived of a major element of worship through its music since that moment. I am not saying that the present choir does not make a brave effort, but it is not like the first one.

Such an example will be facilitated by this measure. That is a pity, and I express my reservations about that matter.

Clause 13 will take from churchwardens the right of disposal of collections at holy communion services. My right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) was unable to give the proportion of Church income that is given on the plate at holy communion services. I believe it to be substantial; possibly as much as 75 or 80 per cent. of the Church's income.

There are not many churches, rightly so, that do not teach that the holy communion service is the central service on a Sunday and of the Church.

Mr. Tim Boswell (Daventry): Will my hon. Friend comment on the proportion of that giving of holy communion that comes from planned giving through the envelope scheme? It seems to me, and other Conservative Members, that the rubric has abolished itself because the overwhelming proportion of such giving in my parish church is in that form.

Mr. Greenway: The answer to my hon. Friend lies in the spirit of stewardship schemes and giving through envelope schemes, in which a member of a Church is asked to consider that the essential giving will be in the spirit of the eucharist. Therefore, I do not think that my argument falls down by virtue of my hon. Friend's important point.

If 75 or 80 per cent. of Church income comes through the holy communion service, this is a major step to take. I have always thought it valuable that churchwardens should be slightly apart from parochial church councils in their advice to incumbents or in their view of the appropriate disposal of church giving. Having sat on parochial church councils for a long time, I know that those bodies are sometimes given to discussion of an excessively parochial nature that does not take into account the wider aims of giving that a couple of wise churchwardens can see. That may seem a small point, but in practice it is substantial.

11.15 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): The Church of England has not had much good said of it in this debate; in fact there has been no positive comment on it. With one exception, the provisions in the Measure should be accepted.

Mr. Dennis Skinner: Tell us about "Voices and Choices For All".

Mr. Hughes: The hon. Gentleman said that loud enough for it to appear in the *Official Report*, so I shall comment on it. On balance, I feel that the Church of England should be an institution in which the voices and choices are for all and that it should not be subject to the jurisdiction of this place. I speak as one who was confirmed into the Church in Wales, which is disestablished. That is a proper issue and I would welcome an early debate on the matter.

The point made by the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) showed up the ludicrous nature of the debate. We could have a debate with 650 hon. Members, from all Churches and from none, participating to discuss the jurisdiction, running and practical details of the Church. Although I understand the arguments about whether the Church is a Church for the whole nation, in a nation many of whose members are of no faith or of other faiths, I think that the time has come to deal with this point and that the Church would be far more militant and probably more effective if it were not hidebound by

[Mr. Hughes]

many of its traditions and old practices. For as long as we have jurisdiction, however, we must do our job. On that basis, I happily take part and argue that the Measure should be approved.

My one reservation coincides with that expressed by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) and others, and I would ask the Synod to re-examine the provisions in clause 2 relating to legal aid. It is not in keeping with the mood and spirit of the times that the financial resources of another person should be taken into account in assessing a person's legal aid. Although elsewhere in the Measure we are removing from ourselves the right to determine very important matters of appeal, we are doing so on the basis that there will be an appeal mechanism through the hierarchy of the Church, and that is a satisfactory alternative.

I have made this complaint before. The Measure was approved by the Church with no dissent nearly two years ago. It has taken two years to come this far. The slowness of the legislative process is highly unsatisfactory.

Mr. Skinner: Like your merger.

Mr. Hughes: The hon. Gentleman is wrong about that. The process——

Mr. Skinner: It is not settled yet.

Mr. Hughes: The hon. Gentleman is certainly right to say that it is not settled yet but it started formally only six months ago and it is proceeding pretty quickly by comparison with this Measure.

As we hold responsibility for these matters, we owe it to the Church to get on with the job more quickly. I have now been nominated to the Joint Ecclesiastical Committee, which has not yet met in this Parliament. I am concerned that it has not met for one reason in particular. Members from this House have been nominated but I understand that Members from the other place have not yet been nominated. That is holding up an important Measure — the Church Urban Fund Measure, which needs urgently to come before the House.

I advise the right hon. Member for Selby (Mr. Alison), who speaks for the Church Commissioners, that I hope that he will use his influence and that the members of his party's Front Bench will use their influence to make sure that Members are nominated in the other place so that that Ecclesiastical Committee can meet and we can deal with matters that are in the pipeline, and, with the Church urban fund, which needs to be dealt with soon. The delays that occur in relation to Church legislation are highly unsatisfactory and as long as we have the competence to deal with it, we should do so properly and expeditiously and not nearly so slowly as we do now.

11.20 pm

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): It may come as a slight embarrassment to the spokesman for the Church Commissioners, but I declare an interest as a lawyer. I remind my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) that his constituency is but a little way from mine and I have been known to be somewhat concerned with legal matters for some considerable time.

I also declare an interest as a non-member of the Church of England, so it is with the permission of the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) that I trespass on such matters. Sometimes it pays to listen to the voice from without, rather than to the voice from within. The voice from without does not seek to interfere in the affairs of the Church of England, for which I have the greatest respect, but it occasionally seeks to question the wisdom of what the Church seeks to do.

Mr. Frank Field: My hon. Friend is making the case for establishment.

Mr. Bermingham: I hear mumblings from my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead, who may just have a slight interest in such matters.

I draw to my hon. Friend's attention the clauses dealing with legal aid. You will recall, Madam Deputy Speaker, that it was I who first posed the intervention tonight on the question of legal aid, which was ably and well taken up by my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn). I came tonight simply to bring the outsider's voice to the issue of legal aid in the Church of England. I do so because that issue has been raised with me, as a Member of Parliament, by several persons who are members of the clergy. I am delighted to see the Attorney-General, who has, perhaps, a little interest in such matters, present tonight, and perhaps he might take under his wing the comments that I make about the Church in respect of legal aid generally.

Bluntly, the position is that if one looks at the proposed arrangements, the Church Commissioners are to accept or to determine who shall or shall not have legal aid. However, the Church Commissioners are a party to the proceedings. Therefore, effectively, under these clauses the party who is to be judge is the deciding party as to who shall or shall not be represented, and the terms and conditions under which they can be represented. No matter how one looks at it, that is not fair.

I am moving as speedily as I can and am bearing in mind that other hon. Members wish to speak. However, if one considers clause 4(2), one wonders how the Church of England and the Church Commissioners can justify that subsection, which states:

"The Standing Committee of the General Synod may by rules vary the provisions of Schedule 1 to this measure."

It also states that there are certain tribunals to which a person shall not have the right of representation by solicitor or counsel and in those cases there shall not be legal aid. In effect, they are closed little courts in which people cannot have the right to representation.

We all know the old adage which states that the man who acts for himself in a court of law has a fool for a client. It is an adage as old as time——

The Attorney-General (Sir Patrick Mayhew): It is, "A lawyer who acts for himself has a fool for a client."

Mr. Bermingham: The Attorney-General corrects me, and he should know. A lawyer who acts for himself has a fool for a client. I stand corrected, but the principle is the same.

If one gets to the point where one says that here are certain places where lawyers shall not go because the Church will not have them, one is effectively saying that there are persons who may well come before tribunals, committees or other bodies when their future, their living or their rights are at stake and because they are not articulate and not able to express an argument, they may well find that they suffer considerably.

Justice is meant to be absolute. Rules and regulations brought before the House by a body which is the established Church of this land should at least have a semblance of justice. Conditions in respect of this Measure concerning legal aid, the right to representation and the right of audience and other matters are a disgrace. I hope that the Church Commission will take away the remarks that have been made in the House tonight and I ask Synod —I ask this as an outsider—to think again. Surely the Church should set an example on the matter of justice. I hope that the Measure will be opposed tonight.

11.25 pm

Mr. Alison: With the leave of the House, I should like to reply briefly in the few remaining minutes.

It was a paradox of the speech of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) that he referred to the weightiness of the issues with which we are dealing tonight — for example, the fate of individuals such as choirmasters, the names of dioceses involving much local pride — but then complained that we disposed of too much power by way of remedy for those sensitive issues. No doubt real power does lie here and the right hon. Gentleman will flex the muscles of parliamentary power if he seeks to divide the House, but disestablishment, the elimination of that power, lies wholly and fully within the hands of the Church of England.

The real pressure for disestablishment can and should come, if come it will, by the initiative of the Church and its adherents. The cause of liberty and its attainment is in the Church's hands. If it wants it, it will undoubtedly get it. The right hon. Gentleman should not overstate or overestimate the extent of the Prime Minister's power in, for example, the appointment of bishops under modern arrangements. It is very limited. The logic of the right hon. Gentleman's appeal for the elimination of parliamentary power over the Church of England is that he should sit in his place tonight and not to seek to divide the House.

My hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) was anxious that we were abdicating parliamentary responsibility, and he levelled the charge against me of selective quotation. But he himself stopped short of the operative sentence in the first paragraph in the Ecclesiastical Committee's report on clause 7 which says that the Ecclesiastical Committee is,

"however, satisfied that this is a matter that may properly be left to the Church's own regulation."

The regulation in view here is the question of the revocation of licenses. It can hardly be imagined that the Church of England in the Synod drafting its own canons with a House of Bishops and a House of Clergy, all ordained men concerned with these revocation matters, will not grant canons which fully sustain and maintain the interests and the needs of the clergy who are affected by this. There is no abdication of power here.

The hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) referred particularly, in a helpful contribution on the relevance of establishment, to the clause relating to the Book of Common Prayer's rubric. The legal advisory committee of the General Synod was asked for an opinion on the rubric and it stated:

"Whilst no exhaustive definition of the phrase 'pious and charitable uses' can be given, the uses are not confined to the relief of poverty though that is certainly one of the objects to which the money can be applied."

Any object for the advancement of religion is a pious and charitable use, including most items for which money which is collected for general treasury purposes is usually devoted.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) referred to the important question of collections. I must stress once again the significance of the envelope and the convenanted collection system under which these envelopes, that go straight to the paraochial church council, are collected at the time of holy communion. That is not in accordance with what is stated in the rubric, but it would be reasonable to modernise church practice in this respect.

The important matters about which the House has expressed anxiety, particularly the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham), are subject to the negative resolution procedure. If he needs one, he will have a further opportunity to reflect on the rules when they are brought before the House.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 66, Noes 36.

Division No. 154] **[11.30 pm**

AYES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael	Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Amos, Alan	Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*	Janman, Timothy
Ashdown, Paddy	King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*	Knapman, Roger
Boswell, Tim	Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Bottomley, Peter	Latham, Michael
Bowis, John	Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Brazier, Julian	Lightbown, David
Burns, Simon	Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Burt, Alistair	McLoughlin, Patrick
Butterfill, John	Mates, Michael
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*	Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Chope, Christopher	Meyer, Sir Anthony
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*	Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Colvin, Michael	Nelson, Anthony
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*	Neubert, Michael
Cope, John	Patnick, Irvine
Dorrell, Stephen	Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Dunn, Bob	Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Durant, Tony	Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*	Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Evennett, David	Soames, Hon Nicholas
Fookes, Miss Janet	Stevens, Lewis
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman	Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan	Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Gorman, Mrs Teresa	Thurnham, Peter
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*	Tracey, Richard
Gregory, Conal	Twinn, Dr Ian
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*	Waddington, Rt Hon David
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*	Wood, Timothy
Hampson, Dr Keith	
Harris, David	Tellers for the Ayes:
Hind, Kenneth	Mr. Richard Ryder and
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*	Mr. David Maclean.

NOES

Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*	Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Benn, Rt Hon Tony	McAvoy, Tom
Blunkett, David	McCartney, Ian
Clay, Bob	McFall, John
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*	McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
Cousins, Jim	Martlew, Eric
Cunliffe, Lawrence	Meale, Alan
Cunningham, Dr John	Michael, Alun
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*	Mowlam, Mrs Marjorie
Eastham, Ken	Murphy, Paul
Flannery, Martin	O'Brien, William
Fyfe, Mrs Maria	Patchett, Terry
Haynes, Frank	Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Hood, James	Rooker, Jeff

Skinner, Dennis	Wigley, Dafydd
Smith, Andrew (Oxford E)	Wilson, Brian
Strang, Gavin	
Taylor, Rt Hon J. D. (S'ford)	Tellers for the Noes:
Vaz, Keith	Mr. Gerald Bermingham and
Wardell, Gareth (Gower)	Mr. Tony Banks.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Church of England (Legal Aid and Miscellaneous Provisions) Measure, passed by the General Synod of the Church of England, be presented to Her Majesty for her Royal Assent in the form in which the said Measure was laid before Parliament.

PETITION

Rating Reform

11.41 pm

Mr. Thomas McAvoy (Glasgow, Rutherglen): I am very grateful for the opportunity to present this petition on behalf of the people of Glasgow, Rutherglen. It has been signed by 4,000 people from throughout the areas of Castlemilk, Toryglen, Cambuslang and Rutherglen.

The humble petition of the residents of the constituency of Glasgow, Rutherglen showeth

That the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act provides for the introduction in Scotland of the system of community charge or poll tax, which will impose upon the people of Scotland a system of local taxation which will take no account of the ability of the citizens to afford such taxation, and will cause hardship to many who are already poor. The community charge or poll tax will cause the redistribution of resources away from poor areas into areas which are already prosperous. It will be expensive to operate and its collection will entail invasions of privacy . . .

Wherefore your petitioners pray that your honourable House repeal the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

To lie upon the Table.

Stockport (Road Schemes)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

11.42 pm

Mr. Tom Arnold (Hazel Grove): I am most grateful for this opportunity to address the House on the subject of road schemes in the metropolitan borough of Stockport. I should like to touch on a number of schemes presently being funded by the Government and make some comments.

There is a great deal of congestion in Stockport at present. My view is that, whatever local people may think, it cannot be dealt with satisfactorily until the road building programme has been completed. Although it is extremely frustrating to have to put up with the serious delays that motorists and other travellers are finding in a number of areas of the borough today, until such time as the motorway programme and the bypass relief programme in particular have been completed, I am afraid the congestion will continue.

However, we must deal with the through traffic in the areas. Any visitor to the borough of Stockport will have noticed that travel speeds are frequently less than 10 miles an hour. I gather that this is a reflection of the fact that traffic growth in Stockport is above the national average and that two and indeed three-car families are now quite common.

Fortunately, the Government have come forward with a very large, very expensive programme. I am delighted to have had in the various campaigns with which I have been associated the support of a number of other hon. Members in persuading the Government to go ahead, and wish to thank successive Ministers for the interest that they have taken.

The problems locally were well summed up in a letter of 18 November last I received from the veteran director of works, Mr. Donald Wroe, who gave the following graphic description of the situation in Stockport:

> "If you look at the topography of Stockport you will see that it lies on the confluence of three valleys, and the highways tend to follow the valley routes. This results in the fact that the traffic has to get in before it can get out. Consequently, the result is a whirlpool of congestion, particularly on the eastern side of the town."

The constituency of Hazel Grove lies on the eastern side of the town, and it is to the schemes there that I wish to draw the attention of the House.

Beginning with the Portwood-to-Brinnington M63 motorway and the Portwood-to-Denton M66 motorway, I understand that these schemes are due for completion in the spring of 1989. I should be grateful for clarification of that point from my hon. Friend. In other words, can we expect completion of these motorways on time in the spring of 1989? I gather that at that moment the motorways will be redesignated the M60, which is slightly confusing.

There is a point about road signs which I should like to put to my hon. Friend. I gather from the director of works of Stockport council that there is a proposal in the Department of Transport to re-sign Stockport on a number of roads leading towards the borough in other parts of the north-west so that the signs will say "Manchester, South" instead of "Stockport". The word "Stockport" is, I understand, to be removed from the signs. That proposal has been badly received locally. If it

is serious, I hope that the Minister will consider it again. Far from introducing clarity, it is felt that it would provoke confusion.

On the construction of the motorways, their completion will remove a tremendous amount of pressure in the northern part of the Hazel Grove constituency, with particular reference to the area of Bredbury. I moved recently to Marple, but having lived for four years on the Stockport road in Bredbury, I have been a witness, sometimes daily, to the severe build-up of traffic at peak periods. I believe that the construction of these motorways will make an enormous difference to hard-pressed motorists in the Bredbury and Romiley areas. Will the Minister confirm that as part of these schemes he is going ahead with the construction of an all-purpose road from Ashton road to Portwood, which will run adjacent to the motorway and provide further relief to traffic in the area?

In the central and southern areas of the constituency, the great event is the public inquiry which is still taking place into the Hazel Grove bypass, technically known as the A6(M) Stockport north-south bypass. The history of this project goes back many decades—indeed, to a time long before both the Minister and I were born. I believe that 1934 is the earliest record of a specific proposal for a bypass round Hazel Grove. The Government have committed themselves to constructing a motorway at considerable expense and have chosen as the preferred option a route known locally and colloquially as the blue route. I emphasise once again that the blue route has my full support.

I have campaigned long and hard for the construction of the bypass. I have almost lost count of the number of my right hon. Friends who have been to Hazel Grove, at my invitation and at the invitation of other hon. Members. You will doubtless remember, Madam Deputy Speaker, Maurice Orbach and Tom McNally. We all campaigned together for this road, along with Sir Tom Normanton, MEP, and other distinguished former Members of the House. My right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell), my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey (Mrs. Chalker) have all been there in recent years and they have all expressed support for the project. It is high time that it went ahead.

I hope, therefore, that the Minister will be able to say that his right hon. Friend will decide quickly, following the inspector's report, that we shall have a decision this year and that that decision, should it be favourable, as I hope it will be, will be followed by a quick start. Can we look forward to completion of the project by, shall we say, the spring of 1992? We have to accommodate local needs as quickly as we can.

Although there are a number of controversial issues —the Minister and I have had a lengthy correspondence about Halliday Hill farm, a site of historic interest, and I hope that the inspector will be able to accommodate some of these points without undermining the principles on which the blue route has been designed—nevertheless I hope that the Government will reiterate their determination to go ahead with all possible speed.

Turning now to the most recent developments, I was delighted to receive the news from the Minister that he has taken his work on the A6 Highlane-Disley bypass a good deal further. Indeed, he is mounting an exhibition this week in the village of Highlane and I am looking forward to attending it on Friday. I suspect that further improvements will be needed to other roads in the area if this scheme goes ahead and I would draw my hon. Friend's attention to improvements which will be required on the Windlehurst road between Highlane and Marple.

I am firmly of the opinion that construction of the Highlane-Disley bypass will have far-reaching effects on the town of Marple, where traffic at the moment is particularly severe. Indeed, last Saturday I had a meeting with the Marple community council and tried to persuade the members of that body, which, albeit unelected, is locally influential, that the construction of this road will indeed be of great benefit to Marple. I hope that my hon. Friend will be able to touch upon the reasons he sees for the construction of this further road.

I also understand from the director of works at Stockport council that a proposal is now being considered in the Department of Transport for a Poynton bypass, which would connect the blue route, to which I have already referred, with the A523 to Macclesfield south of Poynton, and that were such a scheme to be in my hon. Friend's mind this could represent the start of a Manchester airport eastern link road, which again has been talked about for decades and is something which in principle I support.

My specific question to the Minister is, does he intend to make this Poynton bypass a trunk road? Clearly that has important spending implications. An answer to that question, if not tonight at any rate in the near future, would be most welcome.

As can be seen, there is a formidable programme of work under way—four schemes in the process of being completed, about to start or at the stage of a preliminary exhibition following the consultant's report. Indeed, I have referred to another scheme, making five altogether, which I believe my hon. Friend the Minister may be contemplating. This is a formidable and an expensive programme. It is a recognition of the way in which successive Ministers and local Members of Parliament—not just myself, but my colleagues—have fought long and hard to deal with the traffic problems in Stockport, with particular reference to the east side of the town. We have to bring about a situation in which we get the through traffic off the present roads and on to the new roads.

I believe that when this programme is completed it will enhance the quality of life in our area considerably. People who are opposed to these roads and advance a case based on a very real fear of change ought, I think, to look at what thousands of people have to put up with at present. I am referring to the frustrations not just of motorists but of people who have to run shops and look after businesses — for example, on the London road, Hazel Grove, where conditions are frequently chaotic and where the noise, pollution levels and damage to the environment in terms of the sheer quantity of filth, soot and dirt which have gathered over the years have made life very difficult for many people.

I am strongly of the opinion that when these roads are built, a new sense of civic pride will be engendered in a number of the areas to which I have made reference, because the traffic jams which have been a daily, miserable feature of life in recent years may rapidly become a thing of the past.

It is in a spirit of optimistic assessment of what the Government are seeking to achieve that I have raised these issues tonight, in the firm belief that only this programme and its successful completion will deal with the very serious

[Mr. Tom Arnold]

problem of traffic congestion and all that it entails in the metropolitan borough of Stockport and in my own constituency of Hazel Grove.

11.54 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Peter Bottomley): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hazel Grove (Mr. Arnold) on the work that he has done for his constituency and for Stockport generally. I asked in the Department when he started campaigning for better roads for Stockport, and I was told that it was 15 years ago. I have had the opportunity to read the debate that he had with my right hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey (Mrs. Chalker) in, I think, 1983. I do not think that anyone could have done more, and I echo his basic, underlying theme—that one cannot have a decent environment, casualty reduction and a prosperous community without effective communications. As he pointed out, trunk roads—national as well as local roads—are a major element in this.

There are major national roads coming into the borough of Stockport. The M56 and M63 motorways from the west give access to Manchester airport, the outer ring road and the national motorway network. The most recent extension of the M63, the Stockport east-west bypass, opened in 1982. There is the A560 eastwards to Bredbury, and the M67 at Mottram and on into Yorkshire. There is the A6 south-eastwards through Hazel Grove and High Lane into Derbyshire, and the A523 southwards towards Poynton, Macclesfield and south Cheshire.

Within the borough there are six miles of trunk road motorway and seven miles of all-purpose trunk road. Local roads, which Stockport looks after itself, total about 560 miles. So, in essence, it has 98 per cent. of the roads in Stockport. Those miles include the A6 and the A560 within the old county borough.

There are four major schemes under construction or planned in the borough. They represent a total investment in the next few years of almost £150 million for works alone, and nearer £200 million when land acquisition and other costs are taken into account. Almost every other borough in the country will be envious of this sort of infrastructure input, but I do not want anyone to believe that it is just because of my hon. Friend's representations that Stockport is getting that money, or I might find myself breaking what I might call the "George Young record" for Adjournment debates. It is due to a mixture of strong representations and a basic, underlying case.

All the national road schemes meet the three main points of national policy on roads: assisting economic growth and employment, removing through traffic, especially lorries, from unsuitable roads, and enhancing road safety. My hon. Friend has talked about the long gestation of the A6(M) north-south bypass. I keep encountering assurances given by my predecessor and my predecessor's predecessor, and there are one or two that go back to Hore-Belisha.

One of the points that I feel strongly about is that there should be as much relief, as possible from through traffic. The Dutch call it "woonerf", which is both unpronounceable and unspellable. I translate that as PETER — "partial exclusion of traffic and emphasis on residents". My hon. Friend talked about the needs of through traffic, as well as those of residents. We also want enhanced road safety, economic growth, through roads and through traffic.

We know that there are worries in solving one set of problems. Individual schemes, and especially perhaps the A6(M), can create other problems by attracting extra traffic to roads which are not really suitable and which feed into the new scheme. We fully realise the potential problems and plan to do something about them.

In the nature of national road programming and the planning processes, as well as financial realities, we cannot build all interdependent schemes at once. If we did, the traffic speed would not be 10 mph; it might be 1 or 2 mph. Our objective is to build all that we propose as soon as design and statutory procedures permit.

My hon. Friend referred to the M63-M66 Portwood to Denton stretch — five miles of dual two or three-lane motorway with works costing £40 million. Two contracts —Portwood to Brinnington and Brinnington to Denton —are under way for completion in just over a year's time. That will complete the southern section of the Manchester outer ring road and start the eastern side.

My hon. Friend asked about reasonably precise dates for completion. It might be better if I kept him up to date as the construction goes through. He also raised the issue of motorway designation and signs on the motorway. Perhaps I might take advice on those points and let him know our thinking on the matter.

The M63-M66 will lead to some increase of traffic on existing roads. It is also worth stating that much of that increase will be local traffic wanting access to the motorway. We want motorways to act as vacuum cleaners, bringing suitable traffic on to the motorways and taking unsuitable traffic off local roads as far as possible, but that traffic will have to find its way to the motorway.

The A6(M) north-south bypass will reduce the A560 flow. The next major scheme in proposal is the A6(M), to which my hon. Friend has, rightly, given so much time over the years. The estimated works cost for this scheme of more than five miles is about £50 million or more. It is mainly a dual three to four-lane motorway, but there will be a dual two-lane all-purpose stretch at the south end. I cannot go into detail about that, or even pick up the point that my hon. Friend made about it, because of the major public inquiry that is now under way. Subject to the outcome of that and other statutory procedures, construction might start in about 1991, so I do not think that we shall be able to finish it by 1992. If the independent, impartial inspector comes to the view that there should be changes, that will necessarily require extra time.

I, like my predecessors, am grateful for my hon. Friend's long-standing support for the scheme. On behalf of them and myself, I pay tribute to the skill and persistence with which he has pressed his claims on the Department. What I can say about the A6 through Hazel Grove and Stockport is that it carries about 40,000 vehicles a day through a heavily built-up area, including major shopping areas. It is one of the busiest roads of its type that anyone could find, or wish to find. I saw something of it when I went to open the accident seminar in Stockport town hall last October.

With regard to traffic increases expected on the three main routes from development of the A6(M), the A523 towards Poynton, the A6 through Highlane and Disley and the A626 Stockport-to-Marple roads will be affected.

As my hon. Friend said, we shall shortly be explaining proposals for major new bypasses at Poynton and Disley-Highlane. Stockport will be considering the need for improvements to the A626 in the light of the prospective opening of the A6(M) and the outcome of our work on the Highlane-Disley bypass.

Not all the problems on the A6 can wait for the bypass. My hon. Friend recently drew attention to a problem at the Commercial road junction in Hazel Grove, for which Stockport and the Department are considering possible solutions. I hope that we shall be able to settle proposals soon for dealing with the long-standing egress problem at Windlehurst road in Highlane.

The A523 Poynton bypass is about three and a half miles long. It is expected to be a dual two-lane carriageway costing about £11 million. It was added to the programme last April and is therefore the least advanced of the four national road proposals. Cheshire county council was appointed as our agent and is in the preliminary stages of design investigations. It could be quite some time before we are able to build, and it depends entirely upon the design and the statutory processes. It seems certain that it will be a considerable time after the prospective opening —if statutory procedures allow—of the A6(M).

We have asked Cheshire county council to study the scope for interim improvements at junctions. Obviously, it is at junctions that most of the injury accidents take place. It is too early to quantify the relief for the A523, but it is expected to be substantial.

The A6 Disley and Highlane bypass is six and a half miles of dual two-lane carriageway and is costing about £40 million. We have just invited comment on the proposed route and, as my hon. Friend has said, there will be four exhibitions this week and the plans will on display until the 4 March. We believe that our route is the only fully acceptable one, and now is the chance for anyone who disagrees to let us know. I understand that concern as already been expressed about effects on Ridge End, Woodend and Waterside. I hope that the Department and the consultants will be able to put people's minds at rest.

We take consultation and public opinion extremely seriously, and I think that anyone who is interested might want to refer to volume 2 of the "National Roads Programme", which came out in April. That programme gives some illustration of how local views have effected our proposals.

Stockport plans to complement the massive national roads schemes investment with three main schemes of its own. One is the town centre western relief road. The council has just completed a distribution ring on the east side of the town centre—the A626 diversion and the southern links road—with national taxpayers' support through the transport supplementary grant. It now proposes to carry out a series of improvements in roads to the west of the town centre—the town centre western relief road. The cost of all the improvements is about £2·5 million.

Another proposal is the Manchester airport eastern link road, which would be a combined venture between Cheshire, Manchester and Stockport councils. It would be expected to form a continuation of the Department's national north-south bypass scheme and might take advantage of part of the route of the A523 Poynton bypass. The cost of the single carriageway, phase 1, in Stockport is likely to be more than £2 million. The cost of a further phase has not been settled. A further proposal is the A34 bypass south of Cheadle. The timing of the schemes is a matter for Stockport county. I predict that, when the appropriate time comes, Stockport will ask the Department to provide national taxpayers' support through the transport supplementary grant scheme.

To use a "Willie Whitelawism" to describe road building plans for Stockport as "robust" risks understatement. Road improvements will reinforce the role of the borough as a centre of communication networks. The borough will have motorways feeding in from three of the four quarters of the compass. This refers to my hon. Friend's point about the three valleys and the roads running through them.

Because the programme is so comprehensive, it is impossible to implement all the schemes simultaneously. The A6(M) in particular will create temporary problems of access. We recognise those problems and we have plans to deal with them on a reasonable time scale.

To conclude this brief, but important, debate, there are times when people say that one can recreate economic prosperity without spending money on infrastructure—on what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and I call "roads and bridges". We have had debates on public transport — last night we debated London public transport—and on British Rail. The growth in capital investment both for public transport and for roads is one of the things that have contributed to providing the economic growth, the drop in unemployment and the increase in taxation that allows for better things to happen —hospitals, schools, pensions or whatever.

I believe that if we can keep the roads schemes moving forward in the way that is proposed in the Stockport and Hazel Grove areas we shall do our duty by the people and provide a wealth-creating infrastructure which our successors will use to generate wealth to pay for our pensions when that time comes.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at nine minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 27 January 1988

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

GREATER MANCHESTER (LIGHT RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM) BILL *[Lords]*

Order for Third Reading read.
Amendments agreed to.
Read the Third time, and passed, with amendments.

GREATER MANCHESTER (LIGHT RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM) (NO. 2) BILL *[Lords]*

Read the Third time, and passed, with amendments.

Oral Answers to Questions

SCOTLAND

Regional Aid

1. **Mr. O'Neill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will next be meeting the Scottish Trades Union Congress to discuss regional aid.

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): I have not received any request from the Scottish Trades Union Congress for a meeting to discuss regional assistance.

Mr. O'Neill: When the Secretary of State next meets the STUC to discuss regional aid, what assurances will he be able to give, as it is likely that the amount of aid for 1986, £240 million, will have fallen by about a third by the end of the decade? How many of the 3,000 applicants who last year were successful in securing regional aid will be able to obtain it under the new regime that he outlined last week?

Mr. Rifkind: It should be fairly easy to reassure the STUC. The switch from automatic to selective assistance is in line with the recommendation of the Scottish Council (Development and Industry). In formulating its views on these matters the council consulted all its members, including its trade union members.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: When my right hon. and learned Friend meets the STUC, will he point out that for regions, such as Grampian, there will be less advantage in these changes?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is correct. We are considering not only the selective forms of assistance, as described in the regional selective assistance proposals, but the new business advisory and consultancy services. They will have an enormous impact on the growth of small businesses in Scotland. I am sure that all hon. Members will support that objective.

Mr. Kirkwood: When the Secretary of State meets the STUC to discuss regional aid, will he consider the important question of the impact of EEC aid? He will know that the EEC attaches great importance to complementing the national regional strategies that are being employed by the Government. However, is he aware that it does not recognise that we have a proper rural regional development strategy? Will he pay attention to that important missing element in the regional aid package?

Mr. Rifkind: It is not missing. The Government consider the development of rural areas of major importance. The Scottish Development Agency estimates that 25 per cent. of its expenditure goes to rural areas to develop the economic infrastructure and to help businesses in those areas. Increasingly, that is being recognised.

Mr. Maxton: As the latest report of the Manpower Services Commission shows that the Scottish economy is doing worse than the economy of the rest of the United Kingdom, will the Secretary of State admit that there is a need for a massive increase in regional aid, rather than a cut, which is what he is proposing over the next few years? How can selective assistance possibly replace mandatory regional development grants? If he can, will he give a guarantee that all the money available for selective assistance will be used in Scotland for investment in Scottish industry?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman might like to read more carefully the survey of the Fraser of Allander Institute, published last week, which reported great optimism for the future of the economy. The Scottish CBI survey, which was published yesterday, showed that, for the first time for some considerable period, the prospects for businesses in Scotland are more attractive and beneficial to the prospects of employment and growth than elsewhere in the United Kingdom. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will take as much pleasure from that as I do.

BBC Scotland

2. **Mr. Galbraith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the controller of BBC Scotland; and what matters were discussed.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): My right hon. and learned Friend last met the controller on 4 December, along with other senior Scottish television and radio executives, for a discussion on a broad range of Scottish affairs of interest to them.

Mr. Galbraith: Did they discuss the episode "Cabinet" of the series "Secret Society"? I understand from my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Griffiths), who has seen this programme, that it is a damning indictment of the Cabinet and Press Secretary Ingham. Is not the Minister, having failed to censor the Scottish media by using the courts, now resorting to his other method—intimidation?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I can answer the hon. Gentleman's question in relation to this film by saying that

I understand that, after consulting the Government, the BBC decided last year not to show the film; but the BBC is aware that the Government deplore the dissemination of security information of this nature.

Sir Hector Monro: Will my hon. Friend impress upon the controller the importance of improving both long-wave and VHF reception in Scotland? Secondly, will he take up the issue in south-west Scotland of the occasions when the BBC splits programmes and south-west Scotland receives programmes from the north of England, which often means missing good Scottish international football?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I will draw to the attention of the controller my hon. Friend's comments. The proposals for the creation of new commercial stations will increase the competition faced by the BBC, and it will have to ensure that the quality of its material is sufficient to retain its business. I am sure that it will welcome that challenge.

Mr. Darling: Further to the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith), I have seen the programme "Cabinet", which is part of the "Secret Society" series. Can the Minister assure us that he will place no impediment in the way of the BBC transmitting the film, which was cleared by the former director general, and has been cleared legally, and which raises no questions of national security?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I understand what the hon. Gentleman is asking for, but I can only repeat what I have already said. The Government would deplore the dissemination of classified information of this nature. I do not wish to depart from that.

Mr. Dewar: Does the Minister, with hindsight, regret the rather high-handed way in which the warrant against the BBC was executed by the police, and does he not have doubts about the endless paperchase through the courts as the Government attempt to stop free discussion in the press about matters that are already in the public domain and which can be discussed in almost every other country?

Lord Douglas-Hamilton: I shall answer the second part of the hon. Gentleman's question first. In relation to the distinction between an injunction and an interdict, I would say this. The Lord Advocate has not suggested — *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) has asked about the courts, so I am entitled to give him a full reply. I will come back to the first part of his question as well.

The Lord Advocate has not suggested that an injunction granted by the High Court in England would apply in Scotland. Nor does the statement, as reported by *The Scotsman*, imply that to be the case. The Scottish legal system is distinct and separate from systems applying elsewhere in the United Kingdom. The Government consider that a responsible media will ordinarily take account of decisions of a court in one jurisdiction of the United Kingdom which may have an effect on the conduct of the press in that jurisdiction, and that a responsible media will deduce that, in the absence of special circumstances, a similar restriction might reasonably be expected to apply in other jurisdictions. The Government take the view that the media should not be subject to restrictions in Scotland to which they would not be subject in England, and vice versa. Therefore, the Lord Advocate took the view that if the injunction granted by the High Court was in terms less restrictive than the terms of an interim interdict, it was appropriate to indicate that he would not seek to enforce the interdict. In one sense— *[Interruption.]* I will answer the hon. Gentleman's first question later. The Lord Advocate is satisfied that the proper—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Under-Secretary must be given a chance to answer. Or has he answered?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Lord Advocate is satisfied that the proper procedures had been followed in obtaining the search warrant.

Scottish Film Council

3. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the future of the Scottish Film Council, and the proposal to amalgamate that body with the Scottish Arts Council.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Michael Forsyth): I shall make an announcement shortly on the Government's response to the report of a policy review of the Scottish Film Council which was carried out last year.

Mr. Clarke: Will the Minister provide the Library with a copy of the review? Does he accept than no one who knows anything about film in Scotland — from film makers to consumers, to educationists and to those involved in film archives — supports the proposal for amalgamation? Does he further accept that although the proposals may be convenient to bureaucrats at St. Andrew's House, and even at the Treasury, it offers no help whatever to an organisation that has done much to promote film in Scotland and beyond since 1934?

Mr. Forsyth: The proposal for a merger of the Scottish Film Council with the Scottish Arts Council is only one of a number of options put forward. The hon. Gentleman does the review an injustice by concentrating on that alone, as the review has been warmly welcomed by the council.

Mr. Clarke: The report is not in the Library. No one has read it.

Mr. Forsyth: If the hon. Gentleman will allow me to answer the question, I shall try to answer the points that he has put.

The review has been warmly welcomed by the council, and I can assure the hon. Gentleman that the arguments that he has advanced and the various options are under consideration at the moment, and we expect to make an announcement shortly.

Regional Aid

4. **Mr. Fallon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has as to how much is spent on industrial support per capita in Scotland compared with England.

The Minister of State, Scottish Office (Mr. Ian Lang): In 1986-87, identifiable public expenditure on the industry, energy, trade and employment programme in Scotland was £178·2 per head compared with £81·4 per head in England.

The difference partly reflects the fact that the share of the Scottish population in assisted areas is more than twice that in England.

Mr. Fallon: Does not the fact that Scottish business now needs twice as much help as English business illustrate the dangers of overdependency of the "suppie" culture on the English taxpayer? Will my hon. Friend reassure the House that we are getting better value for money for this industrial support?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is absolutely right to stress the importance of value for money. Value for money is an important criterion in judging the value of regional assistance. My hon. Friend might like to know that in 1986-87 regional assistance in Scotland was £40 per head, whereas in the north of England it was £39 per head. In addition, Manpower Services Commission schemes provided £179 per head in the north compared with £143 in Scotland.

Dr. Bray: Is the Minister aware that under the current reorganisation of the Department of Trade and Industry — "DTI — the department for Enterprise" — the management of the consulting and advisory services for the engineering industry is being transferred from the National Enginering Laboratory in East Kilbride to the Production Engineering Research Association in Melton Mowbray? Is the Minister aware that that is part of the continuing pattern of draining industrial resources and activities from Scotland to the south?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman is wrong in his general conclusion. The whole purpose of regional assistance is to enable the delivery mechanism to be located in Scotland. The Scottish Development Agency will be providing a major part of that delivery mechanism.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Is my hon. Friend aware that many people in this country think that, overall, policies of industrial support have destroyed rather than saved jobs? At the risk of being accused of being gratuitiously offensive by *The Scotsman*, as I was, will my hon. Friend comment on the Labour party's proposals for regional aid? Those proposals would translate the regional aid budget from my hon. Friend's Department into the Department responsible for the arts, because all that the Labour party seeks to do is to convert Scotland into a museum of industrial archaelogy.

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend makes an interesting point. In the context of regional selective assistance, the House might like to know that a recent document produced by the TUC said that to make regional and local planning bodies effective the amount of selective assistance would be progressively increased until all assistance became selective.

Mr. Salmond: When will the Minister educate his English Back-Bench colleagues in the realities of public finance in the United Kingdom? For example, will he tell them that industrial support through the medium of defence procurement, which is concentrated in certain areas of the country, results in a £2,500 million subsidy to the English economy—10 times the entire regional aid budget for Scotland?

Mr. Lang: I am happy to welcome that part of the defence budget that goes to Scotland. More particularly, I am glad to welcome the fact that Scotland shares in the general defence of the United Kingdom.

Labour Statistics

5. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the number of persons in employment and the number unemployed in Scotland in the years 1983 to the present.

Mr. Rifkind: I have put the figures in the Library. The provisional estimate of the civilian labour force in June 1987 is marginally higher than in the four previous years, and seasonally adjusted unemployment is now at its lowest level since June 1983.

Mr. Oppenheim: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the figures show that the Scots are slowly coming to grips with the structural weaknesses in their economy? Does he also agree that the figures confirm the Scots' reputation as a doughty, dour, hardy, independent-minded people, and that, unfortunately, that fine reputation is too often endangered by the constant whingeing by Opposition Members for more subsidies from the south?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is certainly correct. Opposition Members appear to think that the only solution to any economic or industrial problem is the expenditure of resources. The transformation that is taking place in the Scottish economy has more to do with the spirit of enterprise in Scotland than with the level of available public funds. Indeed, Opposition Members are gradually coming to the same conclusion.

Mrs. Fyfe: Is the Secretary of State aware that in October 1987, 19·6 per cent. of the economically active population of Glasgow were unemployed and that in April 1984 the figure was 20·9 per cent.? Is that what he calls the transformation of the Glasgow economy? Is he aware that of that percentage of unemployed people more than half are long-term unemployed? Is that what he calls a triumph for Tory economic policies? Is he further aware that for every job vacancy outwith the community programme in Glasgow, there are 22 applicants, compared with 10 in Great Britain?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Lady, as a Glasgow Member, appears to be the only person in Glasgow who is unaware that, during this Government's term of office, Glasgow has been transformed into one of the most impressive examples of urban regeneration. In every forum except this one the hon. Lady constantly pronounces to the general public how impressive Glasgow is now compared with what it was like in 1979.

Mr. Worthington: Is the Secretary of State aware that in Clydebank and Milngavie in September 1979 there were 3,500 unemployed people, and in September 1987 there were 7,500? The figures do not take into account the 590 people in community programme places or the 19 separate downward adjustments of the unemployment figures. Is that the transformation of which the Secretary of State is boasting?

Mr. Rifkind: The transformation of which I am boasting includes projects such as that of Health Care International, which, without any support from him, may bring 4,000 to 5,000 jobs to the hon. Gentleman's constituency.

Mr. Fairbairn: I join my right hon. and learned Friend in emphasising the magnificent transformation of

Glasgow, which is entirely due to the Government's policies in the past few years. Now that we have abandoned the blanket concept of regional grants, will he consider the regeneration of other towns, villages and cities in Scotland, so that we can attract industry instead of switching it from one place to another?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. and learned Friend will be aware that the Government's priority for the future is to concentrate on many peripheral housing estates in Scotland in which there are substantial social, unemployment, economic and housing problems. It is by a major infusion of private sector investment, with public support, that we shall see the transformation of such areas into places of which we can all be proud.

Newbattle Abbey College

6. **Mr. Steel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the proposed closure of Newbattle Abbey college.

Mr. Rifkind: Circumstances have changed in the last 50 years. The college prepares only about 40 students each year for entry to higher education, at a total annual cost of more than £500,000. But every year about 6,000 mature students go into higher education in Scotland who have made no use of the college. It is difficult in those circumstances to maintain that it is meeting a significant national need and I have decided to withdraw grant with effect from the end of the next academic year. In my view, the grant paid to Newbattle can be more effectively spent in other ways to promote increased access to higher education.

Mr. Steel: Does the Secretary of State accept that Newbattle Abbey college is a national institution, which is greatly valued throughout the country because it provides a form of access to higher education, especially for late entrants and those who have already missed out in developing their education in earlier years, and that no comparable facility is available anywhere else in higher education or through the Open University? Does he also accept that there has been criticism of his Department for the total lack of consultation when taking that decision?

Mr. Rifkind: On the right hon. Gentleman's latter point, the withdrawal of grant will take place in 18 months' time. Therefore, there is plenty of opportunity to hear any representations that people may wish to make.

On the right hon. Gentleman's earlier question, he must take into account the fact that of the 98 students at the college in 1986-87, 42 were from Edinburgh and Lothian and were unlikely to require residential accommodation; 29 came from England and Wales; none came from the north of Scotland; and very few from other parts of Scotland. In those circumstances, it is difficult to put forward a credible argument that there is any significant need for residential accommodation of the kind that Newbattle provides.

Mr. Eadie: Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman not understand that the measure of consultation has been strange? My understanding is that there was no consultation prior to his decision to withdraw funding. Is it a case of shooting from the hip and asking questions afterwards? What a strange concept of consultation. Does he not realise that there is great resentment because the equivalent in Scotland of Ruskin college, Oxford, is to be withdrawn? Is that not a shoddy way to deal with education, and do we not now seem to have a bunch of philistines in new St. Andrew's House dealing with education?

Mr. Rifkind: I appreciate the fact that the trade unions have identified themselves with the campaign to save Newbattle Abbey college. However, that might be more impressive if the trade unions in question had used Newbattle Abbey college themselves, or if they had made any significant contribution to its work. Only one trade union in Scotland has made any donation to college funds during 1986-87, and not one trade union made use of it during that year to provide short residential courses for its members.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: First, will my right hon. and learned Friend acknowledge that there was no consultation before the decision was taken? Secondly, will he tell the House what circumstances have changed since the HMI report of 1984, which recommended the continuation of the college?

Mr. Rifkind: I must advise my right hon. Friend that with 6,000 entrants over the age of 21 going on to higher and further education in Scotland, I do not believe that he can put forward any credible argument that it is justified to use £500,000 of public funds for the admission of 40 students to that college, the vast majority of whom did not require residential accommodation, given their place of residence.

I emphasise to my right hon. Friend that the resources saved from the withdrawal of support — whether the college will close is a matter for the governors — will be used for higher and further education in Scotland, which will assist the higher and further education requirements of far more students than currently seem interested in using the facilities at Newbattle Abbey college.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: Does the Secretary of State not feel some sense of shame that, through his penny-pinching attitude, he is destroying what was bequeathed to the nation of Scotland and provided an additional asset to our education system? Surely the whole point of having a facility such as Newbattle Abbey college is to enable people to re-enter education for a variety of reasons at a later stage but not within the formal system? Therefore, does he not agree that, in the concept of life-long education, we should maintain that facility?

Mr. Rifkind: Of course that is a desirable objective, but I advise the hon. Lady that there has been precious little interest in using that facility. No one from the hon. Lady's constituency or from a line drawn north of Fort William to Aberdeen has even entered the college during the past year. If we are considering the need for a residential college, we must have the gravest doubts whether there is any need for expenditure of that kind when the trade unions have made little use of the facility and, bar one union, have made no contribution to its running costs and, indeed, when most of the students come from the Edinburgh and Lothian area or from England and Wales. The hon. Lady should bear that in mind.

Mr. Home Robertson: Circumstances have certainly changed in recent years. I understand that the right hon. and learned Gentleman used to be listed as a friend of Newbattle college. Is he aware that we deplore the fact that the Government are discarding this unique college? Can

he tell us why Scotland should be the only nation in Britain without a specialist college to give adults a second chance of gaining the benefits of further education?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman might bear in mind the remarks of some of his Labour colleagues. For example, during the discussion of these matters with Strathclyde regional council yesterday a Labour councillor, Councillor Gilmore, warned his colleagues against indulging in media protests and went on to say that, in his view, the Government had a case for the better use of a £500,000 grant from the SED.

Cervical Smear Tests

7. **Dr. Moonie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the results of the recent campaign to encourage women in Scotland to have a cervical smear test.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There has been no recent national publicity campaign in Scotland on cervical cancer screening. I announced on 10 December 1987 that a comprehensive cervical cancer screening service is to be made available to all women in Scotland aged between 20 and 60 years of age.

Dr. Moonie: In view of the increasing number of women taking advantage of screening facilities, what steps has the Minister taken to ensure that back-up facilities for treatment are readily available to prevent women from having to wait inordinate lengths of time?

Mr. Forsyth: The Government are providing about £6 million to ensure that the software and computer facilities are in place by the end of the year, so that women come in on a call and recall basis. The computer call and recall service will ensure that they are brought in. I am not aware of any problems with any health boards connected with the carrying out of screening.

Mr. Ernie Ross: The Minister will be aware that Tayside has a vey good recall system for cervical cancer. When will he be able to say where the unit for mammography will be established in Scotland?

Mr. Forsyth: We recently announced that we expected to establish 10 units throughout Scotland, and we expect all of them to be in place by 1991.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: We are now trying to increase the number of such tests. Is the Minister aware of the corollary —that more tests will mean a much heavier workload on MLSOs and associated technical staff in hospitals? Is he also aware of the anger felt by MLSOs and other staff about the failure to recognise their proper status or salary levels, and will he give his backing to help them to carry out their important work?

Mr. Forsyth: The precise pattern of workloads and the way in which tests and screenings are carried out are matters for health boards. I am sure that they will take into account all the options open to them.

Health Service Expenditure

8. **Mr. Forth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the expenditure per head in real terms on health services in Scotland in 1979 and 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Gross expenditure on the National Health Service in Scotland in 1979-80, at 1987-88 prices, was £354 per head of population. The corresponding figure for 1987-88 is expected to be £454.

These figures for Scotland are some 25 per cent. higher than the equivalent figures for England, and Scotland has 39 per cent. more health staff and 59 per cent. more hospital beds than England on a population basis.

Mr. Forth: I thank my right hon. Friend for those impressive but not surprising figures. Can he tell the House whether he believes that there has been a commensurate dramatic increase in the quality of patient care, particularly in the light of the article on the front page of today's *Glasgow Herald?* Can he explain that?

Mr. Forsyth: I share my hon. Friend's concern about that article, and I have had inquiries made. The injuries suffered by the reporter concerned can be treated by a padded crepe support bandage or short plaster. [HON. MEMBERS: "Dr. Forsyth?"] May I ask hon. Members to listen? Contrary to what is printed in the *Herald,* the reporter expressed a wish not to have a plaster, so that he could drive to Stirling. I am reliably informed that this was recorded and witnessed.

Had a plaster been essential, the medical staff in the accident and emergency unit could have applied one. This is a scurrilous and inaccurate piece of reporting, and I deplore such an unwarraned attack on the excellent facilities and staff at the Western infirmary in Glasgow.

Mr. Douglas: I believe that we should get back to the main question. I want the Minister to deal with the relevant aspects of expenditure, that is the proportion of GDP spent on health care in England and Wales and in Scotland. Is it not a fact that for the United Kingdom as a whole expenditure on health care is good value for money, and that attempts to undermine that by stupid proposals such as contracting out are to be deplored by hon. Members on both sides of the House?

Mr. Forsyth: I am very grateful to the hon. Gentleman for asking about GDP. He will know that health expenditure in England as a proportion of GDP is 6·2 per cent. In Scotland it is 8·2 per cent. That means that we have significantly more resources. The point of competitive tendering is to ensure that we make the maximum possible provision for patient care.

Mr. Bill Walker: These interesting figures provided by my hon. Friend show clearly that the Government are concerned with health care and that health care really matters. Will he confirm that the Government will look very carefully at these matters to ensure that we receive value for money throughout the Health Service in Scotland, and in particular will he consider the great value for money provided by community hospitals?

Mr. Forsyth: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. The Government are determined to ensure value for money in the Health Service and at the same time to provide additional resources. Next year's additional allocation of expenditure for the Health Service in Scotland, at some £120 million, will be the biggest ever in cash terms in the history of the Health Service in Scotland. I wish that Opposition Members would acknowledge that.

Mr. Wilson: In view of the Minister's very recent, very personal and very profitable connections with the private health sector, is it not time that he was seen to get his sticky

fingers off the Scottish Health Service? Will he accept that it is doubly offensive to loyal servants and low-paid workers in the National Health Service to see someone trying to do them out of their jobs when they know that that individual has such strong, personal, vested interests in the destruction of public sector employment and its replacement with cheapskate contract labour?

Mr. Forsyth: I have no vested interest. I deplore the hon. Gentleman's offensive attack on those workers because, by implication, he is arguing that competitive tendering will put them out of work. That means that he thinks they are providing inefficient services. They have nothing to fear from competitive tendering if their services are providing value for money. Any savings that are achieved will result in improved patient care for the hon. Gentleman's constituents, whom he should seek to represent.

Sir Hector Monro: Does my hon. Friend agree that since 1979 the Government have provided 5,770 new beds and that in the 34 new projects under construction there will be another 4,484? Is that not a splendid achievement, which shows that the Government have every intention of maintaining a close interest in the Health Service?

Mr. Forsyth: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He has drawn attention to the biggest capital investment programme in the history of the Health Service in Scotland undertaken by this Government because of the success of our economic policies and the priority that we have placed on the Health Service. When Opposition Members formed the previous Labour Government they presided over the biggest ever cut in the capital programme in the Health Service in Scotland.

Mr. Dewar: Does the Minister not share my sharp concern about the crisis in the Health Service and the frustration that is growing daily among those committed to the delivery of a comprehensive and adequate service to those in need? Will he accept that if we are to avoid industrial action—which no hon. Member wants to see—it is important that he makes his contribution to that process? Will he look again at the circular on privatisation, because it is resented by the boards, which, in many cases, are seeing their professional judgment on how they manage their areas being overturned? It is also resented by the staff whose jobs are at risk and by the public who know that contracting out is depressingly irrelevant to the real problems facing the Health Service.

Mr. Forsyth: I noted that the hon. Gentleman has aligned himself with those calling for industrial action in the Health Service, and his photograph appeared in the *Glasgow Herald*. It is in the interests of the Health Service to maximise the resources available for patient care. *[Interruption.]* If the hon. Gentleman is saying that he does not align himself with those calling for industrial action in the Health Service, I welcome that.

Since 1983 the boards have been asked to carry out competitive tendering in Scotland. They have not done so. Health authorities in England have, and as a result the Health Service in England has had £100 million a year extra to spend on patient care. Is the hon. Gentleman really arguing that patients in Scotland should be denied those extra resources simply to keep his friends in the trade unions happy?

Councillors (Salary)

9. **Mr. Ron Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from COSLA proposing salaries for councillors; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend has received no representations from the convention regarding salaries for councillors. The convention has, however, indicated that it is in favour of the Widdicombe committee's recommendation that councillors should be paid a flat-rate allowance.

Mr. Brown: Is it not the case that the people who represent local government in Scotland, the councillors, deserve a proper rate for the job, a salary, particularly when they have to defend basic services and fight against the poll tax? We in the Labour movement expect them to organise a movement which will, if need be, break the law to challenge the Government, who are imposing a regime that is totally unacceptable to Scottish people.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am aware of the contributions made by councillors. The hon. Gentleman and I were councillors in Edinburgh together. I should mention that proposals for a further increase will be considered in the near future, and the results will be announced in the spring. The maximum daily rate of attendance allowance is now £17·55. That may be seen as inadequate by those who insist on regarding it as a daily rate of pay, but it was never intended to be that.

Mr. Robertson: Was there not something impertinent and improper about Ministers attacking Scottish councillors for coming to the capital city of the United Kingdom last week to tell the House—which is, after all, considering poll tax legislation in England and Wales—about universal Scottish feeling about that unfair, inefficient and deeply unpopular imposition on the people of Scotland?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is a perfectly legitimate comment if councillors are travelling at the ratepayers' expense. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman is referring to assertions arising out of that.

Mr. John Marshall: As a former Aberdeen town councillor, may I suggest that service in local government should appeal to people's sense of service rather than to their sense of greed?

lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I wholeheartedly agree with my hon. Friend. A sense of public service is extremely important, and I have no doubt that many people enter local government as a vocation and not for any other reason.

Regional Aid

10. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the latest estimate of the number of jobs created by regional development grants in Scotland since 1984.

Mr. Lang: Revised regional development grant has been associated with the creation of over 25,000 jobs in Scotland since 1984. The old regional development grant scheme was not linked directly to job creation.

Mr. Bruce: While the Government's proposed changes will be welcome in areas such as mine, where we do not

have access to regional development grant, will the Minister nevertheless acknowledge that the lack of automatic availability of grant could be at considerable cost to Scotland in terms of investment in the coming year? If there is to be a programme of selective assistance, will he ensure that the criteria are fully understood and appreciated so that investment is not driven away because people have to wait too long before they know whether they will get assistance?

Mr. Lang: I am grateful for the fact that the hon. Gentleman welcomes some of the provisions in the recent enterprise initative. He will have noted that Aberdeen is one of the areas where a higher rate of consultancy assistance grant will be payable. The take-up of applications available under the selective assistance scheme will depend entirely on the number of applications forthcoming. We intend to publicise the scheme widely to ensure that the funds available are taken up.

Mr. McLeish: Will the Minister reflect on the fact that he has reduced expenditure on regional development grant from £170 million in 1986-87 to £66 million in the current year? That is against a background of three points: first, manufacturing employment in Scotland has fallen below 400,000 for the first time this century; secondly, the figures in the MSC "Labour Market Quarterly" report of November 1987—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Do not read them, please.

Mr. McLeish: The figures show that in terms of the 10 economic units in the United Kingdom, Scotland has had the smallest increase in the number of employees between June 1986 and 1987, and the biggest reduction in manufacturing jobs in any economic region in the United Kingdom. Can the Minister take pride in such a background when cutting regional development grants?

Mr. Lang: I do not recognise the background that the hon. Gentleman describes. In the first place, the proportion of regional aid coming to Scotland has risen from 20 per cent. in 1979 to over 30 per cent. now, and, in the second place, the background is one of falling unemployment and rising investment, manufacturing output and manufacturing productivity.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my hon. Friend agree that if regional aid as practised by successive Governments since 1945 had been successful, as is claimed by the Opposition Benches, the areas of high relative unemployment would not be the same today as they were immediately after the war? The sad fact is that the areas of high relative unemployment are much the same, so the system obviously does not work. Therefore, the new system that is being introduced must at least be an improvement on what has gone on in the past.

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. It is not without significance that the Labour Government cut the industrial programme in the Scottish block allocation by 13 per cent. during their last three years.

Mr. McAllion: Does the Minister realise that the automatic availability of regional development grant played an important part in Ford's decision to locate its latest plant in Dundee, thereby bringing 400 desperately needed jobs to an area of high unemployment? Does he share the people of Scotland's view that, in the fiercely competitive business of attracting major inward investment projects into areas of high unemployment in Scotland, it is essential to get the total package of incentives right, so that we can out-compete areas such as Spain? How are we to do that if that total package is gravely weakened by the removal of automatic regional development grant from development areas such as Dundee?

Mr. Lang: The successful attraction of Ford to Dundee had nothing to do with the availability of automatic regional development grant. The company would have been equally entitled to regional selective assistance and the package available to it could have been exactly the same. The fact is that inward investment, which is such an important and successsful part of our economic industrial policy in Scotland, will not be jeopardised by the changes that we are making.

Mr. McLoughlin: Will my hon. Friend, as a Minister in the United Kingdom Government, give some thought to how many jobs have been created by regional aid and how many jobs have been switched from various parts of the United Kingdom? Is he aware that there is deep resentment in Belper, in my constituency, where jobs were lost when English Sewing, part of the Tootal group, was switched to Scotland? Jobs are important in every part of the United Kingdom, not just in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is right to point to one of the disadvantages of regional assistance, when it simply moves jobs around the country. A recent study, which has been published, shows that about 600,000 jobs have been created, but 150,000 of them have subsequently been lost. That is a strong argument against automaticity and in favour of a more selective approach.

Health Service Expenditure

11. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will meet representatives of Grampian health board to discuss national strategies for health expenditure.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I hold regular meetings with the chairmen of all Scottish health boards, at which strategic issues are discussed.

Mrs. Ewing: At the Minister's next meeting with the representatives of Grampian health board on strategic issues, will he consider with them the issues surrounding the future of maternity services in Grampian region? Is he aware that the professional advice offered to Grampian health board showed that the SHARPEN recommendations of nil growth in maternity facilities would be unacceptable in that area because staffing complements and bed levels are already well below the national level? Against that background, will he ensure that he reads every response to proposals to close the peripheral units in my constituency, and those of other hon. Members, where there are sound medical, economic and social reasons for their retention?

Mr. Forsyth: As the hon. Lady knows, Grampian health board recently conducted a review of maternity beds in the area which revealed particular pressures on facilities at the Aberdeen maternity hospital and widespread under-use of facilities elsewhere. I can assure the hon. Lady that the board is currently consulting. Any

decision that might involve any closures would require the consent of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, and we shall obviously consider carefully the representations that we have received from her and from her constituents before any conclusions are reached.

Mr. Fairbairn: Does my hon. Friend agree that the figures that he gave in reply to an earlier question, showing the enormous disparity in money and in the proportion of the GNP being spent in Scotland, and in Grampian as part of it, merely demonstrates the fallacy of the argument that the Opposition are trying to foist upon the public, and that throwing more money at a place is not the answer to improving medical services?

Mr. Forsyth: I am grateful to my hon. and learned Friend, who makes a very important point with regard to Grampian, because not only has Grampian a share of the additional resources available for health care in Scotland, but its share of the Scottish SHARE has been increasing. Its share of available resources has gone up from 8·5 to 9·2 per cent., and the board is approximately £10 million better off today than it would have been if our SHARE formula had not existed.

Devolution

12. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what evidence he has of the level of demand for a devolved Scottish Parliament.

Mr. Rifkind: I have considerable evidence of the Opposition's interest in a Scottish Parliament, but little evidence of the electorate's interest.

Mr. Canavan: When will the Secretary of State stop simply parroting his mistress's voice, repeating her absurd claims that there is little, if any, demand for devolution in Scotland? If he refuses to acknowledge that 76 per cent. of the Scottish voters voted at the last general election for parties with a commitment to set up some form of Scottish Assembly or Scottish Parliament, will he at least have the courage to put his view to the test by the people of Scotland, by having another referendum, so that they can decide, instead of being dictated to by this autocratic Government?

Mr. Rifkind: I note that the hon. Gentleman has been virtually disowned by his parliamentary colleagues for his general approach to these matters. He really must take account of the fact that the referendum that took place resulted in less than one third of the people of Scotland voting for the proposals with which he is associated. There is no reason to believe that the results of another referendum would be any different.

Mr. Fallon: Are not the Scots already complaining about the level of community charge to be levied in Scotland? What would be the annual cost of the Assembly charge levied on every Scot to finance this pipe dream?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is correct to say that it is extraordinary that the Labour party should be committed to imposing on Scotland a tax which at no time is to be imposed on any other part of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Hood: I rise to change the tempo of Question Time, to acknowledge that the greatest service the Prime Minister has done for Scotland so far is in appointing Sir Ian MacGregor to the new Tory party think-tank in Scotland—[HON. MEMBERS: "What has this to do with the question?"]—

Mr. Speaker: Order. The subject is the Scottish Parliament.

Mr. Hood: May I say—[HON. MEMBERS: "Ask a question."]—that it will do the greatest service to the Scottish people's argument for devolution, because if Sir Ian MacGregor does as much for the Tory party as he did——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that this matter would be better raised in the debate.

Mr. Rifkind: I can only say to the hon. Gentleman that I think that it is thanks to the work Sir Ian MacGregor did for the steel industry that Ravenscraig can look forward to the next seven years.

Court Actions (Costs)

13. **Mr. Doran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the costs to the Government of the recent court actions raised in Scotland against *The Scotsman* and *Glasgow Herald* newspapers and Scottish Television.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The expenses of the court actions and liability for their payment will be known only once the actions are concluded.

Mr. Doran: From my knowledge of legal expenses, I think we can assume that those expenses will be considerable. The Minister has already criticised certain councillors of all parties who travelled to London last week to give a very useful presentation on the poll tax. Does the Minister not consider that the expenses that will be incurred in these fruitless actions, which are simply intended to prevent any part of the media from criticising or embarrassing the Government, constitute a useless and outrageous waste of public funds?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No, Sir. I believe that the Government were absolutely entitled to uphold the confidentiality owed to the Crown by present and former members of the security and intelligence services. The Government consider that the action they took was entirely necessary in the circumstances.

Housing

14. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next plans to meet representatives from COSLA to discuss matters related to housing.

Mr. Rifkind: No date has yet been fixed, but my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary responsible for home affairs and the environment, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton), holds regular meetings with the convention.

Mr. McKelvey: Am I correct in thinking, then, that the right hon. and learned Gentleman will be aware of the views of Scotland on the housing crisis in Scotland today? Nearly 1,250,000 people, including families, are living in overcrowded conditions. About 200,000 people are on the waiting lists. Some 31,000 are regarded as homeless. In Kilmarnock alone there are 2,000 on the single homeless list, with 600 of them now being regarded as deserving top

priority. Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman consider COSLA's view that the Housing (Scotland) Bill now going through Committee does nothing to alleviate the problems of all those very unhappy people?

Mr. Rifkind: Given the hon. Gentleman's interest in the housing problems of Kilmarnock, I would have thought that he would welcome the fact that the Government's housing allocation on the housing revenue account block to Kilmarnock and Loudoun district council for the current year represents no less than 97 per cent. of what the council felt it needed.

Mr. Forth: In the context of the housing matters referred to, can my right hon. and learned Friend comment on rent levels in Scotland? Does he believe that these are appropriate to modern and future conditions, and how do they compare with those south of the border?

Mr. Rifkind: It is the case that rent levels in Scotland remain significantly below rent levels elsewhere in the United Kingdom, although average earnings are comparable.

Mr. Home Robertson: Is it not significant that the Secretary of State is answering his hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) in such a friendly way? Is it not a fact that the hon. Member has probably had more influence over housing decisions in Scotland than all the homeless, the overcrowded and the people living in sub-standard conditions in Scotland? Why is the Minister bringing forward legislation which will be of substantial benefit to private landlords, but which will do nothing to meet the housing needs of the people of Scotland?

Mr. Rifkind: If the hon. Gentleman believes that the housing legislation before the House will not help the housing requirements of the people of Scotland and that they will not be interested in its provisions, he and his colleagues might like to reflect on the fact that in the last week 1,000 tenants in Castlemilk have voted to have their houses transferred to the forthcoming Scottish homes organisation, in the knowledge that that might involve higher rents, but that it would also involve the refurbishment and improvement of the houses they live in.

Local Government (Tayside)

15. **Mr. Bill Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Tayside police on the progress of inquiries into allegations of misconduct in local government.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: There are no current inquiries by Tayside police specifically into allegations of misconduct in local government.

Mr. Walker: My hon. Friend will have seen the reports in the Scottish media which link the problems of local government in Dundee with activities in the Labour party. Can my hon. Friend tell the House when these matters will be dealt with, so that the suffering of those affected by the allegations can be brought to an end?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In answering on behalf of the Lord Advocate, I understand that inquiries concern the alleged misappropriation of funds. I am advised that the police will report to the procurator fiscal as soon as their inquiries are completed.

Mr. Ernie Ross: Will the Minister confirm that it was at the request of officials of Dundee Labour party that the police were called in in the first instance and that they are as anxious as anyone to have the matter cleared up as quickly as possible?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Yes, Sir. I am advised that most of the allegations were first intimated to the procurator fiscal by the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Doran).

Day Centres

17. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to encourage joint funding of day centres for elderly people in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The provision of services for groups such as the elderly is a matter for individual health boards and local authorities in the light of local needs and circumstances.

My right hon. and learned Friend has encouraged health boards and local authorities to make full use of joint funding. Places for the elderly in day centres provided by local authorities and voluntary bodies had increased since 1979 by 61 per cent. to a total of 5,690 at March 1986.

Mr. McAvoy: I thank the Minister for his answer. I hope he accepts that in Scotland, and in my constituency in particular, there is a high proportion of elderly within the community. In Strathclyde region, where there is a first-class, prudent authority, as instanced by the recommendation to increase its rate for the next financial year by only one pence, will the Minister consider seriously injecting further finance into the health board so that it may co-operate with the local authority in providing more of these much-needed centres?

Mr. Forsyth: The increased finance that has been provided to the health boards since 1979 amounts to some 26 per cent. in real terms. The increased finance made available to the local authorities for this purpose as part of their social work services has increased in real terms since 1979 by some 36 per cent. That is a record to be proud of, and the hon. Gentleman must acknowledge that considerable progress has been made.

Mr. Foulkes: Is the Minister aware of the concern in Ayrshire about the proliferation in the number of old people's homes and nursing homes, causing consequent strain on the Health Service and social work services? Has he seen the proposals put forward by Age Concern Scotland about the registration of private nursing homes and old people's homes because of the concern over the exploitation of old people to provide profit for the owners of some of these homes? Will he consider legislation along the lines proposed by Age Concern Scotland?

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman does the private sector, which provides excellent care for many people in Scotland, and proportionately more in England, a great disservice by implying that, because these homes are private, there is any question of lower standards. As he will know, the Government intend to make regulations to ensure that the highest standards continue to be maintained.

Scottish Bus Group

3.30 pm

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the future of the Scottish Bus Group.

The Scottish Bus Group is a nationalised industry, providing bus services in Scotland. It has a total staff of about 10,000. In its latest annual report, covering 1986, it showed a turnover of £160 million. The Scottish Bus Group has over 3,000 buses and in terms of vehicle miles is responsible for over half of stage carriage services in Scotland. Through its 12 subsidiaries, it is Scotland's largest provider of bus services.

I have decided that I should now seek powers at an early opportunity to privatise the Scottish Bus Group. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] All nationalised industries which have been privatised have benefited from taking control of their own affairs. I am sure that the Scottish Bus Group will be no exception. Privatisation will allow investment decisions to be made in Scotland, free of the Government's constraints on nationalised industry financing. Management will be free to manage, the travelling public will benefit from the greater sensitivity to the market which a private sector company necessarily has. Deregulation has already achieved much in that field, with increased competition and innovation. I am presently considering whether the Scottish Bus Group should be privatised as a single company or as several regional companies.

Whichever method of privatisation is chosen, there will be benefits to the Scottish economy. It will be strengthened by the addition of one or more new private sector firms providing substantial employment and free to take full advantage of market opportunities. The privatisation of the bus group will complement the major stimulus to be given to the Scottish economy by the privatisation of the electricity industry.

Privatisation should also provide opportunities for the work force, at all levels, to take a stake in the business for which they work. This increased sense of involvement should also lead to improved performance. The work force as a whole should benefit from being part of an organisation which has been set free to operate in a fully commercial way.

This decision will have implications for Caledonian MacBrayne which, together with the Scottish Bus Group, makes up the Scottish Transport Group. Caledonian MacBrayne is responsible for providing ferry services on the west coast of Scotland. I shall be considering the best future arrangements for Caledonian MacBrayne, consistent with our commitment to the provision of shipping services to the islands.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): The announcement that we have just heard will please no one but the placemen and the zealots. I thought that the source of the cheering behind the Secretary of State was highly significant and rather depressing. This measure may earn him some brownie points with the Prime Minister, but it will do very little for public transport in Scotland. It is a remarkable turnabout which has been largely unexplained.

The privatisation of the Scottish Bus Group was specifically rejected in the White Paper of August 1984, yet suddenly the group is now to be sold off in very difficult trading conditions. Does the Minister accept that these are difficult and unsettled times and that many bus companies, particularly in central Scotland, are trading at a loss? Is he not aware of this from the fact that, in the calendar year 1986, the profit of the Scottish Transport Group, at £10·7 million, was over £6 million down on the previous year?

That was specifically ascribed by the chairman, in his report, to the difficulties which attended deregulation. Why, then, the further difficulty of sale now to an unknown buyer on speculative terms? Can the Minister says what impact he thinks that this will have on jobs? That is a highly relevant question, because we all know that there have been difficulties in the Scottish Bus Group. Kelvin Scottish, in particular, has been the subject of reports and of suggestions of a loss of about £3 million. One important depot, Milngavie, has already been closed. With 10,000 employees, is it not important that we know a little more about that side of what the Government propose?

I recognise that we cannot know today whether it is to be one company or 11 or 12 companies. There is a lamentable lack of specificity. May we be assured that the Minister will return to the House at an early date, as soon as decisions have been taken, with information? Will he confirm that primary legislation is needed? I presume that that is the implication of the phrase that he will "now seek powers", but I should like that matter cleared up. Will this be a sale by share tender, or will the Minister be looking for some existing company, possibly in the industry, to buy the Scottish Bus Group? What price does he expect?

Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman note that what happens to Caledonian MacBrayne is a matter of deep concern to the Opposition because it is an essential lifeline to island communities? Does he accept that we have little confidence in his touch in these matters? We, like many people who depend on Caledonian MacBrayne, will remember the fiasco of the Gourock-to-Dunoon run and Western Ferries' pre-emptive raid, with the right hon. and learned Gentleman's assistance. We remember also the sale of MacBrayne Haulage to Kildonan Transport, if I remember rightly at a knockdown price of £450,000. We hope that, if the right hon. and learned Gentleman insists on going ahead mistakenly with this exercise of selling assets, it will be carried out with greater respect for those who depend on the services, and for the public purse.

There is a great deal of talk of stimulus, of the freedom of management to manage, but the right hon. and learned Gentleman's statement is the worse sort of padding—specious propaganda bordering on claptrap. No case has been made out for this U-turn. Stripped of the advertising copy, it is nothing more than a bald, unsatisfactory, unacceptable statement of intent, and we will oppose it when it comes to the House in legislative form.

Mr. Rifkind: I bow to the hon. Gentleman's experience of specious claptrap and will respond to the points he raised. I share his view that the ferry services are a lifeline to the islands. That will be a fundamental consideration when determining future arrangements. I point out that Caledonian MacBrayne and the ferry services to the islands have improved enormously beyond all recognition over the past 10 years. If the hon. Gentleman will not accept my word on that, he should speak to those on the islands, who will be happy to confirm it.

As to the reasons for and the background to my announcement involving the Scottish Bus Group, the board of the Scottish Transport Group fully supports privatisation and believes that it will be in the interest of bus services in Scotland, and that this is the right way forward. Our experience since deregulation came into effect has shown that the Opposition's alarms and fears were competely unjustified and that deregulation has been to the benefit of bus services in Scotland. More bus services are available and competition has been to the benefit of those involved.

I confirm that these proposals will require primary legislation. As to the form of flotation, we shall of course seek advice from financial advisers but, in the light of experience elsewhere in the United Kingdom, it is likely that there will be interest among the management and employees as well as others, depending upon the type of structure which is eventually determined.

Given that, over the past 30 years, there has been a decline in bus services throughout the United Kingdom, including Scotland, the increased competition which this decision will ensure will be of great benefit to those who use bus services and therefore very much in the interests of those who work for the Scottish Bus Group. They can only benefit from being part of a successful private sector industry, and that will be the effect of these proposals.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that this is the moment for the bus industry to show initiative and enterprise and to go ahead and develop its services, especially on the major trunk routes? Would the Minister also keep in mind during his consultation the issue that has already been raised about employment, and particularly the development of rural services?

Mr. Rifkind: Yes, I very much confirm what my hon. Friend has said. It is factors such as these that we will take into account when determining the precise structure under which privatisation will take place.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): May I bring the Secretary of State back to his rightful acknowledgement of the fundamental concern about the ferry services, not least for the employees but also for the communities and the many others dependent upon them? Referring earlier to the Scottish Transport Group, the Minister said that it had not been decided whether to have one monopolistic concern or to break it up regionally. What is the implication of that thinking for the ferry services? Does the Minister propose to privatise ferry services as one group, or is he looking at individual routes which may be sold off to individual companies which may bid for them?

Would the Minister address himself to the very simple fact that, taking my own constituency, the ferry services to the Isle of Skye and the feeling that, even with a level, of public subsidy, the fares are extremely high, when it comes to considering the replacement of ferry vehicles, it is very difficult to see how something that is economically viable can at the same time serve the public interest?

Mr. Rifkind: My statement today was solely concerned with the Scottish Bus Group. Nothing in it involves any decision having been taken with regard to the future of Caledonian MacBrayne, with the exception that the privatisation of the bus group will mean the end of the Scottish Transport Group as such, because Caledonian MacBrayne would be the only remaining element in it. We have yet to come to a view as to the future organisation of Caledonian MacBrayne and the extent to which either privatisation or some other arrangement would be appropriate for that organisation.

What I have said is that our prime consideration is to ensure that this vital lifeline for the islands, which we have built up over the past ten years, is maintained insofar as it is the necessary transport facility of those who depend on it.

Mr. Alick Buchanan-Smith (Kincardine and Deeside): Will my right hon. and learned Friend acknowledge that all experience of privatisation so far suggests that the removal of Government interference in management is to the ultimate benefit of both management and the users, the customers, of the services in question?

At the same time, following on what my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) said, will rural services be taken into account in my right hon. and learned Friend's consideration? The need for them does not change, whether the service is nationalised or privatised. They are an important social service and for many are the only link with centres of population for shopping and so forth. That is a major consideration.

Mr. Rifkind: My right hon. Friend is absolutely correct in the priority that he identifies. I will simply add that up to now the investment decisions involving the Scottish Bus Group have had to be made by Government in the context of their overall public sector borrowing requirement. That is true of all nationalised industries. In future, these decisions will be taken in Scotland by the management of the new company or companies, and will be taken on the basis of the perceived needs of the Scottish Bus Group.

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): Is the Secretary of State aware that there is a great deal of concern that control of the Scottish Transport Group or the Scottish Bus Group, when it is sold off, will pass out of Scotland, perhaps to London or even abroad, and that a new owner living in London or the Gulf will care little about when the last bus runs and how much it costs? Is he also aware of the concern that Caledonian MacBrayne has received large sums of public money to modernise its fleet which, by the 1990s, will be very new and that it would be quite wrong for someone to snap up a bargain, into which public money has been poured, at a knockdown price, as has happened elsewhere?

Mr. Rifkind: In answer to the first part of the question, I do not remember the hon. Gentleman complaining when the Perth-based Stagecoach bus company successfully acquired one of the English bus companies after the privatisation of the National Bus Company. I have every faith in the Scottish bus companies being able to make a major contribution to the improved well-being of the Scottish economy. As regards Caledonian MacBrayne, any future decision, if it did involve some form of privatisation, would obviously be subject to the same principles with regard to public assets as has been the case with other nationalised industries.

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): May I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on freeing from bureaucracy and Treasury control a service of the greatest importance to people in Scotland, to be run, I

[Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn]

hope, by several competing companies—that would be my preference—for the benefit of those concerned? As regards bus provision in the countryside, at the moment only private companies provide the sort of facility that shoppers want, taking them to the places where they can shop at the time they want to do so or, like Stagecoach, giving them the service that they really require. My right hon. and learned Friend is greatly to be congratulated.

Mr. Rifkind: I am grateful to my hon. and learned Friend. I agree that these proposals represent an exciting opportunity for the bus industry and for those who work in it.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): On what basis does the Secretary of State make his confident claim that privatisation will automatically lead to an improvement in services? Has any research been undertaken? Have there been any preliminary soundings among people who might be interested in taking over bus services? I reiterate the point that has been made by other hon. Members—rural communities are dependent on bus services as lifelines. Any company interested in services in rural areas, such as my constituency, should be asked to take full cognisance of the need to offer an efficient and effective service.

Mr. Rifkind: Those who run the Scottish Bus Group believe that these proposals will be in the interests of the bus services that it provides. I would be somewhat puzzled if the hon. Lady and her colleagues were opposed to the transfer of ownership of the Scottish bus industry to Scotland from London, where it presently operates.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): My right hon. and learned Friend should be congratulated on the measures that he is proposing to introduce. Will he confirm that, contained in these measures, whatever they are, there will be a requirement that employees will be given an opportunity to purchase shares in the new company or companies, whatever form they take? Employee shareholdings are an essential part of changing attitudes, which will be required if we are to improve services.

With regard to rural services in my constituency, there is no question but that one of the advantages of deregulation has been competition. It has brought about circumstances that I have never known before. Bus companies have been prepared to divert and re-route their buses for the benefit of people living in small communities. That would never have been achieved before deregulation.

Mr. Rifkind: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's experience of the benefits of deregulation. I agree with his objective of encouraging share ownership. I have no doubt that the people of Scotland and the employees of the Scottish Bus Group will be especially interested in the opportunities that this will present for the greater involvement of the public, including employees, in the ownership of an important industry in Scotland.

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): Has the Minister considered what the feelings of many Scottish people will be when they hear this news and realise that bus companies will chase profits by concentrating on the most profitable routes and times? Those people will be condemned to stand for long periods in the wind and rain waiting for a bus to arrive.

I notice that the Under-Secretary is smiling. He obviously thinks that it is funny to stand under a draughty bus shelter with small children in the cold. He has probably never had to do so. It is very easy for people such as him who ride around in ministerial cars. This is a piece of vicious class legislation. It will affect those who rely on buses, such as women with young children and elderly people going to the shops or to their doctor. Those people are forced to rely on public transport, and what you are doing——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Fyfe: I beg your pardon, Mr. Speaker. It is clear that we can expect no benefit to services from this measure. Have the Government investigated the needs of the people that I have mentioned?

Mr. Rifkind: As the hon. Lady has been one of the foremost critics of the Scottish Bus Group, which is a nationalised industry, and its attempts to introduce competition in Glasgow, I am rather puzzled by her anxious desire to defend the status quo.

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that it is only under this Government that the bus industry has been rescued from terminal decline? Will he accept from us that what he has announced is welcome news? It is typical of the whingeing Opposition parties that all they want to do is stick their collective snouts into the public trough.

Mr. Rifkind: For the past 30 years, the use of buses throughout the United Kingdom has declined. The combination of deregulation and privatisation of these bus companies will offer the first serious opportunity for many a long year to reverse that decline in the use of buses, in the interests of the general public.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): The statement that the Secretary of State has made is so vague as to be almost meaningless, and it makes it very difficult for people who are trying to make an objective — not an ideological — judgment about whether this measure is to be supported or not. We are prepared to look at the proposal for the buses, but if the Secretary of State is thinking of privatising the ferries, he will run into stout opposition from Members on these Benches and from Members in other parts of the House.

As to the date, the Secretary of State said that he would take an early opportunity to take powers. What does an "early opportunity" mean? There is worry that the phasing out of public sector subsidies, which are due to end in 1991, will be conterminous with the introduction of the powers that he may wish to take. That will mean that there will be no central Government subsidy, which will leave local authorities to carry the can. That would be unacceptable in rural areas.

I welcome the statement that the Secretary of State has made about the opportunities for management and, we hope, staff buy-outs. Last, but most important, we would favour these proposals only if they are carried out on a regional basis, because otherwise it is impossible to protect individual companies from predatory depredations of companies from out of the Firth of Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind: So far as I could tell, I think that the hon. Gentleman was saying was that he gives a cautious and qualified welcome to the proposed privatisation of the Scottish Bus Group. Unless I am mistaken, I am grateful

to the hon. Gentleman for that. As far as Caledonian MacBrayne and ferries are concerned, I have said that we have not yet come to any conclusion about the future organisation or structure of the ferries, including whether and to what extent privatisation would be appropriate. The supreme consideration will be to ensure the maintenance of healthy ferry services to the island communities. There are other ways in which, in theory, it might be possible to do this.

For example, the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) will be aware of that support for those islands communities is organised in a different way. The islanders are provided with services mainly by P and O and other smaller companies. There are other options. Therefore, it is important not to come to a speedy conclusion on these matters, but instead to examine all the possibilities that might be available.

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): Is this not clear evidence that, at long last, after eight and a half years, the fog of political cross-subsidy and bureaucratic Socialism is finally lifting in Scotland? That will be warmly welcomed by bus passengers throughout Scotland. Will my right hon. and learned Friend turn his attention to other parts of the British Scotland Corporation that might benefit from similar freedom of management to run good Scottish businesses without further political interference?

Mr. Rifkind: I am sure that the levels of political support in both Scotland and the north of England are matters that equally attract the attention and interests of my hon. Friend. I am sure that we shall be able to apply similar principles in both parts of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Ron Brown (Edinburgh, Leith): The Secretary of State and the Government have sold the family silver, no doubt at a knockdown price, to his friends in the business community. Is it not true that, increasingly, within this country and within the Labour party, there will be demands for renationalisation of those public assets without any compensation and under workers' controls? Is that not real democracy, and will that not come in time?

Mr. Rifkind: I can appreciate the hon. Gentleman's aspirations in this matter, but he will expect me to conclude that he is hardly likely to persuade the Government until he has persuaded his hon. Friends.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): I join my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) in welcoming this further stage in the journeying of the Scottish Office towards Conservatism. Has my right hon. and learned Friend yet had time to read the proceedings on the Transport Act 1985? During the Committee proceedings on that Act, those of us who have the privilege to be members had to listen to Labour Members telling us of the doom and gloom that would come from the successive privatisations and deregulations of the buses, all of which have been proved wrong. Will my right hon. and learned Friend take heart from this fact and, when he has any moments of doubt, re-read the proceedings on the Act and gain a new confidence?

Mr. Rifkind: I say in the kindest possible manner to my hon. Friend that if he had ended up representing a Scottish rather than an English constituency, the Scottish Office might have approached the Conservative ideal for which both he and I stand that much earlier.

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): What is to happen to the rumoured £25 million-worth of reserves of the Scottish Transport Group? How are they to be distributed? Since a consequence of deregulation of buses in the Kelvin Scottish area has been the acquisition of a clapped-out bus fleet, the loss of one garage and £3 million of losses, who will buy that without the consequence being a massive loss in the number of journeys available to constituents in that area?

Mr. Rifkind: On the financial arrangements, I shall shortly be appointing financial advisers to make recommendations to me on these matters. We shall then be in a position to ensure that the best possible method is used.

On the other matters to which the hon. Gentleman referred, he will appreciate that whether the Scottish Bus Group is a public or private sector company, it would do devastating damage to its long-term future if it did not make whatever economic decisions were necessary on the use of its assets and other such matters.

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): Does not my right hon. and learned Friend consider it paradoxical that Opposition Members, who are presumably keen to get the best value for money when their own money is involved, have no interest whatever in the principle when they think that we are spending someone else's money? Is not their concern for jobs bogus? Instead, they seem to be concerned with preserving non-jobs. If jobs are providing services that people want to buy in the market place, they will be as safe after privatisation and competition as before.

Mr. Rifkind: I do not think that Opposition Members' concern for jobs is bogus; it is simply confused.

Mr. Sam Galbraith (Strathkelvin and Bearsden): As the Minister knows, Kelvin Scottish is an important company in my constituency. It is one of the largest employers and in large parts of my constituency it provides the only form of transport. I have to deal with the problems, as do some Conservative Members, confronting rural areas. In that context, and further to the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) does the Minister intend to take any steps to ensure that the control of any new companies is retained in Scotland, or will it be possible for that control to move elsewhere?

Mr. Rifkind: As the hon. Gentleman will be aware, there is no legislative provision—under this Government or any previous Government—dealing with the control of a particular company in any one part of the United Kingdom. That is the legal position, and it has not arisen since 1979. It has flowed from the policy of all Governments—Labour as well as Conservative—as we live in a single United Kingdom economy.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): Will my right hon. and learned Friend ensure that special concessions are given to employees of the group when the industry is denationalised, so that the workers can have a special stake in the future success of the company under private control?

Mr. Rifkind: I assure my hon. Friend that we shall be giving close and sympathetic consideration to that kind of approach.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): Will the Minister agree that his complete failure to reassure the

[Mr. Brian Wilson]

people of Scotland about the future of services — particularly rural routes and other unprofitable routes— under the arrangements will be noted with apprehension? Will he further agree that his failure to give firm commitments on the future of Caledonian MacBrayne as an integrated unit serving the Scottish islands will be greeted with similar apprehension, not least by the excellent people who maintain the services in conditions that most of us would baulk at working in?

Will the Secretary of State recall the last Scottish Office transport privatisation? It sold off £1·5 million-worth of assets of MacBrayne Haulage to Mr. Billy Walker for £450,000. At that time, Mr. Walker was asked whether he thought that he had received a bargain. He replied:

"It would be a stupid man who didn't think that. An asset-stripper taking over this firm would have made a fair profit for the money. We have no intention of doing that."

Will the Secretary of State consider that Mr. Billy Walker, who was handed this valuable public asset on a plate, is about to sell MacBrayne Haulage—Kildonan MacBrayne, as it now is — to a firm in Yorkshire without a whit of social guarantee for those who rely on the services? Is that the policy that the right hon. and learned Gentleman intends to pursue? If so, can he not easily understand why his party is a discredited rump in rural, as well as urban, Scotland?

Mr. Rifkind: I am not quite clear from the hon. Gentleman's splendid but somewhat empty rhetoric what his conclusions are. If a Scottish company had purchased an English company, would he have condemned that in similar terms, and if not, why not?

Mr. Wilson: What about the knockdown price?

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that, although we are glad for Scotland, the new wind of free enterprise that is blowing through Scotland is regarded with some apprehension elsewhere in the United Kingdom? It will undoubtedly attract back to the country those entrepreneurs who were so famous in Scotland. Our gain will be your loss.

Mr. Rifkind: It is certainly the case that Scotland's major contribution to the industrial growth of the United Kingdom was based not on Government funds but on the ingenuity of the enterprise and initiative of the Scots themselves.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): On a point of order arising out of questions, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. It does not have to arise out of questions.

Mr. Walker: I advise you and the House, Mr. Speaker, that the Billy Walker who was referred to in the question that was asked by the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) is not me, nor is he a relative of mine.

Telephone Talkabout (Abolition)

4.1 pm

Mr. Terry Lewis (Worsley): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to prevent the use of the national telephone system for the purpose of joining together several telephone users at a time for casual conversation.

I make no apology for returning to the subject so soon after having raised the matter in December by the same means. The objective of the Talkabout service is to join up to 10 people at random—10 young people, usually—in casual telephone conversation. When so joined, they engage in what is mainly idle chatter, and which mostly, to say the least, is banal. That sounds fine and harmless, but there are five main complaints to which I draw the attention of the House. They are the obscene conversation that takes place; racist comments, which are usual; the costs; the addiction that young people suffer; and the exchange of phone numbers to make dates with perfect strangers—"imperfect strangers" is probably a more apt description.

One need say little about obscene conversations and racist remarks. To start with, they are contrary to the telecommunications legislation. There are procedures by which they could effectively be dealt with outside British Telecom. That has not happened. If anybody argues that racist comments and obscene conversations do not take place, the evidence of my own ears argues the contrary.

The cost of the service to the consumer is tremendous. The problem is that British Telecom gears its advertising to young people, who, mainly, are not subscribers to the telephone service. That is a bad business ethic. It is immoral for a huge corporation such as British Telecom to advertise in that way. It is tantamount to encouraging young people to steal.

I show the House a Talkabout bill. This bill was sent to me by a constituent of an hon. Friend in the north-east. He received a bill of £351 and complained to British Telecom. He was told that it was a bona fide bill and that he had to pay it. He subsequently paid British Telecom for a computer printout of his bill. I show the House the computer printout, nine tenths of which comprises calls made by his 15-year-old son to the Talkabout service. That consumer is still strenuously arguing with British Telecom that he should not have to pay the bill. The service is driving people into debt. People innocently think that their telephones are being reasonably used by their families, but, usually, a youngster in a family is not using it reasonably.

I draw another problem to the attention of Conservative Members in particular. Small business men are in the same boat as parents. Small business men who employ young people may find that their telephone bills have escalated. I suggest that they quickly get on to British Telecom and get a printout. They will find that their profits are rapidly going down the drain. I sincerely hope that that matter interests Conservative Members.

One of the worst examples of despair that has come to my attention through another hon. Friend concerns a young lady in Scotland—a 15-year-old girl. When her mother received a bill for £397, she attempted to commit suicide. That young lady spent a long time seriously ill in hospital. Thankfully, she is now on the mend. From conversations that I have had, I do not believe that British Telecom is working hard to help that family's problem.

Young people have written to me stating that they are addicted to the Talkabout system. They are addicted in the same way in which people are addicted to one-armed bandits and fruit machines. Of course, it leads to escalating bills and the matrimonial and family problems to which I have referred.

Another problem is potentially more serious. It is the exchanging of telephone numbers. One example occurred not far from the House. After an exchange of telephone numbers, three young girls were abducted, not to put too fine a point on it, by an ill-disposed man.

For the best part of two years, British Telecom has claimed that it is capable of monitoring the problem. That is not so. It cannot effectively monitor and control callers, mainly because there are up to 10 people on a line. Some monitors look after more than one line, and many more than one line in some areas. Control, perforce, is reactive. British Telecom can react only after an obscene comment is made, after a rascist comment is made, and only after telephone numbers are exchanged.

In addition, the young people who know that this campaign is running and that the House is examining the service, have invented their own ways of circumventing British Telecom's weak control. They have a code by which they swap telephone numbers. They have all sorts of ingenious ideas for getting into the service when the service has been stopped. I shall give the House an example. It is part of the addiction.

I have evidence that some parents have taken their home telephone instruments to work to stop young people using the system. Young people then go to the cheapest shop around the corner and buy £5 made-in-Hong Kong telephones, and plug them in to run up their parents' bills. Even more ingenious young people take the tops off telephones. They know which part of the system to tap to get into the service. It cannot be locked up. Young people cannot be stopped by taking telephone instruments away.

Before anybody tells me that parental control and responsibility are involved, many hon. Members who are parents who know how difficult it sometimes is to keep an eye on one's offspring. I do not mean that in a malevolent fashion, but I hope that it strikes home to those hon. Members who might not respond positively to the matter.

I am convinced that British Telecom, whether well motivated or not, cannot police the system, from which it is making an inordinate profit. I cannot accept that monitoring is effective. I cannot believe for two minutes that any senior manager, from the director down, would wish such an obscene, addictive and costly service to go to the people of this country. If British Telecom cannot act, the House should.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Terry Lewis, Mr. Ken Eastham, Mr. Dennis Canavan, Mr. Tony Blair, Mr. Robert Litherland, Miss Marjorie Mowlam, Mr. Peter L. Pike, Mr. Lawrence Cunliffe, Mr. George Howarth, Mr. Ian McCartney, Mr. Bruce Grocott and Mr. David Young.

TELEPHONE TALKABOUT (ABOLITION)

Mr. Terry Lewis accordingly presented a Bill to prevent the use of the national telephone system for the purpose of joining together several telephone users at a time for casual conversation: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 12 February and to be printed. [Bill 91.]

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Ordered, That Mr. William O'Brien be discharged from the Committee of Public Accounts and Mr. Graham Allen be added.—*[Mr. Foster.]*

Opposition Day

[8TH ALLOTTED DAY]

Government of Scotland

Mr. Speaker: I must announce to the House that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

4.10 pm

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): I beg to move,

That this House welcomes and endorses the proposed reform of the structure of government in Scotland contained in the Scotland Bill presented in the House on 12th November 1987; and, believing that it both reflects the strongly expressed wishes of the people of Scotland and would strengthen the United Kingdom, calls for the setting up of a directly elected Assembly in Scotland with fiscal powers and legislative responsibility for Scotland's domestic affairs.

I begin by giving an assurance to the Secretary of State for Scotland that I do not regard this as a debate about why he did not mean what he said in 1976. I imagine that he will be grateful for that, because the alibi that he has so carefully constructed over recent months is pretty thin. He is a man with previous convictions in the eyes of the Government. In Scotland he has an honourable history, which, sadly, is now being rewritten. It is very much a scissors and snopake job but the record is there for all to see. The explanation that he has offered, if never less than agile, is nowhere near convincing.

I am not interested in the Secretary of State's old speeches, but I am interested in one or two of the things that he said in the debate before Christmas, on 23 November 1987. He argued then, in a remarkably blatant way, that his allegiance in the early days to devolution was based on the electoral arithmetic of the day and that it was not a matter of principle but of expediency. He put that argument forcefully during the debate, when he said:

"The argument then was that such was the demand from the people of Scotland—and indeed of Wales—for some constitutional change, however illogical, and however much it failed to answer the fundamental point . . . we must make that change because the break-up of the Union was the . . . alternative."

The right hon. and learned Gentleman went on to say:

"It if became clear that certain constitutional changes were required to ensure the future of the Union, whatever doubts many of my right hon. and hon. Friends and I might have, we are so attached to the Union of the United Kingdom that we would reluctantly be prepared to see those constitutional changes made."—[*Official Report*, 23 November 1987; Vol. 123, c. 37-39.]

That was a quite remarkable gloss on the speeches that the right hon. Gentleman had made. It was especially odd because, at column 42 of the same debate, he stated that in his view the arrival of Scottish devolution would not necessarily lead to the break-up of the United Kingdom. That drove a substantial coach and horses through the argument that he had deployed. As I understood the right hon. and learned Gentleman, he was then showing a voluntary abdication of judgment and going for a cop-out of the most blatant and dishonourable sort. It was a case of, "public opinion rules, OK."

I advise the right hon. and learned Gentleman that if that was his position then, and presumably it is still his position today because it merely justifies his bombast on devolution by saying that the people of Scotland do not really want it, what price the poll tax, or what justification for the privatisation of the Health Service? We might as well wipe the slate of the Scottish Office totally clean if we are to substitute public popularity for principle, as the right hon. and learned Gentleman asks us to do.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman will not be taken seriously. I do him the credit of believing that back in the late 1970s he said what he thought was right at the time. He has either changed his mind or silenced his conscience for other reasons—I do not know which—but he is certainly not doing any service to himself if he holds the idea that he did not believe what he was saying, and that in some way his resignation from the Opposition Front Bench over devolution was a personal act of idiosyncratic flagellation. If that is to be believed, it is, indeed, a Pyrrhic victory for the right hon. and learned Gentleman.

The Secretary of State is now trying to pretend that there is the silence of the grave in the Conservative party. We know that that is not true, because there are already rustlings in the undergrowth. There are probably some Conservative Members who have some sympathy—indeed, some have consistently shown sympathy—for devolution. Councillor Stevenson and Councillor Brian Meek and others are putting forward a case. I remember that in a splendid article, to which I have referred before, Councillor Brian Meek noted that the characteristic of Conservative Members of Parliament for Scotland was that they would jump into the sea if asked to do so by the Prime Minister, without stopping to take off their trousers. Little changes, even after the general election. However, at least that good councillor is proving that some Tories are not prepared to jump to each and every command.

For Labour Members, devolution is an argument based on the condition of Scotland and on the Scottish psychology. It is a debate about our place in the United Kingdom and our ability to contribute to a common cause. We believe that that is a strong and sound case that has been well made out. It is an argument about democratic control, about the control of almost 7,000 civil servants already in post, and about the sprawling mass of the Scottish Office administration. At the moment, one Minister covers, for example, a Health Service that is in crisis, and an education system that has recently been in turmoil and may well be so again if certain plans are pursued.

The other day I read a famous passage about the Minister's predecessor at the Scottish Office. He was described as a Pharos of Scotland:

"who steered upon him was safe, who disregarded his light was wrecked".

Every appointment and every detail of the administration, and the placing of every policeman, was

"the breath of his nostril".

That predecessor of the Secretary of State was a giant and was apparently omnicompetent and dominating, but when we looked to see who now sits in his place, we see the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth). There must be a better way of running our affairs.

This country is gripped by a metropolitan obsession. Power is being focused more and more in Whitehall and in the Scottish Office. Initiative is choked, and discretion is now a luxury that is enjoyed in few elected council chambers. Experience proves, and has proved, over the past few years that the man from the Scottish Office does not necessarily know best.

The argument is about democratic control and how we exercise that control over the administrative devolution that is already in place. It is also an argument about legislative competence. It is bizarre—some people would use the word grotesque—that, for example, housing, education and health are in alien hands in the Scottish Office, and that the Scottish Office itself is being run as a sort of branch office of the Adam Smith Institute. It is not pleasant to watch the death of a liberal reputation and to hear the right hon. and learned Gentleman claiming common heritage and common cause with the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth), as he did only a few moments ago. That is not an encouraging phenomenon.

I want to make it clear that we are not arguing that the Government of the day do not have a right to govern. However, a Government with any wisdom, common sense or sensitivity would exercise their power differently and would think in terms of devolution of power. Not to do so is to fly in the face of so much evidence of public concern. The case for administrative efficiency is simply offensive.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): So that we can be clear, on the subject of democracy and the Government's right to govern, does the hon. Gentleman accept that the Government have a mandate to govern Scotland, and is he arguing that the Labour party has a mandate to bring forward a devolution Bill?

Mr. Dewar: I cannot understand the hon. Gentleman's objection to us bringing forward a devolution Bill. I absolutely hate to think of the plaintive gnashing of teeth, the rending of clothing and the false hypocrisy that would have emerged if we had not done so. We are pleased and proud to stand by a good blueprint that was well worked out and well argued, and which is represented by that Bill.

I know that the Secretary of State will argue that in a unitary state one must accept the majority vote. That is the position that he puts forward. However, he must accept that Scotland is not just another administrative area within the United Kingdom. It is an entity—distinct, sometimes idiosyncratic, but always different.

The Scottish Office exists. There is a legal system in place—a corpus of separate legislation—and it is justified by our own particular Scottish approach to education and to local government, by our social priorities, and in half a hundred other ways. Apart from the self-appointed rabble of Scotophobes who now appear once a month for Scottish questions, who would want to abandon that tradition? Indeed, Tory Members and Ministers boast about their contributions to putting administrative devolution in place. If that is a cause for congratulations, what is so dangerous, revolutionary or wrong about parallel political developments?

The Bill that we have laid before the House, and to which we refer in the motion, is a substantial measure and puts forward a well-argued case. It is a realistic look into the future of Scotland. I accept that it is there to be shot at, but we are glad to take the flak: the case will stand it. Of all those who have talked about devolution or Scottish solutions, it is perhaps significant that the Labour party has done the work, put its detailed thoughts up front and shown the people of Scotland what we propose and want.

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): Granted that the devolutionary arrangements that the hon. Gentleman presents to the House have been well argued and well worked out, will he explain what the cost will be once those arrangements are in place? What will be the assembly charge on each Scot, on top of the community charge?

Mr. Dewar: I shall come to the financial arrangements for the assembly in a moment. Although the hon. Gentleman may imagine that this is some enormous new charge on the people of Scotland, the Scottish Office and all its works are in place. The hon. Gentleman may find that regrettable. He may have become the enemy of everything Scottish now that he has fled to find his fortune south of the border, but for those of us who have a commitment to Scotland, and remain there, that Scottish tradition is important and ought to be fostered. The marginal—and I mean marginal—costs of the administration of the assembly are a small factor to weigh in the balance against the advantages, if it is accepted that they are advantages, of a better system of government.

Miss Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): I thought for a moment that the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) was going to rise in support of the Bill launched this afternoon by the northern group of Members of Parliament. However, he seems to have exported himself north of the border and deserted the people of Darlington.

May I ask my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) about his views on, and, I hope, support for, the Bill launched today by the northern group, which itself launches a northern regional assembly and northern development agency?

Mr. Dewar: I strongly welcome that initiative. *[Interruption.]* We are attacked because it is said that there is no sympathy, no parallel movement, in other parts of the country; then we are attacked again when it becomes evident that there is. That, no doubt, would win cheap debating applause in certain artificial settings, but it has little to do with furthering proper debate on the government of this country.

My hon. Friend the Member for Redcar (Miss Mowlam) is right. One of the difficulties of the Scottish experience and the Scottish devolution argument 10 years ago was that it was unique. It was, in a sense, constitutionally lonely, and that set up some stresses and strains that were used effectively in the argument.

I welcome the fact that the point that I made about the centralisation of power—the need for influence and decision-making in parts of the United Kingdom outwith the London area—has led my friends from the north to come forward with imaginative and innovative proposals for a northern assembly and a northern development agency. If we achieve that kind of movement throughout the United Kingdom—for it is relevant not only to the north but to Wales and other parts of the nation—the case for Scottish devolution will be infinitely strengthened. My hon. Friend will find a warm welcome and strong support for the discussions that her group is launching in the north of England with a view to finalising and sophisticating an important initiative.

No one is trying to dictate what is the right solution for every part of the United Kingdom. We are merely noting that we are wrestling with common problems and moving in the same direction. Our particular solution is a directly elected assembly, with legislative powers, and a greater say for Scots within the framework of the United Kingdom.

[Mr. Dewar]

I recognise, of course, that there are arguments on the other side. No argument is so complete that it cannot be challenged. Some people will say that it is all an additional tier of government, an unnecessary bureaucracy, but, as I have tried to point out, the civil servants are already in place and Westminster, by passing power and authority to Scotland by agreement, will be doing a job for the United Kingdom.

There may well be further changes. For example, I believe that there is a case for a move towards a one-tier, all-purpose local authority below an assembly, in terms purely of appropriateness of scale, but that is for the future. The important thing is to achieve that passing of power from the centre to the areas where it will have its impact.

There are, of course, arguments for and against what is a grand design, an important constitutional change. What I find unpleasant is the parish-pump politics approach that so often lies behind the opposition to devolution. Neville Chamberlain was said to look at the world through the wrong end of a municipal drainpipe, and I sometimes think that Conservative Members have the same noble sweep of vision when it comes to the devolution argument.

The other point of contention—and I accept that it is contentious—is what we have built into the Bill: a right to vary the level of public expenditure and revenue that is raised in Scotland. I consider that imaginative. I think it right that we should be able to vary the rates without affecting the yield taken by the United Kingdom Treasury, which is the effect of the scheme that we have devised. However, the Secretary of State is entitled to argue, as he did in the House on 23 November, that this is

"the single most damaging element of the proposals".—[*Official Report*, 23 November 1987; Vol. 123, c. 44.]

I find that rather odd. The people who are saying that now are exactly the same people who, in 1978, were saying that an assembly without revenue-raising powers was constitutionally irresponsible. I suppose that we have become rather used to that kind of flexibility in recent years.

I believe, and I think that I carry all my hon. Friends with me, that if a directly elected tier of government is set up with those powers, it must have the necessary discipline of raising some of the money that it ultimately spends. I find it astonishing that the Minister's obsession with accountability, as has been illustrated in the argument for the poll tax, is so conveniently selective when it comes to a Scottish assembly.

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): Can the hon. Gentleman explain why he has not taken his argument to its logical conclusion? If an assembly is to have tax-raising powers, why should it not be responsible for raising all the money that it wishes to spend, rather than only a tiny fraction of it?

Mr. Dewar: I suppose that that is the new policy for local government announced by the Secretary of State. I suppose that he is going to apply a new principle. *[Interruption.]* It is a matter of balance. It is right that there should be a Scottish budget that is evolved in negotiation between, now, the Scottish Office — but, ultimately, the Scottish assembly—and the Treasury. We are arguing that there should be a right to vary that on the margin, which seems to me an unexceptionable and sensible democratic procedure.

I am astonished that the Secretary of State is so gloomy in his assumptions about the future of his party in Scotland. When he says that it inevitably means Administrations with high public expenditure, he clearly assumes that the Scottish people will forever bar the door to any influence of power to his party if they are given the chance. That is a remarkable assumption for any politician to make.

There is also the insulting presumption that, while Westminster can be trusted in its stewardship of Scotland, any politician who is directly elected in Scotland cannot be so trusted: that he will have absolutely no interest in the future of Scotland's industrial base or commercial life and will cheerfully choke it with the crippling burden of taxation. Of course the powers will have to be used responsibly, but I trust Scots to use them responsibly. The right hon. and learned Gentleman does not, and that is the basis of his argument.

We want a comprehensive Health Service that is freely available. If that is under threat, if we are threatened with a two-tier service by Conservative policies, with those who can afford it baling out to the commercial medical sector, is it not right for Scotland to have an option to go another way? Is it not right for Scotland to have the financial machinery to tackle the problem, given that we already have separate legislation and a separate financial framework within the government of the United Kingdom?

I believe that the case is strong. I accept that it will give us difficulty, because there will be scaremongering on the other side, but if we stick to it, and argue for it with care and responsibility, I believe that we will win on that, as we will on the worth of the general scheme.

Mr. Bruce Millan (Glasgow, Govan): On my hon. Friend's point about scaremongering, will he clarify the exact powers in the Bill that will vary the rate of tax on individuals, but not on commerce and industry, in view of the misleading and frankly dishonest propaganda that we have heard about that in Scotland from Conservative Members?

Mr. Dewar: I do not know whether it was dishonest, but it was certainly misleading. I agree with my right hon. Friend that there is no power in the Bill to allow the Scottish assembly to vary commercial or corporate taxation. We are trying to strengthen the government of the United Kingdom. We will remain within the United Kingdom, and we will create a system for Scotland that will allow us to contribute more effectively to the common cause. Obviously, that reflects a balance that must be struck. The right balance has been tested in argument, and we will stand by it.

Mr. Rifkind *rose*—

Mr. Dewar: I want to finish this important point.

We have built into the scheme a process whereby if there is a need to raise revenue — and of course the Scottish assembly must answer to the ballot box for its actions—it can vary the rates and the extra money will be available for the assembly to use. If it wants to cut taxation, that may be done. However, the United Kingdom yield must be maintained by an adjustment in

the block grant, which will be negotiated each year. That is simple. No doubt the technique and mechanics may be complicated, but the principle is clear and it will receive a response from the people of Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind: I am rather puzzled by the hon. Gentleman's response to the point raised by the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan). If local authorities can increase their marginal revenue by levying taxes on individuals, businesses and companies, why should the Scottish assembly, a much grander and more important body representing the will of the Scottish people —in the hon. Gentleman's view—not have a similar right which local authorities take for granted?

Mr. Dewar: Because we are devolving power to an assembly. We are giving it powers. We want to give it the powers relevant to its duties within the United Kingdom framework. The Secretary of State is being obtuse, although he is obviously enjoying himself. He is complaining bitterly that the scheme does not go far enough. If that is his complaint, let him bring forward amendments to our Bill; let him allow the Bill to be debated. If his real objection is that we are being too cautious in our approach I am surprised, but I am prepared to be tutored on that point.

We are producing a solution to a problem. The assembly will not be a talking shop. It will have substantial legislative powers, which will be increased and tidied up, with the inclusion of the universities and the legal framework within which the police operate. The assembly will have a budget in current terms of about £8 billion. It will have economic clout using section 7 of the Industry Act 1980, with control of the Scottish Development Agency and the Highlands and Islands Development Board. We are not claiming for it powers that it will not possess. We believe that it will be able to put Scotland's case effectively. It will be a competing centre of power and an advantage in an unbalanced land. Politics is about influence and pressure, as well as about legislation. I believe that the assembly will operate in both those senses.

We hear a blatant appeal to political fears from the Secretary of State and his colleagues. They argue that we are on a slippery slope to something very different. I note that the Secretary of State rather retreated from that during the debate in November, as I said earlier.

However, on one point the Labour party takes a different stand from that adopted by the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond), who represents the Scottish National party. We see devolution as a means of strengthening the United Kingdom, establishing that it can respond to Scotland's needs. In a sense, I invite the House to know the scheme by its enemies. Although I believe that Scottish National Members will vote for us tonight for tactical reasons, ultimately the SNP will see devolution as essentially negative because it represents reform and not the break-up of Britain. Devolution and separatism are ultimately incompatible.

Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): The hon. Gentleman referred to the other national party within our group. Does he realise that within our group of national party Members we regard the transfer of power from London as progressive wherever it happens, as my hon. Friend the Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) argued? I am concerned to note the absence of colleagues from Wales on the Labour Benches today to speak up for Wales and give Wales the same high level of support as hon. Members from the north of England are demanding. I congratulate the north of England on its initiative.

Mr. Dewar: I am delighted that the hon. Gentleman is congratulating the Labour Benches. I shall have to be satisfied with that rather grudging congratulation. However, I suspect that in time we may well be able to convince the hon. Gentleman that he should be more generous. I certainly hope so.

I have not been greatly impressed by the SNP's recent campaigning on this issue. The campaigning has been rather long on advice and short on action, if I may say that to the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan. Our late colleague Mr. Gordon Wilson called for a boycott of Parliament on two occasions, but he did that in vain, because his colleagues remained rooted to their seats. My hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) is now held up as a shining example of what others should do, but there is no sign of SNP Members following their own advice.

I genuinely tell SNP Members that I would have been more impressed if one SNP hon. Member had been present in the House to vote against the Second Reading of the Regional Development Grants (Termination) Bill, which killed regional development grants on Monday. The Scottish National party is hard at work portraying tonight's vote on this motion—while the big batallions will trudge through the Lobby and give the Government their majority—as a decisive setback. The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan told *The Scotsman* that the devolution option would no longer be on the table. I believe that that was said in an extremely hopeful fashion. It was wishful thinking.

Mr. Salmond: The hon. Gentleman will have the opportunity to hear me elaborate my thoughts on this matter later in the debate. What will the Labour party's strategy be once the motion is defeated tonight—as we know that it will be—for implementing its policy on which it fought and won the general election in Scotland?

Mr. Dewar: I shall not ask the hon. Gentleman what his strategy is, because I do not have sufficient interest to listen to his reply.

Our job is to campaign for what Scotland demonstrably wants, no more and no less than that. Nothing less than that will do. It would be a very poor politician who, if he lost a vote in the House, failed to move the Government miles in terms of their prejudice over a short period of time, packed, struck tent, went home and refused to carry on the struggle. That is not the way of the Labour party on this issue. We openly admit that we have a long way to go, because we are realists. We are in the realistic business of communicating what will happen and what our objectives are for the people of Scotland.

No doubt we will have to track back many a dreich and weary mile in the argument. No doubt there will be many echoes of the past. Doubtless the West Lothian question will reappear, probably during the course of the next half hour or so. No doubt the charge will be made that Scotland's influence at Westminster will be undermined. I accept that there are always reasons for buttressing doubt if the doubt exists and if people want to find those reasons. However, we should have a debate that does not involve myths or scare stories.

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): Referring to the matter of doubt, may I, as a Scottish episcopalian Jacobite bathed in scepticism, ask the hon. Gentleman whether, if the Labour party had been in power over the past nine years and had had a majority of the Scottish seats in Scotland, he would be seeking devolution?

Mr. Dewar: I imagine that the episcopalian Jacobite party in Scotland is probably just as strong as the Scottish Conservative party. However, in reply to the hon. and learned Gentleman, we have stuck with the devolution argument through good days and bad, through thick and thin. No one can say that we will not deliver or that we do not believe that devolution is right on its merits. It may well be that there is an argument about whether we should have it, but everyone knows on which side of the argument the Labour party stands. Everyone knows that there will be action when we next have a Labour Government.

Returning to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Redcar, I do not believe that we will lose our role and influence at Westminster. Our role may change. Scottish Members may not have to be jacks-of-all-trades, trying to cover the whole range of Scottish Office activities, but there will be more specialisation; for example, in foreign affairs, defence, economic and fiscal matters. It will be an important role. I certainly do not consider that we are trading power in Edinburgh for impotence at Westminster.

There is a different climate now, and there is a different thinking about regional government in other parts of the country. The northern Bill underlines that point. We are no longer isolated. We are part of a wider movement, with the strength that that gives.

The argument about devolution is a matter of conviction and gut root feeling about what Scotland wants. I believe that it has support. Even the new, reformed, sanitised Secretary of State has to concede that point. He dressed it up. He told *The Independent* that devolution was a preference in Scotland, not a priority. That is a nice distinction, but it will not stand him in good stead in the months ahead.

I believe that the preference is a strong one. It has been repeatedly illustrated and will grow because of the Government's insensitive policies. Its roots go deep. In the 19th century, Scotland was something of a fading memory. People were building British hotels and hiring elocution teachers to get rid of the last traces of a Scottish accent. However, the tide turned, as can be seen in many ways. The Scottish Office was set up in 1885, and since then we have built and improved, and we have tried to establish a structure in Scotland to serve Scottish needs. We wish to complete that structure by putting a parallel political and democratic roof on it.

There has been a growth of confidence in Scottish literature. Even in my day, Scottish literature was limited to "L'Allegro", "Il Penseroso", "The Deserted Village" and one Shakespeare play. People are now becoming aware of Scottish literature. The feel for history in Scotland has grown beyond Scott's "Tales of a Grandfather." There is a sense of purpose. The legal system, the Church, educational and cultural traditions have survived and flourished, and we must build on them and harness them in the nation's interest.

I remember the impressive arguments of John McIntosh about dual nationality. All Scottish Opposition Members would agree that we are citizens of Scotland and of the United Kingdom. Devolution strongly reflects that feeling. It is an important and pressing matter. The present situation is flawed and the danger is that flaws lead to fractures.

There is sometimes an air of beleaguered desperation about the Scottish Office. In a recent newspaper article the Secretary of State was driven to Hilaire Belloc, who said:

"Whatever happens, we have got the Maxim Gun, and they have not."

That was an arresting and clever point, and shows that he has a good memory. It was also flippant, and says something about what is wrong in Scottish society and Scottish political life. The Bill is designed to meet a challenge. If Scotland ends up with an assembly, it will have the Maxim gun, but that will be Scotland's choice. The Opposition face that challenge, but are the Government prepared to face it, or will it be the status quo again, at whatever cost?

We have stayed with our argument. The Labour party has fought for devolution for decades, and we have won many victories, but we will achieve the ultimate victory only by convincing and probably by capturing government. We have made a pact with Scottish public opinion and we intend to carry it out. The motion underlines our commitment and determination to win through. I commend it to the House and hope that we will have solid support in the Lobby tonight.

4.43 pm

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'rejects the arguments for constitutional change that would be disruptive, unworkable, costly to implement and destabilising in their effect; and in particular rejects the added tax burden that would fall on the people of Scotland from a Scottish Assembly with tax-raising powers.'

I have listened with particular interest to the speech of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar). There is a distinct change in the tone of this speech. Unlike previous occasions, today we were not told about the "irresistible demand" for devolution from the people of Scotland. That irresistible demand changed to a "strong preference". If the hon. Gentleman now wishes to maintain that there is an irresistible demand, we are entitled to ask for evidence of that demand.

The evidence of a demand is normally considered on the basis of representations being made to the Government. I have made inquiries about recent representations made to the Government by those who have strong views on policy. The Labour party in Scotland is committed to and calls for devolution. However, the Government have received only 64 representations since the general election. On the other hand, the Labour-controlled Strathclyde regional council has committed itself to a certain education policy. The Scottish Office has received 2,555 representations on that issue. That is a helpful indication of relative priorities.

We were told by the hon. Gentleman that there is a major new move towards devolution.

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Rifkind: I shall give way in a moment.

We are told that there is a major new movement in the Labour party, seeking devolution not only for Scotland but for the north of England, and no doubt for other parts of the United Kingdom.

The motion on the Order Paper is in the name of the Leader of the Opposition, who is committed to the policy put forward by the hon. Member for Garscadden.

Mr. David Marshall (Glasgow, Shettleston): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Rifkind: I shall give way in a moment.

On a previous occasion in the House, the Leader of the Opposition, speaking on devolution, referred to

"the central misrepresentation of the whole devolution case —the idea that more houses can be built, more jobs found, more happiness manufactured . . . if only we have an Assembly."—[*Official Report*, 18 January 1977, Vol. 924, c. 153.]

The Leader of the Opposition now supports an assembly for Scotland, and perhaps one in the north of England. Why does the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas), representing Plaid Cymru, appear not to believe in one for Wales? If the fact that there are only 10 Conservative Members in Scotland somehow makes devolution essential, why does the fact that there are only eight Conservative Members in Wales not lead to a similar conclusion?

Dr. Reid: As the right hon.and learned Gentleman is interested in evidence of the demand for devolution in Scotland, I draw his attention to a recent poll, undertaken for Scottish Television in November 1987, which said:

"Question 7: Do you think that the Government cares about Scotland? 20·1 per cent. answered yes: 79·9 per cent. answered no. Question 8: Which system is best for governing Scotland? 23·1 per cent. said the existing system: 52·2 per cent said a Scottish Assembly: 24·7 per cent. said independence". When 77 per cent. of people are not satisfied with the present system and want at least some form of devolution, is that to be defined as demand or a strong preference?

Mr. Rifkind: We should attach the same value to the results of that opinion poll as we did to the results of the opinion poll during the general election campaign, which showed that 97 per cent. of Scots did not think that devolution was a major issue for the general election. The hon. Gentleman should bear that in mind.

The hon. Member for Garscadden, in presenting the Scotland Bill, hardly referred to it. Normally, when one presents a Bill, one devotes a substantial part of one's speech to its content. However, apart from a few cursory references to it in the hon. Gentleman's speech, it might never have existed.

I have looked at the Bill. It is an interesting and revealing document. In the history of the United Kingdom, there have been campaigns for greater power from certain areas and the language is significant.

There have been calls for home rule, demands for Parliaments and requests for a Prime Minister of the territories concerned. Perhaps we have given insufficient consideration during the past 10 years to why the Labour party has steered clear of such terminology.

There have been no references to home rule, only adherence to a much more clinical and sterile term— devolution — which is hardly likely to set alight any great passion or interest in such a mundane approach to the problems of government. There have been no calls for a Scottish Parliament, merely for an assembly, which, by definition, has reduced relevance and significance. Most important, the executive head of the assembly to which the Labour party refers, is to be called not a Prime Minister, Premier or Chief Minister, but First Secretary — a magnificent title, normally more relevant to a senior official in a trade union or a senior official in the central committee of the Soviet Communist party.

Mr. Millan: That is exactly the terminology in the Scotland Act 1978, for which the right hon. and learned Gentleman voted.

Mr. Rifkind: The right hon. Gentleman is mistaken, and I shall explain why. I did not vote for the Scotland Bill on Third Reading.

The Labour party's reluctance to use the terminology that one usually associates with a genuine campaign for home rule is of great significance. The reason is quite simple. Opposition Members know perfectly well that the terminology which refers to home rule, to Parliaments and to Prime Ministers is the language of nationalism. They are conscious of the fact that they are opening a Pandora's box which they believe, by their addiction to a sterile indifferent terminology, they will somehow be able to conceal.

There is a basic and fundamental inconsistency between the Labour party's claim to speak for the Scottish people, and claiming that they deserve a legislature of their own, and its refusal to use the terms usually associated with such a political philosophy.

Mr. Salmond: Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman still hold to his view, expressed in *Scottish Field* in March 1986, that the powers of the Secretary of State for Scotland are not unlike those of a colonial governor?

Mr. Rifkind: I made no such remark. I am aware of that quotation, but it was never a remark made by me, as I have said on several previous occasions.

I repeat—I return to the point because it is of great significance—if the Labour party wants to maintain its argument on the basis that the needs and wishes of the Scottish people should be respected, why adopt such a meaningless concept as devolution? Why apply titles as insignificant as that of First Secretary? The Labour party will not attract millions to its banner on this issue if it campaigns on the slogan that every nation worthy of its name is entitled to have a First Scretary of its own.

Mr. Dewar *rose*——

Mr. Rifkind: I give way to the prospective First Secretary.

Mr. Dewar: I am delighted to have the right hon. and learned Gentleman's good wishes for my future career, but I fear they will do me no good.

I am puzzled by the right hon. and learned Gentleman's argument. I understood that devolution was a disaster, a catastrophe — the dismemberment of the United Kingdom, according to the Conservative party. We are now being told that it is all minor cosmetic tinkering and dry administrative adjustment, not worth a candle. Which is the right hon. and learned Gentleman's position? He is making himself more ridiculous by the minute.

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman's proposals have a fundamental significance, but I am puzzled and curious as to why, for the past 10 years, he and his colleagues have constantly shied away from the terminology which is

[Mr. Rifkind]

usually associated with campaigns for home rule, federalism or constitutional change in almost every other part of the world. There is a significance, and the hon. Gentleman is well aware of that.

Mr. Dewar: I am puzzled. If someone strays into the kind of language that the right hon. and learned Gentleman is accusing us of eschewing, that is immediately pounced on as an example of the central irresponsibility of the devolution scheme and as evidence that it is not really a scheme to reform the government of the United Kingdom, but something totally different. The right hon. and learned Gentleman is now complaining that we are being too careful, saying what we mean, and arguing the case in which we believe—that the government of the United Kingdom can be strengthened by giving a greater say to Scots over their own domestic affairs. I do not see why we should be pilloried for doing, precisely and accurately, what we claim to be doing.

Mr. Rifkind: That is clearly a matter of dispute between us. There is one major way in which the Opposition's presentation is fundamentally different from what we had 10 years ago, and that is its proposal for a tax-raising power. One must ask on what basis such a proposition is put forward by the Opposition. Some years ago the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), now a member of the Shadow Cabinet, said:

"Any power to raise revenue in Scotland would create a tax unique to Scotland, which therefore would be politically unacceptable".—[*Official Report*, 14 November 1977; Vol. 939, c. 161.]

Why is that which was politically unacceptable some years ago now a fundamental element in the Labour party's policy?

The hon. Member for Garscadden says that that is not unique to Scotland. He cannot deny that if that proposal were used to vary upwards the level of taxation in Scotland, it would mean a level of direct taxation which did not apply to any other part of the United Kingdom. The Opposition have spent many hours criticising the Government for the fact that we are to introduce a community charge in Scotland 12 months earlier than in the rest of the United Kingdom. Yet here the Opposition are committing themselves to a higher level of taxation in Scotland, not just in the short term, not just for a number of years, but for the indefinite future.

If the hon. Gentleman says that this is a power to levy tax downwards as well as upwards, I am well aware of that fact. But as the whole tenor of the Opposition's case over the last nine years has been that the Government are not spending enough resources in Scotland, is he seriously asking us to assume that, if the Labour party were in control of such an assembly, there would be the slightest possibility of reducing the tax burden on the Scottish people?

The hon. Gentleman can give me a theoretical answer. He can pretend that that is a matter for the Scottish assembly to decide. But he knows perfectly well that if one of the purposes of such an assembly is to achieve a more generous provision of public services in Scotland, that can only mean that the people of Scotland will be burdened by a higher level of taxation than any other part of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Dewar: Income tax is not a unique tax. It is levied in other parts of the United Kingdom, as no doubt the right hon. and learned Gentleman is aware. I give him that much credit. Is he trying to argue that if one has a form of taxation, it is constitutionally obnoxious and wholly impractical to have different rates in different parts of the country? If so, presumably he is against all forms of variation in, say, rating or poll tax levels when the time comes.

The point of the scheme is that it allows a variation of the revenue of the assembly, for which the assembly will be answerable at the ballot box. But it also preserves the take of the United Kingdom Treasury at national taxation rates. I see nothing offensive or essentially impractical in that and it gives the kind of flexibility that Scotland would clearly want. The Government talk about choice. Why, within the framework of the United Kingdom, do they deny choice to Scotland?

Mr. Rifkind: I did not suggest that there is anything constitutionally improper in one part of the United Kingdom being burdened by a higher level of taxation than other parts if such a political structure were created. I suggested that that would be fundamentally against the interests of jobs, employment and industry in Scotland.

The hon. Gentleman will have to address himself to another matter. In an exchange a few moments ago arising out of an intervention by the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan), the hon. Member for Garscadden confirmed that his proposals would not involve any additional taxation on industry or commerce. We have to ask: why not? We know that the Labour party believes that an assembly should have industrial powers, control of the Scottish Development Agency, the Highlands and Islands Development Board and section 7 grants to industry. Therefore, if industry is to benefit from the expenditure of an assembly, what curious reasoning has led the hon. Gentleman to conclude that any additional taxation that the assembly might levy should not include business and commerce?

We know perfectly well what the real explanation is. It is that Labour Members are excessively sensitive to the argument that heavier taxation will be a burden on the Scottish economy. They are hoping to convince people that, because that heavier taxation would be imposed only on individuals, not on business, such fears are unjustified. The hon. Gentleman knows that that is not the view of Scottish business or Scottish industry. He knows that the unanimous view of those who run Scottish industry is that the Opposition's proposal would be a grievous burden—*[Interruption.]* It is for all practical purposes unanimous.

Furthermore, if the hon. Gentleman ever had my job, and if one of his future responsibilities was to encourage new investment in Scotland, the idea that companies such as Ford would be contemplating Dundee, that Compac would be going to Renfrewshire, that Caledonian Paper would be going to Irvine, if they knew that their employees in those locations wold have imposed upon them a higher level of taxation than if they went into development areas elsewhere in the United Kingdom—*[Interruption.]*

The hon. Member for Garscadden does not understand this point. There are development areas throughout the United Kingdom. If the hon. Gentleman ever ran a company and was contemplating which development area to go to, would he take his company and his investment to that one part of the kingdom where his management

employees and the rest of his employees — the whole work force — were subject to higher levels of direct taxation than in other development areas in England or Wales? If he seriously believes that that would not be a major problem, he is living in a world that bears no relationship to the real problems of industry. There is evidence for what I have said; all the spokesmen for Scottish industry have said so — *[Interruption.]* If hon. Members refuse to accept the evidence of those who work in industry, that shows why industry has so little confidence in their views.

Mr. Fairbairn: I am sure my right hon. and learned Friend is coming to the serious financial disasters that would result from the Scotland Act. Section 2(2) would give power to the Scottish assembly to

"amend or repeal a provision made by or under an Act of Parliament."

If that is not a recipe for constitutional warfare, what is?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. and learned Friend is correct. The Bill contains some open-ended powers which might indeed have the effect that he suggests.

One of the main arguments that the Opposition have used on various occasions is that if an assembly had existed over the past eight or nine years, many of the major problems that have affected Scottish industry would not have occurred.

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): No.

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman says that that would not have been the case.

Mr. Maxton: I said that we had never argued that.

Mr. Rifkind: Then I must assume that the hon. Gentleman takes the view that an assembly would have no significance for the major industrial requirements of Scotland.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. The Secretary of State should not debate with hon. Members who are intervening from a sedentary position.

Mr. Rifkind: I am happy to accept your advice on these matters, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

If anyone is of the view that an assembly would somehow be relevant to helping the level of employment in Scotland, or to Scotland's industrial requirements, I would advise him or her to consult the paper on devolution published by the Labour party two or three years ago. It said:

"The economic problems of Scotland are very similar to those of Merseyside, the North, and, indeed, the West Midlands. They must be dealt with in a national context, and therefore, in terms of broad UK strategy, are best tackled by the United Kingdom Parliament."

I am glad that there is happy agreement between the two sides of the House—certainly between the Labour party and the Conservative party — that Scotland's industrial and employment requirements will be of little relevance to the work of an assembly, other than that the additional powers of taxation will add to Scotland's unemployment and distract from the investment needs of our country.

The hon. Member for Garscadden rightly prophesied that we would refer to the fundamental unresolved issues, with which the Labour party has never been prepared to come to terms. Here I refer to the question how, if an assembly were created, Scottish Members would continue to have a significant role to play.

Mr. Dewar: What does the right hon. and learned Gentleman think?

Mr. Rifkind: I shall come to my own views, if the hon. Gentleman will be patient. At present I wish to refer to the views of an English Labour Member, the hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Leadbitter) who, in 1977, said:

"If Scottish Members of the Labour Party think that for one moment I, as an English Member of Parliament shall tolerate their coming here and determining what happens in my constituency when I can say nothing about Scotland, they have another think coming." — [*Official Report*, 14 November 1977; Vol. 939, c. 182.]

That is not only the view of Conservative Members from south of the border; it is the view of a colleague of Labour Members. It is a matter to which they have blindly, in an extraordinary fashion, refused to address themselves.

Mr. William McKelvey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun): It would also be fair to the right hon. and learned Gentleman and the House to echo what I once told the House—that we do not seek to impose or to foist Scottish legislation upon our English counterparts. We do not seek to force the Scottish education or tax system on England. But we are having to suffer English legislation being foisted on the people of Scotland, and they do not want it.

Mr. Rifkind: What the hon. Gentleman does not appreciate is that what he would be foisting on the people of England is a Labour Government that they had not voted for. That is exactly what happened in 1964 and October 1974, when the majority of people in England returned a clear majority of Conservative Members, but still had to live with a Labour Government. I do not recollect Labour Members saying that that was a grave embarrassment to them. I do not remember the hon. Member for Garscadden or other Labour Members, on the Front Bench or on the Back Benches, saying, "Clearly, we must apply our Labour policies only in Scotland and Wales, because England did not vote for them." I do not recollect the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes), saying either in 1964 or in 1974, "The Labour Government do not have a mandate for their policies in England, so we shall not nationalise any industry in England; we shall nationalise only those in Scotland and Wales, because they are the only parts of the kingdom in which we received a mandate."

Suddenly there is silence on the Opposition Benches. Can Opposition Members explain why what is sauce for the goose is not sauce for the gander? I shall happily give way to anyone who can explain why a Labour Government, not elected in England, were entitled to govern on a national United Kingdom basis, while a Conservative Government are not entitled to the same privilege. I shall happily give way to any hon. Member who would like to deal with this matter.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North) *rose*——

Mr. Rifkind: I know that my hon. Friend is anxious to help, and that Opposition hon. Members are anxious for me to give way to him, but on this occasion I would rather give way to an Opposition Member, because we are dealing with a fundamental issue. The deafening silence that has suddenly descended on the Opposition Benches speaks louder than words.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Does the Secretary of State accept that there is a world of difference,

[Mr. James Wallace]

a deep qualitive difference, between the situation now and the situation in 1964 or 1974, when indeed there was a Conservative majority in England, but Labour seats in Scotland and Wales gave Labour a majority? After the last election the Conservative party in Scotland had only 10 out of 72 seats. If in England the Labour party had been unable to secure more than one seventh of the seats, there would never have been a Labour Government. That qualitive difference is fundamental here. The Conservative party in Scotland has no mandate, and it is no use pretending that it has.

Mr. Rifkind: If that is supposed to be a statement of principle, it is an extraordinary attempt. I appreciate that the hon. Gentleman is doing his best, but he knows perfectly well that the principle that one has a mandate only when a majority of hon. Members elected from a particular territory are of the party to which one belongs is entirely invalid.

Mr. Bill Walker: Will my right hon. and learned Friend ask Opposition Members why it was in order for a Labour Government, without a majority in England, to abolish grammar schools — something that the English cared very deeply about — using the strength of their votes from Scotland, which was not affected, and of their Welsh votes?

Mr. Rifkind: I am delighted that I gave way to my hon. Friend, because he has given a very relevant example, which Opposition Members will not and cannot seek to justify.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): Will the Secretary of State concede that he is trying to confuse the debate and take it off at a tangent? No one on the Opposition Benches, apart from nationalist Members, is challenging the mandate that the Government received in the June election to rule as the Government of the United Kingdom. What we are telling the Government is this: "If you are to be a reasonable, realistic and caring Government of the United Kingdom, you will take heed of the views of the Scottish people within the United Kingdom".

The Scottish people have clearly expressed their view, which is that they want a form of devolution in Scotland. The Government — as the Government of the United Kingdom, although they have little support in Scotland — should be conceding that to the people of Scotland, if they wish to keep them within the United Kingdom.

Mr. Rifkind: That is an interesting point, but it is in no way relevant to the position on which I had hoped the hon. Gentleman would comment.

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): Would the Secretary of State not think it equally atrocious if the intervention of the Prime Minister today were to secure the return of selective independent grammar schools in Paisley when they have been rejected by the electorate in Scotland?

Mr. Rifkind: Nothing that has been said today will have that effect. When there is a proposal to close a school, which is the choice of parents and which is full, that proposal will require the consent of the Secretary of State. Why the hon. Gentleman should be so opposed to parental wishes being taken into account I find it difficult to understand.

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central) *rose*——

Mr. Rifkind: If the hon. Gentleman wishes to intervene on a matter that is relevant to the debate, I shall happily give way. That is what is required, I think, by the rules of the House.

Mr. Darling: It is on devolution. The Secretary of State asked about the justification for hon. Members from different parts of the country voting on legislation that will affect parts of England and Scotland. Surely the point of devolution is that it gives expression to the fact that in Scotland the dominant wishes of the electorate are different from those in other parts of the country; devolution would allow those differences to flourish within the whole. It is a question not of a mandate but of allowing differences to be expressed within the whole United Kingdom.

The Secretary of State might care to address his attention to another point. Does he consider that the scrutiny that the House can give him and his colleagues for one hour every five weeks is adequate when in a Scottish assembly scrutiny could be carried out daily?

Mr. Rifkind: The objective is to ensure that those who believe in the Union and in the United Kingdom support a constitutional structure that provides a long-term future for all the territories of the United Kingdom. A system of reform which proposes a fundamental constitutional change for one part of the United Kingdom but no change for the other parts is inherently unstable.

Mr. Maxton: I have been listening to the argument that the Secretary of State is putting forward. First, I do not understand it because there is no English Department of State. We have the Scottish Office, the Northern Ireland Office, the Welsh Office and United Kingdom Departments. There is no English Department. Secondly, the pure logic of his argument is the abolition of the office that he holds and the integration of Scotland fully within the United Kingdom. The Secretary of State cannot argue for a separate Scottish Administration without accepting that there has to be some form of democratic control over it.

Mr. Rifkind: I accept that we cannot argue for a separate Scottish Administration on that basis.

Mr. Maxton: That is what we have got.

Mr. Rifkind: On the contrary, what we have was introduced by a Conservative Government 100 years ago — a Scottish Office within a unitary system of government. The hon. Gentleman is trying to reverse that process.

I have noted over the past few months a very engaging interest in my previous speeches. There have been so many references to them, and such is my curiosity about the interest of the Opposition, that I thought it was about time that I re-read what I said 10 years ago. In 1977, the time that the hon. Member for Garscadden was talking about, I find that in *The Guardian*, of all newspapers, I wrote:

"Few doubt that the Government's present Bill is unworkable and that the mood of the people of Scotland may now become reconciled to our present unitary system and single British Parliament. We could do far worse than our present institutions, but those who wish to preserve the Union must look to other solutions if the need becomes imperative. The answer will not lie in appeasement or in piecemeal constitutional changes for one or other part of the kingdom. It will require Parliament to provide a British answer to what would have become a British problem."

In 1978, in an article that I wrote in *The Times*, I referred to

"the fundamental defect in the Government's proposals; namely, that Scottish MPs will also be able to vote on purely English domestic issues, while their English colleagues will have lost the corresponding right to influence Scottish legislation. That is a defect that can, probably, only be resolved by either creating a federal United Kingdom or by dropping devolution altogether."

I am amazed by my consistency over the years.

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): Many of the arguments that the Secretary of State is rehearsing now are arguments that I remember hearing when I came into the House in 1978. What we are all agog to know—and I hope the Secretary of State will confide in us — is whether he voted yes or no for the Scotland Act 1978 in the referendum in 1979.

Mr. Rifkind: If the hon. Gentleman had been here for the last devolution debate he would have heard two things: first, that I voted for the 40 per cent. rule and, secondly — [HON. MEMBERS: "Why?"] Because I believed that devolution could only be justified if there was an irrestible demand by the people of Scotland. Secondly, I indicated the day after the referendum that, as that referendum had shown that there was no irresistible demand — *[Interruption.]* I voted yes; it is well known that I voted yes. I have never made any secret of that fact. I indicated then, as I indicate now, that only if there was an irresistible demand was that kind of fundamentally unsound constitutional change in the interests of the United Kingdom.

We saw then and have seen since that the interest in devolution in Scotland is largely concentrated on the Opposition Benches. Even among the Opposition there are three schools of thought: those who wish for separatism, those who yearn for a federal solution and those who are trying to avoid the consequences of their own philosophy and are seeking to achieve a devolved system within a unitary structure.

The proposal that the hon. Member for Garscadden put before the House would involve a higher level of taxation on the people of Scotland. It would be contrary to the interests of industry and jobs in Scotland. It would be contrary to the interests and well-being of the United Kingdom. On that basis, and because of other propositions that have been put to the House, I have no doubt that the motion should be summarily rejected by the House when it votes tonight.

Mr. Buchan: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is a grave matter affecting the operation and the privilege of the House. I arrived here within the last half hour to be told by the press about a decision referred to in documents, which I saw later, which had been given to the various Front Benches this afternoon. The documents contain a letter which had been sent to the headmaster of a grammar school in my constituency informing him, before the House was informed, that the Government propose to introduce regulations which would have the effect of saving schools such as his.

This is a crucially important set of regulations which should be considered by the House. Although the letter was sent to one headmaster——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I think the hon. Gentleman is raising a matter of privilege, is he not? There is an established procedure which would require the hon. Gentleman to write to Mr. Speaker on the subject. I suggest that he adopts that course of action.

Mr. Buchan: May I have further clarification Mr. Deputy Speaker? As I understand it, the information was given first to the headmaster of a school in Scotland before being given to the House. No one in the House has been informed, officially or otherwise, of the regulations. I may have chosen the wrong procedure. I am very angry, which is perhaps why I have chosen this procedure. You may advise me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, how best to proceed and whether it should not be followed up as a point of order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The question of a Minister informing people outside the House of matters which the House feels it should be informed of first has been commented on by Mr. Speaker in the past. It is not a matter on which I can rule now. If the hon. Gentleman has put the point in the context of the privilege of the House, the procedure would require him to write to Mr. Speaker. That is the best advice I can offer him.

Mr. Rifkind: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I understand that the matters to which the hon. Gentleman referred were announced in a written reply at 3.30 pm today.

Mr. Dewar: This matter is of grave importance, not just in terms of the fate of the schools concerned, *[Interruption.]* The Secretary of State groans, but he has done a remarkable thing. It appears to be done by the Prime Minister from on high. The balance between ministerial power and local government will be altered. It is legislation for a special case.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must raise matters on which the Chair can rule. The Chair cannot rule on such matters.

Mr. Dewar: I shall be brief. The fact that this incident occurred today was possibly not a coincidence, given the business that we are discussing. The least that the Secretary of State can promise is a full statement in the House tomorrow. We are changing a system in a fundamental way and many hon. Members will want to criticise that change.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: No doubt the Secretary of State will have regard to what has been said, but the Chair cannot rule on the matters raised by the hon. Gentleman. The best advice that I can offer is that which I offered the hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan).

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It may be for the benefit of the House to know that regulations and a prayer were tabled this morning in the Table Office. My colleagues and I have already prayed against the regulations and I hope that we shall have an opportunity for a debate on the basis of that prayer. I hope that that will help the House to proceed with tonight's business.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman knows that that is not a matter for me. It is a matter for the Leader of the House. I remind the House that many hon. Members wish to take part in the debate.

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): On several occasions I have tried to raise with the Secretary

[Mr. Michael J. Martin]

of State for Scotland the issue of school closures, which my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan) has also raised.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: We cannot start discussing the procedure for dealing with school closures. I was asked a specific question, and I hope that I have helped the hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan). The House should now move on.

5.22 pm

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): I do not intend to go through the rather arid country of the Secretary of State's speeches, but I shall comment on some of the points that he has raised.

I concede that this is the United Kingdom Parliament, for which we all stood in June 1987. I readily concede that that is a truism and that the only ways to show disapproval of that result, and therefore not to represent one's constituents, are to be disruptive and to get oneself constantly expelled, to withdraw, like some Northern Ireland Members, or, indeed, not to take one's seat at all.

I concede the Secretary of State's point that devolution is not a prime election issue. No single political issue of this nature dominated the Scottish electoral scene in June 1987. The nature and approach of the Thatcher Government dominated the political scene. No one would dispute that. The Scottish people showed an almost universal distaste for the style of that Government.

Most Scottish Members are here because the Prime Minister's personality found no favourable response among our constituents. She came to Fife during the campaign and her visit was shrouded in secrecy, not particularly for security reasons, but because the opposition was such that she would have had a rough ride from the general public.

Of course, Conservative Members march to a different drum. They believe that, because they have a United Kingdom mandate, Scotland must be given the shock treatment of Thatcherite policy. I do not think that I am misinterpreting the position. They believe that we will eventually see that this is good for us and that the Scottish electorate have been terribly mistaken in rejecting Thatcherite policy in successive general elections.

This is a gamble on the part of Scottish Tories. I have little objection to them gambling with their own future, but today we are discussing the future government of Scotland and the future of our country. What is before us today is not merely a piece of paper with 48 clauses and five schedules. That might be easily dismissed and we might be willing to listen to disputation on it clause by clause, and line by line. What is before us today—I wish that the Secretary of State would rise to his office—is the democratic structure of Scotland which will fit the requirements not just for the 1980s and 1990s, but for the years after 2000.

I give the Prime Minister credit. She, perhaps more than any of our other political leaders, recognises the imperatives of science and technology. Science and technology in modern society have enabled individuals to adopt a self-sufficient, self-reliant approach. Like most hon. Members, I shudder at the amount of time that I spend isolated in a steel box, a car, on my own, going to and from my constituency. I shudder at the amount of time—when we get time—that we spend at home in small family units, watching television. The growth of small-scale businesses which do not necessarily feel remote from markets and information, bears testimony to advances in science and technology.

On the other hand, the revolution of science and technology, particularly in information technology, has encouraged the view that society can be centralised. My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) demonstrated a flaw in the Secretary of State's argument. If we took the Secretary of State's argument to its logical conclusion, we would wrap up the Scottish Office. We would wrap up a separate Secretary of State for Scotland. That may be the Government's design. Perhaps that is what the Tories are moving towards. Perhaps their desire for a wholly centralised society will eventually come about, because they give the impression that they want to eliminate all sources of democratic resistance to them, whether in local government or other spheres.

I put this point sincerely to the Minister of State who will reply to the debate. If the constitution stands that now seems to be developing under the Government, are there any hopes for decentralised areas of democratic power within the United Kingdom? Do they have any plans for constitutional developments which will give voice to the aspirations, desires and outlooks which go against those of Whitehall and Westminster?

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): No one doubts the hon. Gentleman's sincerity, but I put one small difficulty to him. If he argues that a majority will for devolution in a certain part of the United Kingdom should be met by central Government, how can he deny that will for devolution in another part of the United Kingdom — Northern Ireland? Or is he prepared to grant the wishes of those people? Is there not a certain difficulty?

Mr. Douglas: I recognise that the Northern Ireland situation is extremely delicate, especially for the Labour party. I do not want to be tangential or to avoid the point. We make claims for Scotland because Labour party members stood for election there. There is a great weakness in our advocacy of certain policies in Northern Ireland, because the Labour party does not participate in Northern Ireland elections. Some may say that Northern Ireland must remain part of the United Kingdom unless and until the people of Northern Ireland change that. That is the constitutional view. I claim that the people of Northern Ireland are entitled to a flexible view of how they would democratically control themselves. This is a reflection not just on the Labour party but on the whole House. Because of the strains of history and the delicate position, we have not been able to deal with this matter. I recognise the difficulty.

The centralised approach which the Tories adopt is damaging to the unity of the United Kingdom because it is unlikely to meet the important social aspirations of people in Scotland. It may suit Conservative Members because it facilitates the view that Whitehall, Westminster or St. Andrew's house temporarily knows best, but in a society of 55 million it does not take cognisance of a sense of identification or loyalty among human beings.

The logic of the approach of the Secretary of State is to do away with the Scottish Office and run everything from Whitehall. I submit that modern science and technology could assist them. There is another approach,

which claims that we have the resources to make government more responsible and more responsive to people's needs. I shall illustrate this by referring to taxation. Most of the arguments of the Secretary of State on taxation in a modern context fall down, especially his addiction to a poll tax. The poll tax will prove impossible, but not because there is no technical ability. I do not think that the right hon. and learned Gentleman would have embarked upon such a device had we not had our existing computer facilities.

I shall illustrate my point by referring to some taxation provisions in the Scotland Bill. The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup referred during the debate on English and Welsh poll tax legislation to a local income tax. He referred to the practicability of collecting income tax on a local basis because modern computers could be programmed for such a purpose. Modern technology gives us these tools, and will increasingly do so, to make variations in our constitutional and political practices which would have been difficult, if not impossible, to make before.

Surely we cannot think that these devices will be used only for the Government's highly centralised purposes. Surely, as Socialists, we must believe that science and technology can be used to enhance human freedom. That is what we are in the business for. Will the Government say that this constitutional edifice epitomises all that is good in human freedom and that we shall rest there until kingdom come? I do not suggest that we are putting forward a perfect device, but I argue that it has a greater thrust in terms of meeting individual aspirations, especially those of the Scottish people. We are not merely voting for a Bill. We are voting on the direction that the nation of Scotland will take in the last decades of the 20th century and into the 21st.

The Secretary of State says, "No change." We say that the imperatives are to change the forms and substance of government to make them more responsive to the needs and wishes of the Scottish people. Those who share that wish and aspiration will vote for us. The people of Scotland will make up their minds in a future election in relation to their responsibilities.

5.35 pm

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): It is always interesting to follow the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) and to listen to his views. To a degree I subscribe to them — a party's standing depends very much on hearts, minds, style and presentation and, equally important, on results. At the end of this Parliament in four or five years, the Government will be judged on that. The people of Scotland will have seen what I am determined to see — for example, unemployment continuing to fall as it has over the past year.

Tonight we tend to say to ourselves, "Here we go again. When will we stop debating devolution?" Is the Labour party trying to show its virility week by week, month by month? The Labour party was piqued that it was trumped by the Liberal party in November and that Labour's deployment of a Second Reading debate on its Scotland Bill was prejudged and pre-debated by the House in November.

This debate highlights Labour's ineffectiveness. No wonder the reputation of the "feeble 50" is developing week by week. Those hon. Members have shaped up particularly poorly during questions and in debates on orders and statutory instruments and on the Select Committee issue. The hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) has messed up our procedures in the Chamber and in Standing Committees, which shows that the Labour party is hardly fit to govern or fit to bring in an assembly with any hope of success. Labour Members must learn more about this place and parliamentary democracy before trying to take it apart with mayhem and to break up the unity of the United Kingdom.

We all appreciate the fact that Labour's stock is plummeting and that the heady words of June had evaporated by mid-winter. I was interested to read the leader in *The Scotsman* — no friend of the Conservative party — on 22 January. It said:

"Mr. Dewar" —

who has now given his life story to the *Sunday Post* —

"has to accept that his 50-strong phalanx has suffered a shaky baptism . . . he must . . . persuade all of his colleagues to trim their ambitions to suit the constitutional reality. Unless he is successful in that, Scotland's Labour MPs will appear to be a rag-taggle, undisciplined crew for which 'feeble' would be too kind a description."

[Interruption.] That is *The Scotsman*, not me. This shows that one of the newspapers of Scotland has already taken a different approach compared with recent years.

Mr. Maxton: Since the Conservative party lost 11 seats and the Labour party gained nine in Scotland in the general election and since the last opinion poll in the *Glasgow Herald* showed that we are seven points up in Scotland on our remarkable election results in June 1987, could the hon. Gentleman explain why he considers that the Labour party is doing so badly in Scotland?

Sir Hector Monro: I am explaining to the House something that is well known, that the performances of the Labour party in the House has been beyond description and that it is not fit to bring in a Bill for Second Reading. In a way, that is also a con on the Scottish public, because Labour Members know perfectly well that, whatever happens, they are in no position to obtain a Second Reading for this Bill and so are certainly not fit to guide through this House legislation that might have such an impact on Scotland.

The Opposition spokesman on Scotland, the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) declined to go into any detail on the cost of what the Opposition propose. They have spent the past year drumming up tremendous opposition to the community charge, enlisting the support of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, at great expense to the ratepayers, and saying that this is a unique tax; yet here they are in their Scotland Bill inevitably moving towards a far higher tax on the people of Scotland because of the expenditure on the proposed assembly.

No one would deny that over the past nine years the Labour party has shouted the odds from the rooftops. They have declared that we must spend, spend, spend to buy ourselves out of economic trouble — never mind inflation, never mind the rise in the cost of living. They say that if we just keep on spending, everything will be all right in the end. If that were to be the policy of a Labour Government and a Labour assembly dominated by Strathclyde, heaven help the economy of Scotland and heaven help the people of Scotland who would have to pay the cost of an assembly. It is no use the Labour party trying to avoid this key point in the question whether there should be an assembly.

[Sir Hector Monro]

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State was absolutely right to highlight in his brilliant speech how important it was to bring home to the people of Scotland that to put through the Scotland Bill as proposed by the Labour party would lead to one of the most expensive operations ever imposed on Scotland.

We know too that we had endless promises last May and June about the future of Scotland under a Labour Government and how they would overcome the problem, again highlighted by my right hon. and learned Friend, of how to be fair to England if there were a Labour Government only because of the number of Scottish Members of Parliament. Again Opposition Members dodged that issue today and sat in deathly silence when my right hon. and learned Friend asked them to explain away this very important point.

In the 1970s, I was one who favoured a form of devolution, and I abstained from voting on the Bill because I felt that there was merit in proceeding in the right direction to give Scotland additional powers through a form of assembly; but subsequent legislation and the subsequent attitude of Opposition Members have shown that my hopes in that regard were quite unfounded.

I have always believed in the possibility, which has become a reality, of a dramatic improvement in the administrative devolution at St. Andrew's house. In passing, I must tell my right hon. and learned Friend how delighted I am to see that he intends to return to old St. Andrew's house. As a junior Minister in 1974, I manned a small rearguard action to the then Secretary of State and asked that we should not move to the awful jungle across the road but should rather stay in that imposing building with its great Scottish Office tradition; and I am very glad that my right hon. and learned Friend is returning to relative peace and quiet, somewhere which the average person can find and where he can park his car in reasonable comfort.

What we should be acknowleding today is how effective the Secretary of State, with his Ministers, has been in obtaining additional resources for Scotland in industry, the Health Service, education, the police and fire servies and every other direction, and in helping local government to spend more money then ever before. The fact that local authorities come here, supported by COSLA, and talk about nothing but cuts is quite irrelevant, because more money than ever is going into services in Scotland due to the good administration of my right hon. and learned Friend and the Government as a whole.

All in all, Opposition Members have not succeeded in making a case that would carry any weight in Scotland. They have dodged the issue of the enormous cost that would be placed on the people of Scotland if an assembly were ever to come about. We must throw out the motion before the House and show the Scottish people that there is a better way forward than that proposed by the Labour party.

5.45 pm

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): It is always particularly interesting to listen to the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), especially on such an issue as this. I remember receiving an election address from him in the October 1974 election in which he gave an unequivocal and clear commitment to support a Scottish assembly. I also noted his wish to have the Secretary of State restored to old St. Andrew's house, a building which he described as imposing. It is an apt word, considering the impositions that the Secretary of State makes on the people of Scotland in his continued exercise of that office.

When the Leader of the House announced the title of this debate last Thursday, there was an audible groan from Government Members who feel that the House—rightly, in my view — is frequently asked to debate the government of Scotland. It is an issue which has been debated here over many years. In moving the Second Reading of the Government of Scotland Bill in 1913, the Liberal member, Mr. Cowan, itemised five or six occasions in the previous 26 years when the issue had been debated in the House. In 1966, my hon. Friend the Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir. R. Johnston) introduced a Scottish Self-Government Bill, and twice since his election in 1983 a similar Bill has been introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood).

Mr. Salmond: Could the hon. Member tell the House if the 1966 Bill that he referred to contained provision for proportional representation?

Mr. Wallace: I am pretty certain that it did. If the hon. Member speaks later in the debate, I will try to intervene and give him confirmation.

Against that background, although I have many reservations on the Bill which forms the subject matter of this debate, I nevertheless think that it is a welcome contribution to the debate on Scottish home rule and devolution.

It will come as no surprise to hon. Members on the Opposition Front Bench that one of my party's reservations is the absence of a clear commitment to proportional representation. It is perhaps significant that there is no indication which electoral system will be used. I remember campaigning in the referendum debate in 1979 in the south-west of Scotland; I now represent a constituency at the other end of Scotland; both constituencies are rural and are sometimes described as peripheral areas. It has been clear to me that one of people's anxieties about Scottish home rule without proportional representation is that there would be a large single-party majority which would dominate the assembly and which would not be sensitive to the needs and views of those who live in the rural areas of Scotland.

Mr. Maxton: I can understand the debate about proportional representation in respect of the overall balance within a country, but I must tell the hon. Gentleman that single-assembly constituencies, elected in the way that we suggest — which is two assembly constituencies for each present parliamentary constituency —would give a much greater proportion of seats in the assembly to rural areas than would proportional representation. I do not understand why the hon. Gentleman keeps putting the case before us.

Mr. Wallace: I am in favour of an assembly Member for each part of my constituency, but, assuming that constituencies voted consistently and elected two Members of the same party, it would double the imbalance that we presently have with the Labour party. I am not detracting from the considerable electoral success that it enjoyed in June, but it amounted to only 42 per cent. of

the Scottish vote. It gave it a huge preponderance of seats, which, if doubled up, would give it 100 out of 144 seats in a Scottish Parliament.

Mr. Sam Galbraith (Strathkelvin and Bearsden): The hon. Gentleman is confusing two matters — the geographical distribution of seats and distribution among parties. Proportional representation is distribution among parties, not geographical distribution. Proportional representation will not shift any bias to the rural areas; it will shift it within the political parties. I do not see why that advantages or disadvantages rural areas.

Mr. Wallace: I follow the point that the hon. Gentleman is making, but the Labour party, with one or two exceptions—notably the hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald)—derives most of its membership from the urban areas of Scotland, whereas the other parties derive their membership from the non-urban areas. It is not healthy for our politics to have one party with a predominance of interests in one area. The Conservative party is represented in the rural areas of Scotland, but—perhaps for obvious reasons—is not represented in the urban areas of Scotland. It would benefit the Conservative party, and would be healthy for democracy, if it had a more direct interest in and a closer relationship with the electorate in, for example, Glasgow, which it does not have under the present system.

In a previous debate, the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) suggested that my right hon. and hon. Friends regarded proportional representation as a higher principle than Devolution. It is not a question of one principle overriding another. We believe that, unless they are taken in tandem, the pro-home rule argument is weakened. Proportional representation has not been put forward by us as a blocking measure but as an enabling measure for a more democratic nation.

Our other reservation relates to the problem of introducing a new tier of government while retaining a two-tier system of local government. It may be that the Labour party has an open mind on this subject. If we were debating this proposal in Committee we would hope for some movement on it from the Labour party.

Mr. Maxton: Perhaps I can clarify the matter for the hon. Gentleman — we are anxious to have as much agreement as possible. It is in the view of the Labour party in Scotland that it would be for a Scottish assembly, given the power, to take decisions about local government and its structure. It has always been my view, and that of many Labour Members, that once there is such an assembly it would move quickly towards single-tier government.

Mr. Wallace: That statement helps to try to win greater consensus for the proposals that we have put forward.

While I agree that the boundaries and powers of local government should be a matter for a Scottish assembly, we have proposed that, at the same time as bringing in a Bill to devolve power to Scotland and create a Scottish Parliament, a commission should be set up whose remit would be to report to that Parliament with new proposals for local government in Scotland to reduce it to a single tier. It is necessary to give an assurance that we are not imposing an extra tier of government that which already exists.

Mr. Malcom Bruce (Gorton): Are we not anxious to get across the fact that the difficulties faced by the Labour party in securing the necessary support for the last legislation were partly because of the voting system and partly because people were not prepared to accept an assembly on top of the existing tier of local government? Therefore, those problems must be solved together.

Mr. Wallace: My hon. Friend has articulated our important reservations about this matter. If this were the Second Reading of a Bill, these points would have to be debated in Committee. At this stage, it is better not to give the Government troops an opportunity to say that the Opposition are divided and that there is no consensus in favour of the principle of greater decentralisation. On that basis, we are prepared to support the motion.

It is important to take up some of the arguments that have been advanced, somewhat weakly, by the Government. The Secretary of State thought that he had made a clinching point by saying that he had received only 64 representations on the subject of home rule. There is an old Scottish phrase that says that there is "no use preaching to Ailsa Craig." As we do not expect any response from the Government, there is little point in making any representations.

The Government have said that home rule is a short cut to separatism. The truth is quite the reverse. The longer that the status quo is dammed up and the Scottish desire for self-government frustrated, the greater will be the damburst in a separatist direction.

We have been told that business will desert Scotland. That is not a point that Lord Home advanced in 1979, when he called for greater economic and financial powers for a Scottish Parliament.

The last bastion of Conservative argument raises the banner of fear. It is not in tune with what for centuries has been the native Scottish spirit of enterprise and innovation. There are financial institutions in Edinburgh that all hon. Members would like to see playing a more prominent role. No one has suggested that they are being parochial or inward-looking. What we lack in Scotland is the political focus that would be the catalyst to draw more industry and enterprise.

Mr. Brian Meek, the Tory leader on Lothian regional council, recently said:

> "Opponents say that firms will go elsewhere if taxes here were different, but I think that is an utterly simplistic argument that can be demolished on a whole range of points."

Why is it always assumed that taxes will be raised? Fiscal regulation could mean reducing the rate of corporation tax. The Government have always advanced the argument that cutting taxation will make the economy more buoyant, but if it were the vote of the Scottish people to raise taxation, to opt for better roads, hospitals, housing and schools, that would be the democratic view of the Scottish people. If money were invested in education, training and better roads or, for example, in my constituency, on better subsidies for transport to and from the islands, it would help industry to become more competitive.

The Tory party in Scotland has advanced the bogus argument that a Scottish assembly would lead to an extra bureaucratic tier. As a description of our proposals, that argument is not accurate. It also ignores the presence of substantial administrative bureaucracy in St. Andrew's house, which is inadequately accountable; at least, it is not properly accountable in the limited time available during Question Time.

[Mr. Wallace]

It is not many years since we had the Portavadie fiasco. A rather mysterious financial consortium was given £12 million by the Department of Energy to build a workers' village for an oil platform site. The project was approved by the Scottish Office in spite of unfavourable evidence given at a public inquiry. No platform was ever built, and when the Government tried to recoup some of their investment they discovered that they had omitted to secure title to the land on which the village was built.

If we had a Scottish Parliament making Ministers accountable on such matters, I do not believe that that money would have been wasted. There would be savings in public money if the Scottish Office were more accountable.

Responsibility goes with fiscal powers. The block grant alone would surely be a recipe for confrontation. The blame for every school, hospital, trunk road or bypass delayed or not built would be laid at the door of the Westminster Government. Without revenue-raising powers, the financial responsibilities of the assembly could well be diminished.

When the Scotland Bill was receiving its Second Reading 10 years ago this month, my hon. Friend the Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) related his experiences when he was a member of the Royal Commission on Local Government in Scotland—the Wheatley commission. He drew attention to a visit to the Faroe Islands, where he had seen a community school, in which the members of the community took great pride and interest. He pointed out that the community had contributed 60 per cent. to the cost, the Faroese Government 20 per cent. and the Danish Government 20 per cent.

By contrast, in my constituency, my hon. Friend had been shown a school that had attracted 90 per cent. Government grant. Local people could not understand why it had been built in the face of a prevailing wind. They could not understand why there was no connecting corridor between the kitchen and the dining area. There were many complaints because it had been the responsibility of the people far away in London, not that of the local people. When the bulk of funding rests on a community or, in this case, the Scottish nation, there will be a more positive attitude to responsibility and price.

We are always being told by the Tory party that the Tory Government were elected to get the state off the backs of the people. In speech after speech, the Secretary of State has said that we must wean Scotland away from the paternalistic society which he claims pervades it. What could be more paternalistic, or maternalistic, than a Government who say, "Trust the people, but do not trust the Scottish people to have their own self-government". They trust the people, but only if they agree with them. That view of trusting the people leaves no room for the maximum choice, variety or diversity or for having a real influence on the decisions that affect the people. The Government's version of trust is the very antithesis of the Liberal view, which is that people should have a choice and be able to decide things for themselves.

We must take up, head-on, the issue of what really poses a threat to the Union. I do not believe that the threat comes from the Scottish National party. It could not have had more favourable political circumstances over recent weeks. My party has not exactly crowned itself with glory, but the SNP has failed to make any significant political impact, with all the wind blowing in its favour. I do not believe that any threat to the union comes from the proposals in the Labour party's Bill or from the proposals for federalism consistently put by the alliance parties. One might ask whether we would know Canada as it exists today if it had not been for its federal structure. It is unlikely that a province as alienated as Quebec has been at times would have remained part of a unitary structure such as that which we have in this country.

The most serious threat to the union comes from this Tory Government, who not only refuse to respond to the aspirations of the Scottish people for self-government, but do not even accept that these aspirations exist. In the last century, Lord Acton said:

"A State which is incompetent to satisfy the different races within it, condemns itself."

The intransigence of the Government on this issue may well prove that to be the case.

I and my party do not wish to see the break-up of the United Kingdom. The ties of family and friendship, the shared triumphs and tragedies of our common history over the past 280 years are sufficiently strong to unite us. However, we are so confident of that unity that we think that it is not only possible but essential that Scotland's nationhood within the United Kingdom is properly recognised.

In the great home rule debate of 1886, it was said:

"The passing of many good laws is not enough in cases where the strong permanent instincts of the people, their distinctive marks of character, the situation and history of the country require not only that these laws should be good, but that they should proceed from a congenial and native source and besides being good laws should be their own laws."

Mr. Gladstone's words ring true today. He was ignored then and great calamity followed. We will be in a sorry and dangerous state if his words continue to be ignored today.

6.2 pm

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) and to hear his discourse on the dangers and threats to the union of the United Kingdom. I would have thought that a little modesty from a Scottish Liberal on the concept of alliances, unions and fragmentation would be in order at the moment. I cannot think of any surgeon on whom I would call less to receive a lecture on that matter than a member of the Liberal party or a member of the Scottish Social Democratic party, if there is one at the moment.

Mr. Galbraith: Brutal.

Mr. Fairbairn: The hon. Gentleman is a distinguished surgeon, and he must have heard me give the anaesthetic before I made that remark.

It is an important political fact that the interest of the Labour party in the concept of what is called devolution and the Scotland Bill is an interest that has arisen entirely as a result of losing three United Kingdom elections. I remember no enthusiasm when my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) made his disastrous declaration of power. I do not remember the Scottish Labour party saying, "Hooray, we are all Heathites now." The plain fact is that it is saying, "If we cannot run SS Great Britain, let us launch a little lifeboat with a unionised crew." Essentially, that is what it is about.

It is nothing to do with principle. It is a new-found faith based on the attitude that if it cannot swim in a sea, it can at least swim in a puddle.

The Labour party has some explaining to do. We come, first, to finance. I do not see how central taxation in a unitary state can be raised differently. The fantasy put forward by the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland, that taxation in Scotland might be lower than that in England, is unbelievable. The Labour party in Scotland is constantly asking for tax-raising powers, in addition to those of the Treasury. The then Member for West Lothian, now the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) asked a fundamental question, which became known as the "West Lothian question". In a unitary state one cannot have different legislative responsibilities in which those in the large part have no say over those in the small part, but those in the small part can alter the decisions affecting the large part.

I raise an infinitely more fundamental question, which I hope will become known as the "Perth and Kinross question". The Labour party's Bill says in clause 2—all hon. Members should listen to this:

"A Scottish Assembly Act may amend or repeal a provision made by or under any Act of Parliament".

That means that without consultation with Parliament, without the leave of Parliament and without the vote of Parliament, Acts may be altered and it has no right to interfere. If we are to have a situation in which a Scottish assembly can interfere with the United Kingdom legislation, such as Finance Acts, there is no answer to the old West Lothian question, the economic question or the constitutional question.

Mr. Galbraith: If the hon. and learned Gentleman reads the Bill further, he will see that that clause starts off by saying:

"Subject to sections 3 and 4 of this Act".

Clause 4—or section 4 as it would become—would give the Secretary of State the power to scrutinise such legislation before it is presented to the House if he thinks that it is ultra vires. Therefore, the hon. and learned Gentleman's point is just a red herring, or a blue finnan haddock.

Mr. Fairbairn: It is not. Clause 2 continues:

"The validity of any proceedings leading to the enactment of a Scottish Assembly Act shall not be called in question in any legal proceedings . . . The validity of any Scottish Assembly Act shall not be called into question".

This will be an extra vires assembly. It will constantly be a law unto itself.

Let us be quite clear about the present position of economics and funds in Scotland. At present, of the nine regional councils, two rule and raise money in the name of, or out of the funds of, two thirds of the people of Scotland. That is, Strathclyde region and Lothian region. These two Labour authorities put together are the equivalent in size, measure and political intent of a Labour Scottish assembly. They raise infinitely higher taxes on the unfortunate people of Lothian and Strathclyde than do any of the other seven regions of Scotland.

Mr. George Galloway (Glasgow, Hillhead): That is why they keep getting elected.

Mr. Fairbairn: Exactly. They get elected because they raise money from the people who make the money and spend it on the people who do not make the money. That is always a recipe for being elected. Any assembly in the hands of the Labour party would increase Scottish taxes, not reduce them.

Let us be absolutely clear about this. The United Kingdom Treasury spends about 25 per cent. more per head on Scotsmen than it does on Englishmen, and nearly double what it spends on Cumbrians or Northumbrians, whether in transport, education, the social services or the Health Service. Opposition Members may not know this, but at the time of the Scotland Bill the Treasury conducted an exercise in which it worked out the relative unfairness of the treatment of the regions of Britain — not just England, Wales and Scotland, but the north of England, Cumbria, the west, the midlands, the south-west and so on. It concluded that Scotland was being overfed with between £600 million and £1 billion.

The first thing that the Treasury said was, "Right. Pass the Scotland Bill and we will want that money back. If you want to run your own affairs, you can run them, but you will not get British Treasury generosity to an extent that no one else in the country gets it." In Scotland, we now spend £8,000 million. Therefore, the assembly would have to start by raising between £1,000 million and £2,000 million, using its tax-raising powers, just to get Scotland back to where it is now. That is the first fundamental flaw in the Opposition's argument.

Dr. Reid: I am deeply moved by the hon. and learned Gentleman's touching concern over the onerous burden of taxation that the assembly might impose on the Scottish people. Given that deeply felt concern, will he confirm that the average family in Scotland is paying just over £27 a week more in all taxes under this Government than it was paying in 1979? Will he further confirm the figures that I put to Ministers some days ago, which I received from the Library? They show that, in addition to that £27 a week extra, the average family with two adult children will pay an additional £2,000 a year in poll tax within the next four years. Is it not the case that the hon. and learned Gentleman's crocodile tears over taxation are only a mask to hide the crocodile teeth of the Tories when they get their hands into the pockets of working people?

Mr. Fairbairn: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman intervened, because he has demonstrated another reason for our not having a Scottish assembly. He does not understand anything about economics. If he cares to examine the differences in taxation in Scotland between now and 1979, he will discover that the increase arises because the income of the average Scottish family and the average working wage have gone from the bottom of the table in Great Britain to the top. All that Scottish families are having to pay extra is £27 a week, and that is only because they are infinitely more prosperous than they were.

Opposition Members cannot say that industry abroad will not take account of differences in taxation. It is a sensitive matter to try to persuade someone not to go to Holland, Spain, Portugal, Cyprus, Greece, France, Germany, Devon, the midlands or London, but to come to Scotland. The most important factor of all is cost and the best deal regarding cost. Taxation is taxation on employees, the incoming work force and the company's capital and income. Let it be understood that if Scotland earned a reputation for being the high-tax country—just

[Mr. Fairbairn]

as Glasgow wrongly had the reputation of being the criminal city — it would be very difficult to shed, especially if the rumour were true.

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland referred to the history of Scotland, which few Opposition Members will have read, I suspect. One does not have to be taught it at school to take the trouble to read it. The fact that historical chance has left the border where it is does not mean that there is a sensible constitutional argument for setting up another Government north of it. If Opposition Members want an example of the folly of that concept, they should look at the facts. Any lawyer in the whole of Europe can practise in a Scottish court, except an Englishman, and any lawyer can practise in an English court, except a Scotsman. That is absurd. The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) is not entitled to appear in a court in England, but a Greek solicitor can appear in a sheriff court or in the High Court in Scotland.

That petty division—the idea that we must not allow anything that does not carry the title "Scottish" — demonstrates the fallacy of the argument. It is a specious argument advanced by Opposition Members who feel that if they cannot have a nice little Marxist republican state in Great Britain, they will settle for a wee one up north.

6.16 pm

Mr. Henry McLeish (Fife, Central): Opposition Members share a profound concern about the quality of government in Scotland. We can ritually exchange views on the matter and watch Conservative Members treat with contempt any considerations of democracy, but the essential question that I want to tackle concerns the quality of government in Scotland. The arguments about that are very important.

At the last general election, Scotland rejected two extremes. On the one hand, it rejected the extreme of Conservatism, offered by a party whose policies were clearly not in tune with the thinking of the Scottish people and which consequently suffered humiliation, from which it has learnt nothing. On the other hand, Scotland rejected another brand of extremism — the extremism of the Scottish National party, whose contribution to the devolution debate was to advocate Scotland's separation from the rest of the United Kingdom. The fact that Scotland made that decision placed on the Labour party a tremendous responsibility constantly to bring before the Government the needs and aspirations of the Scottish people, and this debate provides us with a useful opportunity to do that.

There is unease about the government of Scotland for two specific reasons. First, a tremendous gulf is developing between the governed and the Government. That cannot be healthy in any democracy. Secondly, the Scottish people perceive the Conservatives as anti-Scottish. Conservative Members may laugh at that, as was shown by the contribution of the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn), who has decided to leave the Chamber, but it is a serious business. It is not a recipe for stability if the Government and the 10 Conservative Members elected to represent the interests of the Scottish people constantly appear to be anti-Scottish. That is a key issue.

I come to the House not as a separatist or a nationalist in the narrow way advocated by the SNP, but as someone who is clearly interested in the integrity of the United Kingdom, in social cohesion and stability, and who passionately believes that those interests could be jeopardised if we do not move towards decentralisation of government and power in this increasingly centralised state.

It is quite obvious that the Government would like to dwell on the matter of taxation. That is ludicrous. They have not even accepted the notion that devolution is of benefit to Scottish people or can help in the cohesion of the United Kingdom and cement its stability.

My main contention is that, at present, we in Scotland are experienceing thoroughly bad government. That provides additional pressure for the Labour party to put forward what it regards as reasonable, modest, moderate measures to give Scottish people a more direct say in matters that affect them.

Bad government could be based on two things. One could be the Government's excesses. They are well documented and understood by Scottish people. There is another serious point. With the centralist Government that we have at present, it is obvious that strains and tensions are beginning to appear in other parts of the United Kingdom. A unitary state can retain cohesion and credibility only if it recognises the distinct features of all parts of the Union, not just the parts that are represented by the Government. To their peril, many people ignore that simple point.

Our case, within the House and within Scotland, has traditionally been about devolved government that would attempt to do four basic things. First, as some of my hon. Friends have mentioned, it would democratise the administration of Scotland. We have widespread administrative devolution; and, indeed, it is certainly a democratic system, so-called. It is useful to make that system accountable to Scottish people.

Secondly, there are separate national identities in education, religion, many aspects of the law, and culture. That fact must be recognised. Thirdly, the people of Scotland, as a separate area, have a different culture and different ways of life that the House will ignore at its peril.

There is a fourth compelling reason why the debate should capture the Government's interest, and even that of English hon. Members. My hon. Friend the Member for Redcar (Miss Mowlam) mentioned decentralised government within the United Kingdom. There need not be the same solution in each part of the kingdom. Nevertheless, the same compelling pressures that are driving Scots towards more power over their own affairs exist in different parts of the country. That provides the link between what has traditionally been a Scottish and Welsh issue, distinct from the main stream of United Kingdom politics. If we absorb that point, it will make the debate more meaningful and should capture the imagination of Conservative Members, although I doubt it.

If they are the accepted conventions upon which we base our campaign, I shall reflect for a moment on the strains and tensions that are now giving added urgency to the issue of devolution and government in Scotland. Again, I shall reflect on what I perceive to be manifest weaknesses in the Government's case. I hope that all Conservative Members represent their party's interests. That is fine. But surely some of them should have some pride in their political craft. When ideas about democracy

and accountability are being discussed in the Chamber, it is unacceptable for contempt to be shown for issues that allowed the country to develop the democratic system that is the pride of many nations.

The first point that I stress relates to legislation. I refer to education, housing, poll tax, local government, regional policy and bus services. If a devolved assembly existed in Scotland, Scottish people would be able to state their views and debate and judge such issues. What do we have? Uniquely unpalatable proposals are put forward by the Government, who take cognisance of nothing that is Scottish. Indeed, if the proposals were not contained in Government legislation, to all intents and purposes they would be regarded as a complete joke. That is offensive to Scottish people. When a Government's legislative programme bears no relation to the consensus that the culture reflects, it is a serious matter for the Government.

My second point relates to policy. We talk about the Health Service. The Minister with responsibility for Scottish health matters, with every power at his disposal, tries to force Scottish health boards to do things that are in the interests of neither the Health Service nor the people whom it is supposed to serve. Why? It is because he is motivated by organisations that care not a jot about the concerns, needs and aspirations of Scottish people. It is an absolute outrage that the Minister can abuse his power and, at the end of the day, is elected by Scottish constituents to represent their interests.

Thirdly, what about the parliamentary dimension? It is a farce for a new Member such as myself to sit here when the Government have about 370 supporters. But the Government cannot find five hon. Members to serve on a Select Committee. What do the Scottish people read from that? The Scottish Grand Committee has not met. During Scottish Question Time, the Government wheel in the Secretary of State's protection gang. If we have time, I shall reflect on the appearance of the hon. Members for Darlington (Mr. Fallon), for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) and for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton). I shall quote the kind of distasteful provocation that Conservative Members invite. Today's issue of *The Scotsman* states:

"We want an end to Celtic featherbedding . . . I think that after steel and coal, British Scotland should be privatised."

Then there is the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire, who couches ignorance, stupidity and insensitivity in the one body—a remarkable example of humanity.

Mr. Bill Walker *rose*——

Mr. McLeish: No offence is meant to the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) because he has been ommitted from my comments.

The hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire stated:

"Spending on the health service per capita in Scotland is one-third as high as in England because of smoking, drinking and confectionery. Why should the English subsidise the bad habits of the Scots?"

Why do Scottish people tend to be slightly angry?

Mr. Walker *rose*——

Mr. McLeish: I shall finish this point and then give way to the hon. Gentleman.

In the so-called mother of Parliaments, the Government will consider major aspects of scrutinising the Executive. What do we find? Because Conservative Members are 400 miles from Scotland and because the press is nowhere to be found during debates such as this, they say certain things and act in a certain manner, and their accountability is nil.

Mr. Walker: I imagine that the hon. Gentleman was in the House yesterday when a ten-minute Bill dealing exclusively with English and Welsh Health Service facilities was presented. The hon. Gentleman would have noted, as I did, that 17 Scottish Members voted for the Bill. One either accepts this as a unitary Parliament or one does not. If one does not, one cannot make sense of why the 17 hon. Members voted in that way.

Mr. McLeish: I support the United Kingdom, but I can do so only with a measure of sensible devolved opportunities.

In relation to the news coverage in today's issue of *The Scotsman*, I ask the Minister to disown the offensive comments that were made by the hon. Member for Tayside, North.

The fourth point that I want to stress is the general style of the Government. As I have mentioned, and as my hon. Friends have suggested—my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) has described "the goose-stepping tendency"—there is very little between the ears. The Government's distinctive style is to try to take the Scottishness out of anything that is essentially Scottish. That is a peculiar approach to humiliation at the polls. It is peculiar that they should seek to turn their backs on the nation and on the judgment of the people and suggest instead that Scotland is merely an aberration and an appendage of England and of English legislation. That is a highly dangerous strategy for the Government to pursue.

My final point on the bad government of Scotland relates to the profoundly senseless tendencies of the Prime Minister and her Ministers. It seems hypocrisy writ large for the Government to extol the virtues of individual freedom, of setting people free and of the enterprise culture, but, at the same time, constantly to draw to themselves every conceivable power which matters and, as a consequence, merely reinforce the regional dimension, which is fairly unstable at present.

I referred earlier to two forms of extremism. I have dealt with the Conservative Government, but there is another party in Scotland which seeks to comment on the question of government and to put forward different policies to us. Again, I feel confident enough to say that the Scottish National party learnt nothing from the election results. The fourth party in Scotland, increasingly working at the margin of Scottish politics, is so immersed in internal division, leadership policies and personalities, that it still maintains that the best posture for Scotland would be an independent Scotland even though that has been comprehensively rejected in subsequent elections.

I want to highlight and put on the record an act of supreme hypocrisy on the part of that party in relation to the poll tax campaign. We have listened in the Chamber to hon. Members representing that party, and to ex-Members who lead the party in Scotland. They say that we must resist the poll tax and that Scotland's interests would not be served by it. However, at the same time that the leadership, although divided, advocates a policy of resistance, the only council in Scotland that is controlled by the Scottish National party, Angus district council, is willing not only to collect the tax for Tayside but to

[Mr. McLeish]

advocate that Department of Health and Social Security payments should be deducted at source to make sure that the poor pay.

Mr. Salmond: If the hon. Gentleman looks at the record, he will find that he will have to apologise to Angus district council because it does not advocate any such thing. Is he aware that Angus district council has agreed to collect the poll tax under blackmail from the Labour-controlled Tayside region, which said that unless Angus district collected the tax, Tayside region would send in its own collectors? Will the hon. Gentleman explain that?

Mr. McLeish: Obviously, the record to which I am being referred is confused, as it has been conceded that Angus district council, under pressure from Tayside regional council, which does not have any powers to force a district council to collect, has decided to concede and to collect the tax. Is that the official SNP position or merely the local government dimension?

Mr. Frank Doran (Aberdeen, South): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way. I should like to correct him because his reference to Angus district council was mistaken. It was Grampian regional council, in which the SNP has a share of control. Indeed, it is the only authority in Scotland with which the SNP shares control. That council has refused to have anything to do with the calls and demands being made by the SNP.

Mr. McLeish: We now have it from both sides, from the SNP and my own party, that the position is even worse than I thought. There are groups within groups. Councils that are controlled by the SNP are doing the Government's bidding.

I have tried to suggest that there is no point in hon. Members suggesting that today's debate is not relevant to the Scottish people. There is an important case to be made for devolved government throughout the United Kingdom. We want an assembly in Scotland as a solution to our problems. The solution could be different in the north-east of England.

I am also arguing that the Government's behaviour is leading to bad government in Scotland and to an increasingly unstable situation. I hope that when the Minister replies to the debate he will address himself to those points because they are important, however abstract they may be considered. I shall support the Scotland Bill. If it is rejected, it will be a campaigning weapon for us between now and the next election. It would warn the Conservatives that if they want the death-wish theory of politics to apply at the next election, they should carry on as they are because I am sure that that would be a self-fulfilling prophecy.

6.35 pm

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland told the House this afternoon that in the referendum following the passing of the Scotland Act 1978, he had voted in favour of the proposed assembly in Edinburgh. I must make a similar confession to the House about my past misdeeds. I voted against the Scotland and Wales Bill on every occasion that I was able to do so and, indeed, I voted against the Scotland Bill on every occasion that I was able to do so. If I had had a vote in the referendum—alas, I did not—I should have voted against the proposed assembly in Edinburgh.

This debate is taking place in what is still the United Kingdom Parliament. I hope that Opposition Members will not think it inappropriate for an hon. Member who represents an English constituency to take part, especially one who is an emigré Scot. The debate is on the motion that was moved by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) that the proposed Scotland Bill "would strengthen the United Kingdom." I wish to challenge that proposition. In doing so, I regret that the amendment that was moved by my right hon. and learned Friend did not challenge that part of the Opposition motion.

The proposals contained in the Scotland Bill would weaken the unity of the United Kingdom and the Union between England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. I understand and respect the views which have been put by Opposition Members, and I admired the speech of the hon. Member for Garscadden. However, part of the problem with the United Kingdom in recent years is that we have suffered not from too little government, but from too much. The proposals in the Bill will add one further tier of government, even in Scotland.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): The Bill does not propose the creation of another tier of government. All that it proposes to do is to democratise a tier of government that already exists, namely the Scottish Office, which consists of 10,000 civil servants headed by this rubbishy team of Ministers who, as a group, are not elected by the people of Scotland, and who therefore are not accountable to the people of Scotland.

Mr. Gow: I realise that I should not have given way to the hon. Gentleman—[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer him."] I shall certainly answer him. The proposals in the Scotland Bill provide not only for a Scottish assembly but for a new chief executive. What would happen? At present there are 56 district councils and nine regional councils in Scotland. We already have a Parliament of the United Kingdom, and even the Labour party does not propose to diminish Scotland's representation in the United Kingdom Parliament. However, over and above those three existing tiers there is now—to my regret, we are noticing it with greater frequency—the growing power of the European Parliament, which the hon. Gentleman and I used to be able to describe properly as the European Assembly, although we can no longer do so.

To each of those four elected bodies, to which those who live in Scotland, like those who live in Sussex, have the right to send Members, the Labour party proposes to add a fifth——

Dr. Reid *rose*——

Mr. Gow: No. The hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) has destroyed the opportunity for Labour Members to make further interventions in my speech. If the hon. Gentleman had made a sensible intervention, I would have given way now. *[Interruption.]* Labour Members must not rebuke me; they must rebuke their hon. Friend.

The hon. Gentleman's proposal for another assembly for those who, in effect, will be Ministers—my right hon. and learned Friend even suggested that one might be

called the Prime Minister of Scotland—will, as is self-evident, add to government and its cost. It is to that extra cost, and to the disruption and unworkability of the proposal, that the amendment refers. However, there is a further objection to the proposed measure, over and above the ground that it would add to the problems of governing a part of the kingdom that is already over-governed: that we should not start to govern one part of the kingdom even more differently from the way that we govern the rest.

I concede that Scotland is already governed differently, with regional councils instead of county councils, and a different legal system. But the greatest difference in the way that we govern the four countries that make up the United Kingdom is not between the government of Scotland and the rest of the kingdom, but between that of Northern Ireland and the rest of the kingdom. I can tell my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Treasury Bench that there are many marked differences — which are frequently not perceived in the House — between the rights now enjoyed by those who live in Scotland, England and Wales and the rights of those who live in Northern Ireland.

Let me give the House a warning. Because we have chosen to govern Northern Ireland in a way so dramatically different from the way in which we govern the rest of the kingdom, we do not want to fall into the same trap with Scotland. I shall illustrate what I mean. Each of us has the opportunity to move an amendment to proposed legislation that affects our constituents in England, Scotland and Wales. However, the 17 hon. Members who represent constituencies in Northern Ireland have no opportunity to move amendments to legislation that affects their constituencies, because we legislate for Northern Ireland almost exclusively by Order in Council. I believe that my right hon. Friend the Patronage Secretary is sympathetic to the view that it is unreasonable that Members of Parliament representing Northern Ireland constituencies should be free to move amendments to proposed Scottish legislation, but unable to move amendments to legislation exclusively affecting Northern Ireland.

There is another important difference. Broadly speaking, the powers enjoyed by regional councils in Scotland are similar to those enjoyed by county councils in England and Wales. Every one of our constituents—there is, alas, no Northern Ireland Member in the Chamber—has the opportunity to vote for a county or regional council. But, in Northern Ireland alone, there is no possibility for any citizen to vote for either a county or a regional council. In general, the powers enjoyed by district councils in Scotland are similar to those enjoyed in England and Wales; in Northern Ireland, however, there is a dramatic diminution of the powers enjoyed by the 26 district councils in the Province.

The Labour party has a long history of misunderstanding the mood of Scotland. *[Laughter.]* Mercifully, I have evidence to support that proposition. Nearly 10 years ago, the House gave a Third Reading to the Scotland Bill. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) has only just arrived in the Chamber, and he would be wise to listen. He might learn something.

When the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan), then Secretary of State for Scotland, moved the Third Reading of the Scotland Bill on 22 February 1978 —I remember, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that you were in the Chamber then, and you may even have committed his words to memory—he said:

> "I believe that the debate now is moving out of this House and to the people of Scotland. I believe that when it goes there we shall have their support and the implementation of the Assembly."—[*Official Report*, 22 February 1978; Vol. 944, c. 1461.]

However, when the provisions of what was once the famous clause 80, insisted upon by the House and endorsed in the other place, were put to the Scottish people —in my view, it was right to ask them whether they wished to be governed differently from the rest of the kingdom—they proved that the then Secretary of State was wrong. The test insisted on by Parliament was not met when the Scottish people voted.

If the then Secretary of State was proved by subsequent events to have misread the mood of the people of Scotland, I assert that it is possible that the present shadow Secretary of State has done the same. That is why I believe that my right hon. and learned Friend was right to move his amendment, and I hope that the House will dismiss the absurd proposal in the new Scotland Bill.

6.47 pm

Mr. Frank Doran (Aberdeen, South): The people of Scotland will, I am sure, be grateful to the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) for giving us that perspective on Scottish politics. It is quite alien, however, to the reality on the ground, which is that 76 per cent. of the Scottish people voted for parties that offered devolution in various shapes as part of their election programmes. I think that the hon. Gentleman's points will be as readily dismissed as was the Tory party last June.

My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), in introducing the motion, made a strong case, not only for the Labour party's position on devolution, but for the Scotland Bill. It is both practical and well thought out, and will be of considerable value in the improvement of the government, not only of Scotland, but of the United Kingdom. That point needs to be stressed, because there is tension in Scotland.

The Secretary of State was, I accept, right in saying that his postbag was not bulging with demands from the Scottish people for devolution. However, the Scottish people are sophisticated. Their political activity is channelled through the ballot box, and, as I have said, they expressed their view on the issue in the votes that they cast in June 1987 in rejecting the position of the Conservative party—as they will reject it again in May, in the district elections.

The Bill is an important measure. My colleagues have made the case for it and no doubt the serried ranks on the Conservative Benches will jump to attention and vote against the motion and the Bill, because that is what they have been ordered to do. Even those who previously stated a commitment to devolution, such as the Secretary of State for Scotland and the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) will do as they are told and vote against it. However, they will be voting against a measure that would add considerably to the government of the United Kingdom, and I stress the "United Kingdom".

There is a firm and growing demand for a reversal of policy. Over the past eight years there has been a concentration of power in this House and in Whitehall, and a removal of power from local government across the

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country, and from Scotland and the regions in particular. Indeed, there has been a concentration of wealth and power in the south-east. I believe that the demand for a reversal of policy is rising, and this demand must be met if the unity of the United Kingdom is to be preserved.

I am not scaremongering. I am not preaching anything other than orderly opposition, by legal means. That is what the Opposition are doing by the presentation of the Scotland Bill.

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): My hon. Friend is aware that this morning the northern group of Labour Members published a Bill to establish a northern regional assembly. My hon. Friend is also aware that my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) was present to support us. We are present this evening, on behalf of the northern group, to support our Scottish colleagues in their initiative. This is a common move—although perhaps in a rather different form—towards decentralisation. We will unite the United Kingdom through a pluralistic decentralised approach.

Mr. Doran: I agree with my hon. Friend. My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) has already welcomed the initiative taken by the northern group.

My hon. Friends have referred to the reasons for the Bill, and they have placed it in its constitutional context. All hon. Members, even Conservative Members who oppose the measure, can give examples from their constituencies to show why this measure would be of value to them and their constituencies if it were implemented. I want to give two examples of issues that affect my constituency that have caused me grave concern. I want to explain why I believe that my fears and those of my constituents would be considerably alleviated if there were a Scottish assembly.

My first example relates to the problems facing Aberdeen university. In four years' time the university will celebrate its 500th birthday. During that time it has been a centre of learning in the north-east of Scotland, providing a local and national resource. The university has expanded at a great rate and has become an important institution, playing a vital part in the social and educational life of, and the economic activity in, the north-east of Scotland.

As a result of Government cuts imposed on the University Grants Committee, which were passed on to the university, last year the university struggled for its very survival. It has been through immense traumas while trying to come to terms with these considerable cuts. Its block grant is to be cut by £2·5 million. The net effect is that six departments are threatened with closure and 245 jobs are under threat. Almost 25 per cent. of the academic staff are included in that figure. These cuts will have a severe impact, not just on the university, but on the whole life of the north-east of Scotland, to which the university contributes so much.

Schedule 1 to the Scotland Bill deals with universities. Under this schedule it is proposed to devolve control over the Scottish universities to the Scottish assembly. I cannot believe that a Scottish assembly, sensitive to the needs of Scotland, and particularly sensitive to the needs of the regions, would place Aberdeen university, the university of Dundee or any other Scottish university in that position. The assembly would be aware of the vital importance of each university and its contribution to the locality. At present the University Grants Committee sits in London and does not take local factors into account. It ignores the wider contribution made by the universities and applies a simple accountant's rule to funding. A Scottish assembly would not allow that to happen.

Although I could pick many examples to express my concern, I have chosen only two. My second example relates to BP's takeover bid for Britoil. Britoil is a very important company in Scotland. It is Scotland's largest company and is a significant employer in my constituency. In the Grampian region it employs 750 people. Its operations and explorations centre is in my constituency. Britoil is the world's largest purely exploration and production oil company, and it is the third largest operator in the North sea. It has been one of the most active drillers and the company most active in exploration in the North sea.

Britoil brings considerable benefits to my constituency and to the whole of Scotland. It plays a very important part in the Scottish and United Kingdom economies.

A total of 1,750 jobs in Scotland depend upon the continuing existence of Britoil. The company has taken a positive approach to its investment policy. Its policy is to maximise the Scottish element in its North sea operations. I have already said that its operations centre is in my constituency. Its headquarters are in Glasgow. All its North sea developments are managed, engineered, procured and, in the main, constructed in Scotland.

There are justifiable fears that all that would change if BP were to take over Britoil. Would the Don, Amethyst and Ettrick field developments continue to be managed and engineered in Scotland if there were a takeover? I have already referred to the drilling activity. The company has participated in 172 of the 713 exploration and appraisal wells drilled in the United Kingdom sector. That makes it the most active company in that respect.

Britoil has a drilling programme for the next two or three years, and British Petroleum has its own programme. I cannot accept that if the companies are merged the plans will remain intact. Exploration work is vital to my constituency and the Grampian region. If there is a merger, there will be a downturn in drilling activity in the North sea.

Mr. Salmond: I agree with everything that the hon. Gentleman has said about the importance of preserving Britoil as Scotland's largest independent company. Does he agree that there is nothing in the Labour party's assembly Bill that would allow a Scottish assembly to take the decision on Scotland's largest company out of the unsafe hands of the Chancellor of the Exchequer and place it with the assembly? Why is that power not in the Bill?

Mr. Doran: I had expected that that point might be raised, and if the hon. Gentleman will allow me to develop my comments I shall answer him in due course. In passing, I must stress that the hon. Gentleman believes in independence. That is quite a separate matter and has no part to play in my description of the Bill.

I was referring to exploration in the North sea. Oil industries in the United Kingdom have just experienced a traumatic year. There has been a considerable downturn since the middle of 1986 because of the fall in oil prices. Exploration activity was affected most. If two of the

largest operators in the North sea, Britoil and BP, merge and there is a consequent reduction in exploration, I am concerned that we will face the prospect of another downturn. That downturn will have been created, not by circumstances outside our control, such as the world price of oil, but by something that we could have prevented—the merger of two companies.

We must consider the jobs in Britoil and BP in Scotland that relate to exploration. BP employs about 3,000 people in Scotland. That excludes those employed in the refineries. However, we must acknowledge the knock-on effect on other jobs. Academic studies have shown that for every four jobs in the oil industry, three are dependent upon the oil industry. If there is any downturn in North sea oil activity as a result of the merger, there will be a considerable impact on jobs.

The merger is preventable. The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) was right to point out that the Bill does not give the assembly specific powers to deal with such issues. The so-called golden share is not in the hands of the Secretary of State for Scotland, or even in those of Ministers at the Department of Trade and Industry. It is held by the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Therefore, it is a United Kingdom Government activity.

The Scotland Bill contains powers relating to the Industry Act 1980 and to various other Acts, and I cannot believe that a Scottish assembly would sit back and allow the potential impact of such a merger on the Scottish economy to pass idly by. I cannot accept that a Scottish assembly would sit back, as the Chancellor has done, and refuse to do anything more than say that the golden share will be operated, without specifying in what way, or without making it clear to BP that it is wasting its time by buying shares, as that will ultimately be ineffective. BP is calling the Chancellor's bluff. It is buying shares on the stock exchange and continuing with its takeover bid.

The future independence of Britoil, which is crucial to the Scottish economy, is threatened by the merger. The Chancellor sits on his hands and does nothing. A Scottish assembly would not permit that to happen. Powers would be sought and pressure would be applied.

However, we do not have that opportunity, as the government of Scotland is in the hands of the Secretary of State for Scotland, who sits idly by and allows the Chancellor to do nothing, while a serious attack is being made on the Scottish economy.

I have mentioned two specific points to illustrate the effect that the Bill would have on my constituency. I believe that it is an important measure for the constitutional government of Scotland and for the continuing well-being of the constitutional government of the United Kingdom, and I urge the House to accept it in due course.

7.10 pm

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Mr. Speaker—*[Interruption.]* It is unfortunate that the laird on the Opposition Front Bench, the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) does not like to hear the voice of a real Scot from the Highlands.

The hon. Members for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) and for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) drew attention to the gulf between the Government and the governed. I shall speak on behalf of my constituents, who feel that they are governed at one level by Dundee, which is a long way from Rannoch. They feel that it is a "them and us" situation. At district level, they are governed from Perth, which is a long way from Glen Shee. They feel that that, too, is a "them and us" situation.

Then there is the problem of Edinburgh, which is where an assembly would be. Edinburgh often seems at least as far away from north Tayside as London, and often further. It is further away, not in geographical terms but in terms of understanding. It is possible to meet more people in London than in Edinburgh who know what happens on Rannoch moor. That may surprise Opposition Members, but I regularly meet in London people who have great understanding of what happens on grouse moors in my constituency.

Grouse moors are not to be underrated; they provide work for people. I am amused by the fact that hon. Members, and particularly the laird on the Opposition Front Bench must have more direct knowledge of what actually happens on grouse moors than I do, because I have never been shooting on a grouse moor. I accept that the hon. Gentleman, with his antecedents and his background, would know more about it.

When hon. Members talk about a "them" and "us" situation, they must understand that the further one gets away from the centres of administration, the more likely it is that such a situation will exist. People in my constituency in north-east Scotland feel that they have very little affinity with those in the west and central belt of Scotland. Indeed, the last thing that they want is to be governed by the west central belt of Scotland. That is not meant as an anti-Scottish statement. I merely place on record the views and feelings of my constituents.

If one looks at the votes during the referendum about which we have heard so much, one sees that my constituency rejected the Scotland Bill, as did constituencies further north. That was the breakdown in Scotland. The further north people are, the less they want to be part of the Scottish assembly.

Mr. Salmond: The hon. Gentleman correctly voiced the views of his constituents, but why does his majority keep going down?

Mr. Walker: The hon. Gentleman is wrong. My majority has gone down only once, but it has gone up twice.

The hon. Gentleman will be sorry that he intervened. The Scottish National party has to rely on lies and invention. I am speaking about the party, and not naming any hon. Members. The gentleman who opposed me at the general election is never likely to become a Member of the House if he continues to oppose me, because I will have exposed his lies and thrown them back in his face. One of those lies was that we would have nuclear dumping on Shiehallion. He gave us as his authority for that the *Sunday Post*. However, he forgot to tell the people in the western part of my constituency that he had given the story to the *Sunday Post* in the first place.

I can substantiate everything I have said, as I have hard evidence to prove it. That gentleman who stood for the Scottish National party, a Mr. Smith, gave the story to the *Sunday Post* in May. The story alleged that certain areas in Scotland had been determined as suitable for nuclear dumping. In the last 10 days before the election, the SNP published a leaflet saying that the *Sunday Post* had said that there was to be nuclear dumping in Shiehallion. I kept the leaflet as valuable evidence. The SNP will never be able to use such lies again.

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): The Nirex document, "The Way Forward", makes Scotland a prime candidate for the dumping of such nuclear waste. Moreover, a Minister in the hon. Gentleman's own Government said that no location in the United Kingdom was ruled out, and that would include Shiehallion. I look forward to receiving my SNP colleague in the next Parliament.

Mr. Walker: I do not wish to go too far down that road, other than to remind the hon. Gentleman that the Nirex report looks nearer his constituency than mine. That is a splendid reward for any organisation which puts out such scurrilous, libellous and lying leaflets.

The hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) said that the Labour party was looking for a pluralistic, decentralised Government. That is reputable. There is only one problem. In order to achieve that through legislation, one must capture a majority in the House. That is always the problem with getting legislation through. However one feels about it, one must capture the majority in the House.

That means that one must convince those hon. Members who represent the 80 per cent., or thereabouts, of United Kingdom taxpayers who live in England that they should vote for something that will improve the government of the United Kingdom. It is because the Labour party has been unable to win the hearts and minds of that 80 per cent. that it has been unable to obtain the kind of legislation to which Scottish Labour Members aspire.

It must be progress for Scottish Labour Members to have the support of some, if not all, of their northern colleagues. I do not know where they all are. They will well know that it was northern Members who torpedoed the previous attempt at legislation. However, they must still win the hearts and minds of those further south if they are to put legislation on the statute book.

I have always been against the proposals that have been brought forward on this subject, because I am a Unionist. I never apologise for being a Unionist. I support this unitary Parliament, because it is in the best interests of the United Kingdom and its people. I have never believed that government could not be improved — everything that man makes can be improved — but I will not support measures that are designed to distort the whole.

That is why I have consistently voted against the legislation that my Government have introduced for Northern Ireland. My hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) made a telling intervention, and his points should be taken on board. The problems that we face in Northern Ireland today are the results of past attempts to buy off trouble by giving it a special kind of government and treating it differently.

There are inherent dangers in doing that, and one is that a "them and us" situation is created. Today we see clearly, to our cost, how people in Northern Ireland do not see themselves as part of us. It does not matter on which side of the political fence the people are to whom one talks, they feel that they are "us" and we are "them". We in the United Kingdom do not understand and have never understood that, and that is rather sad. I worry deeply about the way in which we handle such matters north of the border.

There is no question in my mind but that there are Labour Members who see their only opportunity of obtaining office in their parliamentary working life as being in some kind of assembly in Edinburgh. Their policies have more to do with their political aspirations than with the good government of the United Kingdom.

I am also opposed to the Bill because, as the Government's amendment says, an assembly such as it envisages will be disruptive. No one can imagine that that will not be the case when there are extreme differences of view on economic measures and on whether it is better to encourage people by reducing taxes, by giving companies greater opportunities or through privatisation. Of course one would have a disruptive assembly.

In addition, as my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) said, we must have an answer to the West Lothian question. We must also have an answer to what he called the Perth and Kinross question. Both those questions must be answered to the satisfaction not of those Opposition Members who aspire to hold down jobs in the assembly, but to the satisfaction of Members from constituencies in other parts of the United Kingdom. They are the people who have to be convinced. Unless they are, the Bill, or any Bill similarly based, has no hope of getting through the House.

Mr. Galbraith: The hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) made a silly point about clause 2(3). If the hon. Gentleman was listening, he would have realised that I answered that. Clause 4 gives the Secretary of State the power to look at legislation and to place an order before the House. That is the answer to that question.

Mr. Walker: The hon. Gentleman has not been in the House long enough to realise that if we had an assembly in Edinburgh — *[Interruption.]* I am not being patronising. The hon. Gentleman referred to orders being placed before the House and how legislation is put through the House. Let me remind him that the basis of my argument is that for anything to work it must have the support of the majority of hon. Members.

If we have an assembly based on the Bill and the Perth and Kinross question is not answered, and the Secretary of State brings before the House an order which does not have the support of the majority of hon. Members, that will be a recipe for disruption. There is no way in which that can be avoided.

Northern Ireland had no assembly or vehicle for disruption, so its Members of Parliament left this Chamber. They could take only the negative step of departing. Anyone who imagines that an assembly based on the Bill will not be disruptive is living in an unreal world.

Such an assembly is also unworkable because the relationship between the two Parliaments is designed to produce the very conflict that Opposition Members hope their Bill will remove. There will be a conflict of views and opinions on important economic matters. There is no way in which that can be side-stepped. All the gloss and good intentions have no bearing.

If Opposition Members do not think that there are such disruptive people in their party, they should look below the Gangway. The hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) does things that I would not do and in a way that I would not do them, but I often admire — *[Interruption.]* He is now getting worried that I might discomfort him. I admire the fact that he stands up for what he believes in. He does not believe in many of the

things that his party is doing, and I admire his integrity in that respect. However, I do not admire the fact that he will not try to bring about change through the correct system, recognising that we have rules and conventions through which one can get things done.

There is still evidence of the 40 per cent. equation that came about when Labour Members, during the passage of the previous ill-fated Scotland Bill, realised that they could bring about change by using the impoverished rules of the time to make sure that the people of Scotland were given the opportunity to show their wholehearted support. The result was that the legislation did not come to pass.

I felt very sorry for the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Doran), because he realised that whatever one did with the Bill it contained nothing to help him with his arguments about Britoil. From his point of view, that was sad. He had to wriggle out of it, and he did it rather well.

The fact is that the Bill, like so many others dealing with this matter, is flawed. Unless it dealt with the whole United Kingdom on the same basis, unless the whole United Kingdom were governed on the same basis, it would lead to disruption and be unworkable.

More important, the Bill would be costly to implement. I remind Opposition Members that over 80 per cent. of taxpayers live in England. They will be asking, "Why should we pay more in taxes so that the Scots can have a say in our Health Service and our schools?"

The answer given by Scottish National party members is that they would abstain from voting. That is credible only when it is said by members of a minority party. If they were sitting on the Treasury Bench, where Labour Members aspire to sit, they would need the votes of Scottish Members to get legislation through the House. I have already drawn attention to the fact that a Labour Government introduced legislation to abolish grammar schools in England. They did not have the vote of the majority of people in England at the time, and they did not have the majority of hon. Members in England, so the votes were pushed through by the lady who is now president of an obscure party—which has not sorted out what it is going to be or where it is going. It used to be called the Social Democratic party. I do not know what it is called today. In pushing through that legislation, for which she did not have a majority of English hon. Members, she relied—quite properly—on the votes of Scottish and Welsh Labour Members.

The Labour argument is that a Government in a unitary Parliament cannot, or should not, put measures through the House because it relies on votes in the unitary Parliament. That means saying, "We cannot accept the results of the 1987 general election, so we want to change the rules; we want to get into office in Edinburgh so that we can be big fish in a small pond."

I look at Labour Members and realise that daily they get older and daily they see their prospects of ever holding office slipping away. I think the quality of the new intake is much improved. The fellows sitting on the Opposition Front Bench now must be very worried, because all their jobs are on the line. They are all at risk, and I believe it will not be long before we see some of the new intake sitting there. I welcome that, because the quality of their debate thus far has been very good.

If Labour Members continue to follow the false god of trying to find jobs for themselves and their colleagues simply because they had a majority vote in Scotland, they are mistaken. I find it impossible to support the Scotland Bill, because, as the amendment says, it would have a destabilising effect on the United Kingdom.

If Labour Members were honest, they would realise that there are three options. One is the status quo, with improvements. The second is a federal structure. The hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice), has talked about a pluralistic, decentralised system. That would be viable only if the whole United Kingdom voted for it and accepted it, and its supporters do not have the hearts and minds either of the voters or of hon. Members. The third option is the one put forward by the Scottish National party. I do not support independence, but at least it is credible; it is a viable option. I have always said so. The fact that I am totally opposed to it in no way makes me fail to recognise that if all the Scots people wished to have independence it would come to pass. But we all know that that is not what the Scots people want.

In its attempt to satisfy its craving for power, and to appease those who voted for it, the Labour party keeps bringing forward non-viable, unworkable, unacceptable Bills, such as the one referred to in the motion. As long as it does so, and as long as it is unable to command the support of the majority of hon. Members in the unitary Parliament, it can whistle in the wind. It will never see the Bill become an Act.

7.25 pm

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): I am still marvelling at the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) reading the obituary notice of the Labour Front Bench. I saw a shiver of fear on that Bench.

I am sorry that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) is not here to hear me say that he is right in saying that my hon. Friends and I will support the motion. He was less than charitable to attribute to us simply tactical motives, although I dare say tactics have a place in politics, and I am sure that the Labour party employs the odd political tactic from time to time. We shall support the motion for the simple reason that half a slice of bread is better than no loaf.

I freely concede that there are aspects of Labour's devolution Bill that would bring about improvements in the government of Scotland by providing a forum in which we could address some major issues confronting the Scottish nation. It would articulate and represent Scottish opinion in a democratic fashion, as opposed to those on the Tory Front Bench, who misrepresent Scottish opinion in an undemocratic way. It would also have the potential for development, because I believe that once Scots have a whiff of power they will acquire the appetite for something a great deal stronger.

The Bill does, however, have major deficiencies, to which I shall come later. First I want to turn to the essential question in the debate, that of sovereignty.

What the Labour party will have to decide is whether it is advancing its devolution Bill just as a good idea, or as a concept for which it has a mandate from the people of Scotland. There is a world of difference between the two. If the Bill is being advanced as just a good idea from the Labour party, those on the Conservative Benches have every right to say, "We think it is a bad idea and we will use our majority to vote it down." On the other hand, if it is being advanced as a concept with the mandate of the

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Scottish nation, the Labour party has the right to pursue that mandate, regardless of the result tonight, regardless of the opinion of the majority party in the House.

The question is one of sovereignty. Some hon. Members at least are clear about where sovereignty lies. My hon. Friends and I — and, I believe, the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan)—believe that sovereignty lies with the Scottish people and that it is for the Scottish people to decide what level of self-government they should have; whether it be no self-government, devolved government or full independence.

The opposite opinion is put forward by the hon. Member for Garscadden, supported by the Secretary of State. They believe that sovereignty lies in the House of Commons, that it is for the House to decide what measure of self-government the Scottish people will or will not have and that it will do with us as it will.

Over the past few years I have had great hopes that the argument for Scottish sovereignty, the sovereignty of the Scottish people, was gathering strength among Labour Members. Quite recently—on 30 June 1986—the hon. Member for Falkirk East (Mr. Ewing), said in Edinburgh, choosing his words carefully:

"whatever happens at the next election, this building will become the home of the Scottish assembly." — [*Official Report, Scottish Grand Committee*, 30 June 1986; c. 7.]

At various times the hon. Member for Carrick, Comnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes), both before and after the 1983 election, said that he would pursue the case for devolution and achieve it, regardless of the result of the election.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway), admittedly before he was a Member, talked about playing Parnell with Westminster procedures to bring about a Scottish assembly. I have also had my disappointments. I had yet another one earlier in the debate when the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) said that no one on the Labour Benches was challenging the mandate of the Government to govern Scotland. I found that most interesting.

Mr. McAllion: Again the hon. Gentleman seeks to misrepresent a point of view put forward by a Labour Member, as he always does. The hon. Gentleman should spend less time on cheap stunts and try to address the central questions. He knew that the election on 11 June 1987 was for a unitary Parliament. His party has never made clear on what it would claim a mandate for independence. Our mandate was that if we won the election and formed the United Kingdom Government we would create a Scottish assembly and give expression to the legitimate demands of the Scottish people. We failed to win the election. We will do everything in our power to win the next election and deliver to the Scottish people what they want—something which the hon. Gentleman's party is incapable of doing.

Mr. Salmond: I am grateful to the hon. Member for clarifying what I said. Earlier, he said that no one on the Labour Benches was challenging the Government's mandate in Scotland. That surprised me, because an amendment to early-day motion 573, published this morning and signed by the hon. Gentleman and five of his colleagues, congratulates the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) on his

"recent efforts to expose the lack of a Government mandate in Scotland."

In our political careers we all engage in retreat, but what the hon. Gentleman has said in the debate is a remarkable retreat from the amendment to the early-day motion. He challenged the Government's lack of a mandate by signing the amendment, but in the debate he said that no one on the Labour Benches was challenging that position.

Mr. Galbraith: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that there is a difference between a legal mandate and a moral mandate?

Mr. Salmond: I am arguing that the mandate issue is the key to the debate. Until Labour Members clarify their position on whether the Government have a mandate in Scotland, they will emasculate themselves in terms of any opposition.

Mr. McAllion *rose*——

Mr. Salmond: No, I am not giving way again. I have already given way twice.

Unless Labour Members are prepared to challenge the Government's mandate, they are condemning themselves to a long period of futile opposition. It is correct that, for the time being at least, Labour dominates Scottish politics, but its domination of Scottish politics is as nothing compared with the Conservative party's domination of politics in the south of England. In the south-east of England there are 108 seats outside London: 107 are held by the Conservative party, and Labour holds one seat. South of Birmingham, outside London, Labour holds three seats. That is the reality of the political balance within the United Kingdom. It is almost inconceivable that over a generation Labour could achieve the United Kingdom mandate which the hon. Gentleman wants.

Mr. McAllion: The hon. Gentleman has drawn attention to the fact that Labour holds only three seats in the south-east of England and therefore in a generation cannot achieve political power throughout the United Kingdom. His party holds only three seats in the whole of Scotland. Will it be a generation before his party can achieve political power in Scotland? If so, he is lying to the Scottish people when he says that the choice at the next election is independence or Thatcher.

Mr. Salmond: I have great hope that many people in Scotland who voted Labour and who share our constitutional position — a total of 30 per cent. according to one opinion poll—will swing to our party when it becomes clear that devolution is not on offer. Because the hon. Gentleman wishes for victory within the United Kingdom, I have real hopes that Labour voters will swing in substantial numbers to the Scottish National party.

As for the deficiencies of the Bill, perhaps the most important aspect of United Kingdom economic policy at present is the imbalance between the south of England and the regions of England and the nations of Scotland and Wales. The problem with the Scotland Bill is that it will not affect that one iota. Hon. Members representing the regions of England and the nations of Scotland and Wales have to endure a position where the Treasury is cautioned not to overheat the economy because inflation might build up in the south of England. Because of that, we have restrictive monetary policy and a fiscal policy that calls for a tight public sector borrowing requirement. The

Government's view that the economy must not overheat is a deep irony for the English regions and for Scotland and Wales, when our economies are in deep freeze.

On the critical test of what it would do for the Scottish economy, the Bill fails. It includes no monetary powers. Labour's Scottish assembly could not alter monetary policy within Scotland. The fiscal powers are restricted to raising additional taxation. The Scottish assembly could not reflate the Scottish economy; it could increase public expenditure only marginally by increasing Scottish personal taxation.

As for industry, a Scottish assembly could not intervene to save the steel industry, which would remain in the hands of the Department of Trade and Industry and the EEC. Labour's Scottish assembly could not save a single pit or shipyard in Scotland. It would not have any effect on the electronics industry, which is still struggling to achieve a critical mass in Scotland. It could not help the Scottish financial sector by establishing a taxation incentive to build on the comparative advantage that Edinburgh already has.

Worst of all, a Labour Scottish assembly would have had to stand by over the last two years and watch the oil industry decline, but have no access to Scottish oil resources. Indeed, it would have had to watch Government policy—a highly inappropriate, cheap oil policy—cost 25,000 jobs in Scotland.

Dr. Reid: It is fair for the hon. Gentleman to take a view of politics which says that the only way of recovery for the Scottish economy is to have an independent Parliament. However, it is entirely unfair to take that view and then to suppose that that is what the devolution Bill is all about. The people who drew up the Bill are not separatists. We have never claimed that a Scottish assembly would do the things that the hon. Gentleman claims it could not do. We have always argued that it is not a substitute for good United Kingdom government. It is a complementary or integral part of the United Kingdom Government. At the same time, if we want to save the Scottish economy and deal with the issues that the hon. Gentleman has raised, we need a Labour Government at Westminster.

Mr. Salmond: The hon. Gentleman is right in saying that, for some of the reasons that I have outlined, the economic case for an independent Scotland within the EEC is vastly superior to that for devolution. Even in the context of devolution we could still build more economic powers into the devolution Bill. The point I make is that the Bill has limited economic powers, and that it puts forward a minimalist position.

To give two examples, we could build into a Scottish assembly powers to control mergers and acquisitions in Scotland, and then we would not have to stand idly by, as we would under Labour's terms of reference, and watch Guinness take over Distillers. Earlier today the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Doran) said, rightly, that the future of Britoil was most important for the Scottish economy. Therefore, why should there not be in Labour's proposed legislation power to enable a Scottish assembly to stop the takeover of Britoil and defend Scotland's most important company? On the critical test of economic power, Labour's devolution Bill fails.

I bear no ill will for the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), who, unhappily, is not here. If he were with us in a Scottish Parliament he would be a fringe figure. He would put an eccentric Right-wing point of view against the Scottish consensus position which the other Members of that Parliament would hold. In an assembly he would perhaps provide a welcome challenge to established ideas, but, in the present ridiculous situation, this extreme figure in Scottish politics is in charge of Scottish education and the Scottish Health Service and is causing a great deal of chaos to both.

What is the argument in defence of the hon. Gentleman's entitlement to be the Minister responsible for health and education in Scotland? It was expressed clearly by the Secretary of State for Scotland in "Radical Scotland" in December 1986. He stated that the Conservative right to govern Scotland was based on the following argument:

> "I think that as long as the vast majority of Scots vote for unionist parties, and by that I mean Conservatives, Labour, Liberal or SDP, anything other than the Nationalists—and thereby express a clear political desire to remain part of the United Kingdom—then the only mandate that matters is the UK mandate".

This is a development in Conservative party thinking. At the time of the referendum, the Tories were pressing only non-voters into their cause. Now, in support of the mandate, they press into service Labour, SDP and Liberal voters. Labour voters and supporters are being used to reinforce the Tory mandate in Scotland. To challenge the Government effectively, we must challenge their mandate.

The Labour motion will fall this evening, and the Labour Bill which follows it will fall or be frozen, but the case for Scottish self-government will live on. It will become clear that devolution, right or wrong, weak or strong, is not on the political agenda. It is not on offer from Westminster. It is not available. On that basis, the clear choice facing the people of Scotland is either a continuation of English Tory rule, or independence within the European Community, as advocated by the Scottish National party.

7.41 pm

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): This has been a most interesting debate. One of the more interesting things about it has been the absence of some speakers. We have not seen the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan). Of course, he may have one or two things on his mind at present. We have not seen the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) who spoke frequently about devolution when the Scotland Bill and the Wales Bill were going through the House in the 1970s. After all, it is only a few years since the hon. Member for Linlithgow said that devolution is

> "not a stable resting place for five or 10 years, let alone centuries."—[*Official Report*, 14 November 1977; Vol. 939, c. 122.]

The most interesting point is that the Leader of the Opposition, whose name appears on the motion, has not been here to take part in the debate or even to listen. We all know why. Ten years ago, he described devolution as "ridiculous and wasteful duplication." He described the debates on devolution as being

> "as interesting and productive as fishing for tuna in the Taff."

The right hon. Gentleman went on to say:

> "anyone who regards the Bill as meaningful devolution, an attempt to convey real power to the people, to safeguard their interests or to advance democracy or an encouragement to vigilant supervision of elected government at any level, is reading the wrong Bill."—[*Official Report*, 15 November 1977; Vol. 939, c 465-67.]

[Mr. John Marshall]

More recently, the right hon. Gentleman said that devolution reform will not provide a factory, a machine or jobs. Why is the Leader of the Opposition not here to restate those fundamental truths about which he spoke with such eloquence in the past?

Mr. Fallon: Has my hon. Friend asked himself not only why the Leader of the Opposition is not here, but why the Scottish Labour party is not here, if it is so keen on devolution? There are only seven hon. Members on the Opposition Benches, yet we are told that the Scottish Labour party wholeheartedly supports devolution.

Mr. Marshall: The enthusiasm of the Scottish Labour party for devolution is as great as the enthusiasm of the Scottish people when they were asked that specific question in 1979. As my hon. Friend knows, only 32 per cent. of the Scottish people voted for devolution in the referendum.

Let us consider the regional breakdown of that figure. There were a number of areas where the debate was against devolution. In Tayside, 50·5 per cent. of those who voted, voted against devolution. In the Grampian region, which used to be represented by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), the figure was 51·7 per cent. In Dumfries and Galloway, the figure was 59·7 per cent. In Orkney and Shetland, it was over 70 per cent. In the Highlands, the figure for devolution was only 51 per cent., and in Lothian it was only 50·1 per cent. My hon. Friend is quite right. The enthusiasm of the Scottish Labour party for the Bill is as muted as the Scottish people's enthusiasm was in 1979.

It is clear that the economic effects of the Bill could be quite traumatic. The Scottish economy seeks to attract industry from outside Scotland and to encourage it to put its roots down in Scotland. I should like to pay tribute to the success of the Secretary of State in attracting so much new industry to Scotland. What incentive would it be to go to an incoming industrialist and say, "Come to Scotland. Your taxes on your employees and on your managers may well be higher than they would be if you stayed in England or went to Wales, but come to Scotland and run the risk of higher taxes."? No one would come to Scotland in those circumstances.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that if people coming to Scotland could be assured that they would have higher standards of education for their children and higher standards of National Health provision, they might be prepared to pay additional taxes for that purpose?

Mr. Marshall: The hon. Gentleman should consider the figures for education in Scotland and the results from Strathclyde regional council, which give a good guide of how a devolved Scotland would work. No doubt he has seen the written answer, given on 27 October 1987, which shows that 27·6 per cent. of children leaving Strathclyde schools do so without any SCE qualifications. Given the high levels of expenditure in that part of Scotland, I do not understand how the hon. Gentleman can say that higher expenditure necessarily leads to better standards. One could not, therefore, go to an incoming industrialist and promise better standards through higher taxation.

Let us consider the record of Labour councils in Scotland.

Mr. Galbraith: What school did the hon. Gentleman go to?

Mr. Marshall: I went to that same school as the hon. Member for Garscadden. His parents and mine exercised freedom of choice. I am sorry that he and his colleagues do not believe in the same freedom of choice today. The hon. Member for Garscadden and I left Aberdeen in the 1970s, but I did so somewhat more willingly than he did.

Labour Members make it clear that they oppose all steps to improve efficiency and government by competitive tendering. This afternoon, we heard them condemn competitive tendering in the National Health Service. They would say to the industrialist, "Come to Scotland. We shall not have competitive tendering in the Health Service, and that will lead to better service for the same expenditure." It will not. It will lead to worse service. Labour Members make it clear that they want higher expenditure for a whole range of services which, if the Bill were enacted, would lead to higher taxation in Scotland. There is no doubt that the consequence of the Bill would be an over-governed and over-taxed Scotland. The influence of the Secretary of State and of the Cabinet would be reduced.

Mr. Galbraith: Hear, hear.

Mr. Marshall: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman agrees with me, but I am sorry that he welcomes the fact that under the Bill the influence of the Secretary of State will be reduced. His influence is for the good of Scotland as a whole.

Dr. Reid: Given that the hon. Gentleman is greatly concerned about corporate and industrial taxation, for the enlightenment of the House will he mention one clause that empowers the assembly to make such taxation charges?

Mr. Marshall: I thought that I had made it clear that I was talking about taxation on individual employees and managers. Individual managers will decide whether to locate their factory in Scotland. How will one encourage a manager to locate his factory in Scotland by saying, "Come to Scotland and run the risk of higher taxation."? That threat will frighten away industrialists and discourage them from coming to Scotland.

Mr. Galbraith: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Marshall: I have given way generously and my hon. Friends have given way several times to the hon. Gentleman, so he must wait to make his speech in his own time.

I am concerned also about what is known as the West Lothian question—perhaps there is also the Linlithgow question—to which the Opposition have not given an adequate answer. Everyone knows that, on grounds of population, Scotland is over-represented in the House of Commons. We know the good geographical reasons for that—constituencies such as Western Isles and Orkney and Shetland need smaller electorates and could not be lumped with another constituency. It is inevitable, for geographical reasons, that, given the current unitary system of government, Scotland should remain over-represented in the House. If we had a system whereby Scottish matters were devolved to an assembly, how could we justify Scotland still being over-represented in the

House? How could we justify Scottish Members voting on English issues but English Members not being able to vote on Scottish issues?

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): I do not vote on English issues.

Mr. Marshall: It may be true that the hon. Lady, who is currently the hon. Member for Moray but was previously the hon. Member for Dumbartonshire, East, does not vote on English issues. Let us look at some of the voting records in the House. In the last Parliament there was a debate on the shops legislation, which sought to give shoppers in England and Wales the same privileges as are given to shoppers in Scotland. Did Scottish Labour Members say, "How wonderful it is that England and Wales are to have the same privileges as shoppers in Scotland."? Of course not. They voted against the Bill.

I should not have thought that any Opposition Member would say that the abolition of the Greater London council was an issue affecting Scotland, but Scottish Labour Members were willing man after man to vote against it. I believe that the Labour party has been willing to put Scottish Members on the Committee that is considering legislation on the community charge for England and Wales. It may be all right for the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) to say that she will not vote on English matters, but a large number of Scottish Labour Members will vote time after time on English matters to try to impose their will on English constituents such as mine.

The Government want genuine devolution rather than administrative devolution. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] We believe in real devolution to real people.

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend referred to Scottish Labour Members on the Committee on the English community charge legislation. He will have noted the anxiety of the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Gabraith) to intervene earlier. My hon. Friend may be as curious as I am about the relevance to the hon. Gentleman's constituents of the hon. Gentleman serving on the Committee on the Duchy of Lancaster Bill.

Mr. Marshall: I find it as difficult to understand as my right hon. and learned Friend. No doubt strange things happen in the House from time to time.

Mr. Galbraith: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Marshall: I have already once refused to give way.

Mr. Galbraith: Give way briefly.

Mr. Marshall: Briefly.

Mr. Galbraith: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the Duchy of Lancaster Bill is in some way related to Bonnie Prince Charlie and is therefore relevant to my constituents?

Mr. Marshall: My sister tells me that the hon. Gentleman is a very good doctor. Having heard that observation, I wish that he would go back to doctoring instead of coming to the House.

We believe in giving real devolution to real people. The Government have done so, for example, by giving trade unionists the right to vote on strikes and to elect union leaders in secret ballots. They have given real devolution to real people to make real decisions affecting their lives. We heard this afternoon how tenants in Castlemilk preferred not to be subject to the Glasgow housing authority, but wanted to transfer to Scottish Homes. We are giving parents in England and Wales the right to make decisions about their children's education. We believe in giving individuals the right to decide how to spend their money rather than have it taken away by the tax collector.

Those who seek devolution should devolve ownership to individuals. We look forward to devolving to individuals the ownership of the Scottish electricity industry as shareholders rather than by proxy, as taxpayers. We heard this afternoon's statement about the future of the Scottish Bus Group. I am sure that its employees will have heard with interest the reply by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State to my question about giving priority to the employees when the industry is privatised.

If the Scotland Bill were passed, it would be the first step towards the break-up of the United Kingdom. A group of northern Labour Members has presented a Bill to have a similar assembly for the north of England. No doubt these proposals would mushroom quickly. The problem is that once we have gone down the assembly road and it has failed to produce the goods, there would be further pressure from the hon. Member for Moray and others to go down the separatist road. We would find that, in the words of the hon. Member for Linlithgow, devolution

"is not a stable resting place for five or 10 years, let alone centuries."—[*Official Report*, 14 November 1977; Vol. 939, c. 122.]

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: Does the hon. Gentleman agree with a point made earlier, that, on the basic principle of assessing the needs and desires of the Scottish people for freedom, the bounds of freedom should be set by the sovereignty of the people of Scotland and not by this establishment?

Mr. Marshall: I feel that the people of Scotland do not want the Bill. They do not want narrow-minded nationalism or self-centred separatism.

Mrs. Ewing: How does the hon. Gentleman know?

Mr. Marshall: When the question was put to the people of Scotland in 1979——

Mrs. Ewing: They said yes.

Mr. Marshall: As the hon. Lady knows, 32 per cent. said yes; the others voted against or abstained. As the hon. Lady well knows, it was made clear that, as a result of the amendment moved by a Labour Member, Mr. George Cunningham, if there were not a 40 per cent. vote in favour, the devolution proposal could fall. Everyone who was against devolution had either to vote against it or to abstain. An abstention was as good as a vote against. The hon. Member for Moray is well aware that leaflets were distributed telling people that they did not need to vote against devolution but could abstain if they did not support the proposals. When the question was put to the Scottish people, they decisively rejected——

Mrs. Ewing: They said yes.

Mr. Marshall: If the hon. Lady regards one in three as a majority, she has strange mathematics.

This Bill would result in an over——

Mr. Dewar: Does the hon. Gentleman regard our entry into the Common Market as invalid, because the same arithmetic applies to the referendum on that matter?

Mr. Marshall: As the hon. Gentleman well knows, we joined the European Community in 1973 and the referendum that was conducted under a Labour Government did not have a percentage attached to it. As he also knows, it was an advisory referendum. He may well scoff at the term used, but it is not my term; it is the term of the then Labour Prime Minister, now Lord Wilson. If he regarded it as right—and it was the Labour party in this House that voted for it—it ill behoves him to scoff at the proposal put forward by his own party.

The hon. Gentleman and I went to the same school. He may regret the fact that he went to a public school or that it is brought to the attention of his colleagues; but I feel that he ought to produce a better argument than that.

This Bill would lead to a Scotland that was over-taxed and over-governed. It would put at risk the economic development of Scotland, and would, in the words of the Leader of the Opposition, be as

"interesting and productive as fishing for tuna in the Taff."
—[*Official Report*, 15 November 1977; Vol. 939, c. 465.]

8.2 pm

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): I have listened very carefully to the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall), and having done so, I am more than ever convinced of the necessity for a Scottish assembly to be established, so that the people of Scotland may deal with their own affairs. His disgraceful contribution, showing his vast ignorance of matters Scottish, was beyond belief.

The irony of our debating this subject here tonight lies not so much in the fact that we are having the debate; given that 76 per cent. of Scottish voters voted in the last general election for some form of devolved assembly, it would be incredible had there been no debate of this kind early in the life of this Parliament. The irony is the fact that we know, before the debate starts, what its outcome will be: we know the result of the vote.

We know, for example, that a motion endorsing a Bill to establish a Scottish assembly, an assembly with a wide range of responsibilities for education, housing, transport and local government, an assembly which will have tax-raising and economic powers, the kind of assembly which voters in 50 out of 72 Scottish constituencies voted for last June, will be defeated in the House tonight by what is, in effect, a Tory rump in Scotland.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: Does the hon. Member not agree that it is particularly appalling that there are so few people here on the Government Benches — only one Member representing a Scottish constituency and five Members representing English constituencies — listening to this vital debate which the people of Scotland see as so serious?

Mr. McAllion: The hon. Lady makes a valid point: it is appalling. But it is not surprising; it is par for the course, given the way in which Ministers and Tory Back Benchers in Scotland treat the affairs of Scotland as something insignificant. One of the things that has affronted me since coming here is the number of Scottish Members on the Government Benches who time and again say that they do not wish to be thought of as Scottish Members but as United Kingdom Members. I am fiercely proud to be thought of as a Scottish Member and I only wish that the same pride was shown by those on the Government Benches as well.

So the motion will be defeated by a Tory rump. I see that the Secretary of State is now scuttling out; he has had enough already. It is a shame, because I have a few remarks to make about him later on.

It is shameful that a handful of Ministers and a few Back Benchers—a rag-bag of Scottish Back Benchers—in alliance with a huge majority of English Members, who know little of Scotland and care even less, will ensure that the motion and its proposal for an assembly will be defeated tonight. It shows not only that they do not care about the needs of the Scottish nation, but that they are determined to trample the needs of that nation underfoot in their desire to show the supremacy of their numbers here. That is entirely regrettable.

Government Members must recognise that Scotland is a nation. There is no doubt whatever about that. It is something that they seem incapable of recognising. They seem to think that Scotland is just like a region of one nation, like the north-east, the north-west or the south-east of England. It is nothing of the kind — it is a nation, and it must be recognised as such by this United Kingdom Parliament, or it will be to Parliament's regret.

Scotland is a nation which chooses to join, along with other nations certainly, in a partnership of equals which we know as the United Kingdom. We choose to belong; we are not trapped inside it. We can equally choose not to belong to it, and Government Members should remember that as well. We have had a lot of talk from those same Members about the reality of the unitary nature of this Parliament and the way in which it considers legislation, such as Bills of this kind. I accept that that is the case: the House operates as a unitary Parliament.

All hon. Members who stood for election last June were fully aware of the nature of the elections in which they took part. They were elections to a unitary Parliament. They were elections which, if we were to win them, we would have to win under a first-past-the-post electoral system.

It is only fair for Opposition Members to concede that, had any of the major political parties achieved 42·4 per cent. of the vote in the United Kingdom elections, and if we had won more than 370 seats in this House, we would naturally have been hailing that as a marvellous victory and would have seen it as a mandate to go ahead and implement our policies. I concede that the Conservative party in the United Kingdom elections won such a victory and, while I believe that to be a tragedy, not only for the Scottish people but for the people of the whole kingdom, I accept that the Conservative party won and, under the existing constitutional arrangements, legitimately formed the Government of the United Kingdom.

But with victory, and with the power that comes in the wake of victory, comes also responsibility. It is the acceptance of that responsibility which has been so sadly missing in the conduct of Scottish affairs by the Government since they were returned to power on 11 June. What they must recognise is that the particular needs and desires of Scotland, within the framework of the United Kingdom, must be recognised by any responsible Government. If the Government aspire to be a responsible Government, they must recognise the legitimate needs of the people of Scotland. If they do not, the unity of the United Kingdom will be put at risk.

The United Kingdom framework is not a trap within which Scotland is confined and rendered incapable of giving expression to its democratic wishes and desires,

because Scottish democracy must be given freedom to express itself—not only must but will be given freedom to do so, because there is no force in this or any other Parliament which can deny the Scottish people once they have decided on a course of action. Sooner or later, Ministers will have to recognise that fact.

The reality in Scotland is that its people want a devolved assembly to run exclusively Scottish affairs—housing, education, transport and so on. The more I listen to English Members, the more I see the validity of that argument. At Question Time, the Secretary of State for Scotland gave a very unsatisfactory answer to a Question from my right hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan), who asked him about evidence of the demand for a devolved assembly.

The Secretary of State gave a response which was very similar to the answer given by the Prime Minister who was asked the same question in 1986, when she appeared on Scottish television. I have a press cutting here from *The Scotsman* which refers to the occasion:

"Eighty per cent. of Scots interviewed in a Scottish Television-MORI opinion poll are in favour of a Scottish Assembly, it was revealed last night on the programme *Scottish Questions*. MORI questioned 1,012 Scots in September after Mrs. Thatcher said on Scottish Television that she did not believe there was sufficient demand for an Assembly".

How can the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Prime Minister look that kind of evidence in the face—80 per cent. of people questioned in an opinion poll—and then turn round and say that they cannot see any evidence of a demand in Scotland for a devolved Scottish assembly? The Minister may say that they do not take opinion polls seriously. If that is the case, they should, because opinion polls are more often right than wrong, as we have learnt to our cost in recent elections.

All the opinion polls conducted of the views of Scottish people in relation to a Scottish assembly have consistently shown that the huge majority of Scots support the idea. Such evidence must be taken seriously by the Secretary of State for Scotland and by Conservative Members.

If the Government will not accept the evidence of polls, perhaps they will accept the evidence of general election results. I do not wish to labour the point, but in the last general election three out of four Scots voted for parties offering some form of devolved assembly in Scotland.

If the Secretary of State and his Ministers will not take election results seriously—it would appear from their response that they do not—one must ask what they will take seriously. Would they take a referendum of the Scottish people seriously? The Secretary of State denied that when he answered my hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, West during Scottish questions today.

Mr. Andy Stewart (Sherwood): The hon. Gentleman asked whether the Government would take a referendum of the Scottish people. Is he aware that there are more Scots living outside Scotland than there are inside it? What about their views?

Mr. McAllion: Scots who decide to live outside Scotland must accept that in so doing they lose any influence over what might go on in the country that they have chosen to leave. It is the people who live in Scotland who matter most, not expatriate Scots.

Dr. Reid: Does my hon. Friend recognise that the suggestion of the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) was merely a ploy to give people of Scottish origin living in the south-east a vote in Scottish elections? It is the only way in which the Government will have a Tory Member of Parliament elected.

Mr. McAllion: If we return to the referendum that was held in 1979, it must be remembered that the financial and professional campaigning advantage lay entirely with the "no" campaign. We must remember that leading Conservatives were urging people not to vote for an assembly, not because they are opposed to devolution but because the Conservatives intended to introduce an improved form of Scottish assembly, with tax-raising powers. Even in those peculiar circumstances, the Scots voted by a clear majority for a Scottish assembly. Yet to this day it is denied them.

All the available evidence, whatever criterion is applied, tells the Government that the Scottish people want a Scottish assembly, yet they refuse to listen.

If the Secretary of State is a genuine democrat and is concerned to give the Scottish people what they want, he must concede the assembly that they have voted for on so many occasions.

My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) mentioned Councillors Meek and Stevenson. For the benefit of hon. Members who were not present, they are Tory councillors in Scotland who remain sympathetic to the devolution case. They recognise that the interests of Scotland and the Conservative party in Scotland lie in the establishment of a Scottish assembly.

That must be emphasised, because Ministers have not yet grasped that the position of the Tory party in Scotland is drastic. In the election last year, its performance was pathetic. It went from holding 21 seats in Scotland to only 10. If it had not been for the intervention of the SNP in Stirling and Ayr, a further two Conservative Members would not have been elected. The Conservative party's support plummeted to 24 per cent. of the Scottish electorate.

The Secretary of State for Scotland hoped for a much better result in the last election. About 15 months ago, *The Scotsman*—admittedly in pre-general election circumstances—said that the Secretary of State believed that the Conservatives

"can still win almost one-third of the vote in Scotland at the General Election . . . The Government's privatisation programme will be one of the key factors in boosting their flagging support."

He could not have predicted the result more wrongly.

The Secretary of State compounded the felony in the same interview. When asked what he thought the likely impact of the poll tax would be on the general election, he said:

"I have yet to find a single MP or candidate who tells me other than it is one of the best assets we have. They say, 'It is very popular . . . Don't listen to the press and don't listen to the comments made. If you drop it, it will be disastrous. We are getting a marvellous reception among the ratepayers in our areas.'"

The Conservative party was given a marvellous reception—not for the Secretary of State for Scotland but for Labour Members. I suspect that Messrs Ancram, MacKay, Fletcher, McQuarrie and the rest have since changed their opinion.

It is not only a matter of the last general election results. Over the past five general elections in Scotland, the average vote for the Conservative party has plummeted to a mere 28 per cent. of the vote. If we compare that with

[Mr. McAllion]

the five previous general elections, when support for the Conservative party stood at 43 per cent., one can see the perilous position into which it has fallen. That decline in support is directly related to the Conservative party's inability to listen to what the people of Scotland want.

The case for an assembly has more depth than election results or the position of political parties in Scotland. The vital interests of the Scottish people would be better served by the establishment of a Scottish assembly and by the Scots taking control of their exclusive affairs.

Earlier, the Secretary of State mentioned what he thought was an economic case against the establishment of a Scottish assembly. He expressed it in terms of the relative tax burden between England and Scotland for managers of companies. There is an outstandingly strong economic case for a devolved assembly, as has been made clear in the press in Scotland:

Following a debate on the place of Scotland in a changing world, at the international forum of the Scottish Council (Development and Industry) at Gleneagles, the *Glasgow Herald*, which is not considered a Left-wing paper, commented on the problem of de-industrialisation in Scotland:

"The decline of manufacturing industry in Scotland in the past decade is well known and not disputed".

It is well known and not disputed by everyone in Scotland outside the ranks of the Conservative party.

In the same interview in *The Scotsman*, the Secretary of State said:

"Increased output . . . enabled investment in modern technology to be combined with the retention of the same number of employees"—

significantly, he added—

"as last week's £62 million investment programme in Caterpillar's, Uddingston plant has demonstrated."

The Secretary of State held up the announcement by Caterpillar that the Government would invest £62 million as an economic success of the Government. We all know what has happened since.

The *Glasgow Herald* commented on a paper that had been put forward by a Dr. Buxton, who had addressed the problem of Scottish industries and what was needed. He was arguing for an increase in regional aid, which again is a problem from which we have suffered since the election. He said that a solution for Scotland's problems would be a Scottish assembly with economic powers. He further said:

"This is an idea . . . whose time has come."

I do not wish to offend Liberal Members by repeating the phrase, "This is an idea whose time has come." A Scottish assembly is an idea whose time has come.

The *Glasgow Herald* is considered to be a Right-wing paper in Scotland. In the same article, it said:

"But the case for an Assembly does seem overwhelming, if only as a means of arresting the movement South of decision-making and key services, to the great detriment of the Scottish economy. It is extremely doubtful if the Scottish interest would have been treated with such contempt in the recent takeover of DCL if there had been a Scottish Assembly in Edinburgh."

The editor of the *Glasgow Herald* summed it up by saying:

"Only the Conservatives now stand against an Assembly and it is unlikely that they will recover the esteem of most Scottish people until they change their minds."

This is the occasion when Conservatives in Scotland should begin to change their minds about their attitude to the Scottish Assembly.

The Secretary of State and his Ministers may be content that the Conservative party should stand between the people of Scotland and what they want. If that is so, that is his affair. However, if he and his friends persist in that course, it will no doubt be to their political cost in terms of seats in Scotland. The Conservative party cannot be complacent about this. As we heard, the right hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger) and the hon. Members for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) and for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) had close-run results in the last general election. They and other Scottish Conservative Members will be vulnerable at the next general election. The people of Scotland will make them pay the price of ignoring what the people of Scotland are continually telling them by every available means — that they should set up a Scottish assembly.

The lack of such an assembly has cost Scotland dear. This week, I am serving on the Committee dealing with the Housing (Scotland) Bill, and it is becoming increasingly clear that it is doing nothing for the real housing needs of the people of Scotland. For example, in Committee attention was drawn to the plight of the homeless. There are 31,000 families and individuals homeless in Scotland, but there is not a scrap, a word, a dot or a comma in that Bill which does anything for the homeless. In the whole legislative process, from the consultative document, through to the Green and White Papers and now to the Bill, only one paragraph is devoted to the needs of the homeless, and that says that no specific action is needed to deal with the homeless. That shows the ignorance of Conservative Members, and their contempt for the needs of Scottish people.

It has been said that a Scottish assembly would push us down the slippery slope to separatism. I do not agree. If anything, it is the denial of the Scottish Assembly which is pushing us down that slope. The Conservative party seems to be intent on pushing the people of Scotland in that direction. This measure affects more than Scotland, because this has been one of the most centralising and authoritarian Governments in the post-war period of the United Kingdom's history.

Let me take one example. The poll tax has nothing to do with improving the accountability of local councillors, and everything to do with a direct attack on local government and democracy. For a start, only 20 per cent. of local government funds will be directly under local government control. There is a built-in escalator for the poll tax because, by freezing the business rate and linking it to the rate of inflation, the Government are ensuring that the poll tax demands will increase enormously if the legislation ever comes into place in Scotland.

The Government hope that the increase in the poll tax will bring the local electors into conflict with local councils, and will lead to people doubting the wisdom of spending money on good local services. That will open the way for the Government to undermine local authorities, and they will attempt to do away with local democracy altogether.

The Scotland Bill, which will set up a Scottish assembly, will be of great benefit to the Scottish people and to the people of the rest of the United Kingdom, because it will show them the way to go and the way in which to fight back against centralisation and authoritarianism. It is a beacon to everyone in Britain, and it should be supported by every hon. Member.

8.22 pm

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): Having sat through most of the debate, I have more respect for the position of the Scottish National party than I do for that of the Labour party. If the Scots really want devolution, the Labour party is a poor advocate for it. We had a half-hearted speech from the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), and throughout this debate he has not managed to muster more than half a football team to support him.

Dr. Reid: How many Tories are present?

Mr. Fallon: It is not our Bill. It is a Scottish Labour party Bill and it is a tribute to the lack of interest and enthusiasm for the Bill that the party has not been able to muster many Members here in support of it.

I do not agree with the Scottish National party's theory of the inexorable logic of devolution. If one wants to see Scotland as an independent Socialist state, one is entitled to argue for a Scottish assembly. Already in Scotland we see something approaching a Socialist state. Some 48 per cent. of the gross domestic product in Scotland is consumed by public expenditure. Half of all Scottish housing is public housing. Half of all Scottish taxpayers receive some kind of benefit. Some 25 per cent. of Scottish adults work for either local or central Government in Scotland. The nationalised industries of shipbuilding, steel and coal are a major part of the Scottish industrial economy. There are well-endowed publicly funded agencies, such as the Highlands and Islands Development Board and the Scottish Development Agency. A Socialist system already exists in Scotland. Conservative Members will vote against the motion in support of the Bill because an assembly would preserve all that.

It was Enoch Powell who correctly said, in the different context of Northern Ireland, that powers devolved are powers retained. The establishment of an assembly would formalise the development of this kind of Socialist centralism. It would perpetuate the long-standing tradition in Scotland of political interference in economic and social decisions that would otherwise be left to the marketplace. We would see in the assembly, as we see already on the Opposition Benches, micro-politicians from micro-constituencies with a micro-Scottish outlook. The assembly, if it ever came into being, would entrench the policies to which the Labour party is committed — policies of public ownership, higher subsidy of public spending and protection from competition.

The assembly would be bound to reflect the obsession that we have seen with the Scottish ownership of particular industries. We would see preserved, year after year, the coal, steel and shipbuilding sectors of the Scottish economy that have been its most significant failures over the past 10 to 15 years, and, by contrast, we would see little support for the private sector of the Scottish economy, with the newer industries such as electronics.

Secondly, we would see in the assembly ever-increasing encouragement for higher rates of public subsidy and higher levels of public spending. We would doubtless see fresh calls for subsidy from every assembly constituency. Public spending in Scotland is already over 26 per cent. higher per capita than in England. At Question Time today we hard that spending on industry and employment in Scotland is 97 per cent. higher than it is in England, and that spending on housing is 113 per cent. higher per capita than in England. Some £2,500 is spent on every Scottish man, woman and child, and less than £2,000 is spent in the same way in England.

Thirdly, a Scottish assembly — the hon. Member for Garscadden specifically based the need for a Scottish assembly on what he called the Scottish psychology — would inevitably be far more insular than anything that we have seen before. It would lead to increasing calls for protection from competition. We have already seen the obsession with preserving a few jobs at Ravenscraig, [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] I say "a few jobs at Ravenscraig" because it employs 3,100 people, which is a small proportion of those who are employed in many of the newer and more important energy industries offshore.

Dr. Reid: About 3,500 people are employed at Ravenscraig, and the spin-off effect on outside contractors means that 20,000 jobs are involved. Would the hon. Gentleman say that 20,000 jobs lost in an area with male unemployment of almost 22 per cent. was an insignificant figure?

Mr. Fallon: I was contrasting the number employed directly at the Ravenscraig works with the number employed in many more recent and successful industries, such as the development of offshore oil. One of the lessons that we have learnt in some of the areas of highest unemployment is that where a particular process is outdated and in decline — I cast no aspersions on Ravenscraig — and therefore unable to compete, the longer one perpetuates it, the more difficult the task of re-employing and retraining becomes.

Miss Mowlam: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Fallon: No, I must get on.

After Ravenscraig, we saw the same obsession with preserving administrative head office jobs at Britoil. We heard nothing of that when BP was allowed to take over one of the largest companies in the United States. Tragically, some years ago the Labour party showed a similar obsession when the Royal Bank of Scotland had the chance of going into venture with the Hong Kong and Shanghai bank. We are learning the lessons from that as we watch that bank divesting itself of certain interest because of the changes taking place in Hong Kong — interest that would otherwise have accrued to the United Kingdom economy.

A Scottish assembly would crystallise all that. Which company thinking of investing in Scotland would not be deterred by the prospect of being locked into the Scottish economy and being told by assemblyman after assemblyman, "Your company must not be allowed ever to remove its head office from Scotland."? Of course that would deter potential investors.

A Scottish assembly in the form in which it has been presented today represents a colossal red herring for the future development of the Scottish economy. In pursuing the idea of increased devolution in Scotland, the Scottish Labour party is ducking the question of where the Scottish economy should be going. If Opposition Members believe that the policies of the past eight or nine years have been successful, clearly the credit should go to the Government. If they believe that the policies on the Scottish economy have been a failure, why are they asking for more of the same—more public ownership, more subsidy, and more

[Mr. Fallon]

protection from competition? They must make up their minds, and they cannot plead the case for an assembly simply by asking for more of the same.

It was not until my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) made his speech that we got to the heart of the issue. For the Scottish economy, the heart of the issue is that Scotland already has too much government. It does not need more. If we believe that free enterprise and the free society are premised in Scotland, as in England, on freedom of government, we must accept that they are equally premised on freedom from government.

Instead of wasting our time on an issue that was disposed of in the 1970s, we should consider ways in which we can genuinely devolve power to Scotland — as my right hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) suggested — not to assemblies and assemblymen and all the bureaucracy that would accompany them, but into the hands of ordinary people. We could achieve that by promoting policies of private ownership, private housing, and private enterprise, rather than by creating a talking shop.

Miss Mowlam: If the hon. Gentleman is so keen on private housing and private ownership, can he explain why Darlington has had 70-plus grants of £25,000 or more—through regional development grants and regional selective assistance—since 1979? If it is not good enough for Scotland, why is it good enough for Darlington? If he thinks that we can lose 3,000 jobs at Ravenscraig, would he adopt a similar attitude to the loss of 3,000 jobs at British Steel on Teeside, where some of his constituents live?

Mr. Fallon: Let me deal with those points in order. I have dealt with the first already in my speech and we dealt with it at Question Time. Industrial subsidy is so much higher in Scotland than it is in England that areas such as the north-east are put at a significant disadvantage. The hon. Member for Redcar (Miss Mowlam) should join me in asking for more equal treatment. If regional assistance is available, it should be equally and fairly distributed between equivalent areas of high unemployment.

With regard to the 3,000 jobs at Ravenscraig, it is my belief that the British Steel Corporation would have been in a much better position if some years ago it had made the tougher decisions that it is now having to make. Had it done so, the hon. Lady's constituents would now be enjoying the benefits of owning shares in a successful private British Steel Corporation. As I understand that most of her constituents are in favour of the privatisation of British Steel, all of us on Teesside look forward to seeing how she votes on the legislation later in the Session.

I was arguing the case for real devolution, into the hands of ordinary people. There are other Bills before the House that accomplish that aim: for example, the Government's proposals to put real power into the hands of Scottish housing tenants and Scottish parents, and real and effective power into the hands of the users of Scottish local government services.

This afternoon my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State announced the first step towards privatising the large nationalised industry sector in Scotland. I hope that the privatisation of the Scottish Bus Group will soon be followed by equal and popular privatisations of other nationalised industries. I hope that my hon. Friends will move on and examine the work of some of the development bodies and agencies to see which of them might be privatised and turned into successful investment institutions. There is no reason why those south of the border should subsidise development bodies that have outlived their natural purpose.

It is clear that the Scottish Labour party has lost interest in the Bill. Opposition Members may have been enthusiastic when they first arrived in the House, and we understand the pressures between Left and Centre, Right, soft Left and soft Scottish Left and so on. Some Labour Members want an independent Socialist state in Scotland. Others are determined to remain Members of the United Kingdom Parliament. They must take this discussion away from the Floor of the House and settle it at meetings of the Scottish Labour party.

8.36 pm

Mr. Sam Galbraith (Strathkelvin and Bearsden): The speech of the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) was one of the most disgraceful contributions that I have heard in this place. If anything highlights the need for devolution, it is his contribution. He is nothing more than a political Contra; as the Tory party in Scotland cannot muster any of its troops, it pays people such as the hon. Member for Darlington in kind to come here and hurl abuse at us about something of which he knows nothing. He is nothing more than a little primary school boy masquerading as a Member of Parliament. [HON. MEMBERS: "He is not a primary school boy."] I am doing him a service. He is a nursery school boy, then.

The hon. Gentleman pretends to know something about the people of Scotland. He has given us a classic example of what is happening in the Tory party in Scotland. Conservative Members tell us that they know best, just as the hon. Member for Darlington told us that he knew best. He cannot get a seat in Scotland and has to come down south because the people up north will reject him. He tells us what will happen if there is a Scottish assembly. He says that the Scottish people will want this, that, and the other, but are not to have them because this political Contra—this little schoolboy from Darlington — happens to know what is best for the people of Scotland.

I do not want to follow Conservative Members' example in harking back to the arguments of 10 or 15 years ago, when I was not a Member. The world moves on, and I would have hoped that Conservative Members would move on. Indeed, I wish that some of them would move on and move out.

Let me deal with a few of the points raised about a Scottish assembly. I do not wish to get into the mandate argument because, as I said to the SNP hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond), there are political, constitutional, legal and moral mandates, and they are all different. One of the most important reasons for devolution in Scotland is the need to improve the government of Scotland. We already have a devolved administrative structure, but it is not accountable to the people of Scotland, and that is one of the arguments in favour of an assembly.

The hon. Member for Darlington talked about devolution as Socialist centralisation. That seems to be absolutely incredible — a contradiction in terms. The whole basis of devolution is decentralisation of power.

Over the past few years, the Government have concentrated more and more power in their own hands. We wish to reverse that process, decentralise power, and return it to the people in whose name we exercise power.

Conservative Members always seem to get uptight about the West Lothian question.

Mr. Bill Walker: The hon. Gentleman should ask Tam. He will tell him.

Mr. Galbraith: Good gracious, that was a significant contribution from the hon. Gentleman.

It is a constitutional anomaly. There are numerous anomalies, but they do not mean that the constitutional edifice will come crashing down. Normally, we could accept that and learn to live with it.

Conservative Members always talk about what happened when Labour had a majority in Scotland. They will agree that there was rough equivalence. We did not have the present position in Scotland in which there is a rump of Conservative Members. English Tory Members forced legislation on Scotland. That is a different matter. Scottish Labour hon. Members did not vote for things that they did not believe in or did not want.

In contrast, let us examine the poll tax. It is the Westminster question. English Tory hon. Members were happy to force legislation on to the Scottish people. When they themselves considered it, they suddenly found that they did not want it. We did not do that. We must address that matter.

The other issue relates to the number of Scottish Members who believe that we should continue to have the same number of Scottish Members. I agree with the present Secretary of State for Scotland. During the debate on the Scotland Bill on 31 January 1978, he said:

"However, there are powerful arguments that a reduction of Scottish representation, although it might appear superficially to be a reasonable proposal, would be damaging to the unity of the United Kingdom."

Later, he said:

"Therefore, to suggest in that context that there is an overall case for reducing Scottish representation is misguided."

Later still, he said:

"For this reason I believe that Scottish representation at its present level can be justified and that it should continue irrespective of the implementation of the Bill."—[*Official Report*, 31 January 1978; Vol. 943, c. 344, 348, 349.]

Let us hear no more from the Secretary of State for Scotland about that matter.

For some Conservative Members, taxation seems to be the crux of the matter. I shall deal briefly with the nonsense that we hear about companies not locating in Scotland simply because income tax might or might not be a penny more. There is no evidence for that. The Government were always concerned about rates — they are a form of taxation—and variable rates and how they would stop various industries going to Scotland. The Government set up a study at the university of Cambridge, which showed that the level of rates had no bearing whatever on whether industries located in a particular area. The reasons depend on such things as infrastructure, education, roads, ports, the amount of labour and whether it is qualified. Such factors, not the level of taxation, determine where a company will locate.

The Government's thinking seems to be confused. I was interested in the Secretary of State's contribution. His complaint seems to be that, somehow, taxation is not high enough and that we have not advocated more and more taxes. That confusion is highlighted by two conflicting reports in the *Glasgow Herald* of 14 January 1988. On one page, an article reports Lord Goold as stating:

"an assembly with tax-raising powers would be dangerous".

On another page, I find the Tory Reform Group in Scotland advocating that we should have an assembly that should not only raise its own taxes but be able to introduce new taxes and abolish old ones. Another part of the same report states:

"I cannot believe that it will mean reduced taxation, so we have to look at a possible extra tax burden on individuals".

That is totally contrary to what is said in other areas. The Conservative party is totally and utterly confused. The tax powers within the assembly Bill represent the ability to vary taxation—nothing more, nothing less. Let us have none of the nonsense scare stories about corporation tax. For Conservative Members to say that there will always be an increase in taxation is a tacit admission that they will never again achieve power in Scotland. We understand why they take that view.

A Scottish assembly is not a panacea for the ills of Scotland. It is not some short-term solution to long-term infrastructure problems. But it would introduce a dynamism in Scotland and reform the structural, social, economic and cultural base. Such a base will provide an environment and an entity in which we can start to solve the long-term problems of Scotland.

8.45 pm

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): Earlier, the Secretary of State repeated his claim that there is little if any demand for devolution in Scotland. If he believes that, he must have his head in the sand. If he gets his head out of the sand, he will see that there is overwhelming demand for devolution in Scotland. If there is a lack of demand for anything among the people of Scotland, it is a lack of demand for the disastrous policies of the Tory Government, who were rejected by 76 per cent. of Scottish voters at the last general election. This Government can never, by any stretch of the imagination or by any definition of mandate, argue that they received a mandate from the people of Scotland.

When I put that point to her shortly after the general election, the Prime Minister reminded me that four out of the past five Labour Governments did not receive a majority of seats in England. Therefore, she said, by my logic, four out of the past five Labour Governments received no mandate to govern Britain. No party, potential Government or Government have ever sought or received a mandate for home rule for the people of England in the sense of setting up an all-England devolved assembly. If there were such a demand among the people of England, I would not stand in their way. I am grateful to my hon. Friends from the northern region of England for publishing their Bill to bring about an element of decentralisation for at least one region of England.

The situation in Scotland is quite clear. The negative side of the coin is that the Government were rejected by 76 per cent. of the people of Scotland. Therefore, they received no mandate from the people of Scotland. The positive side of the coin, as I said to the Secretary of State this afternoon, is that 76 per cent. of the people of Scotland voted for parties with a commitment to set up some form of Scottish assembly or Parliament.

[Mr. Dennis Canavan]

How, then, can the Secretary of State continue to parrot the absurd claim that there is little if any demand for devolution in Scotland? He does not believe the result of the general election, in which he himself was a candidate and many of his former colleagues were failed candidates. The general election result is confirmed by opinion poll after an opinion poll showing a significant majority in favour of devolution. For example, the last System 3 opinion poll that was done for Channel 4 on the subject showed that a total of 76 per cent. of people in Scotland wanted some form of Scottish assembly or parliament. Sixty-two per cent. of the sample considered the matter to be either very important or quite important.

If the Secretary of State does not believe the general election result or the opinion polls, why is he afraid of having another referendum? His answer to me this afternoon was, "Well, we had one in 1979 and look at the result." I advise him that the 1979 referendum was nearly nine years ago and there has been a lot of water under the bridge since then and much damage done to the people of Scotland as a result of the Government who were elected in in 1979.

Let us look at that referendum result in 1979. Of those who took the trouble to turn out to vote, 52 per cent. voted in favour of a Scottish assembly and 48 per cent. voted against. Probably for the first time in British constitutional history, and probably in the constitutional histories of many countries, the majority of the people who turned out to vote for something were denied their democratic wish. Bearing in mind what has happened during the past nine years, I suggest that if we had another referendum now there would be a much bigger majority—an absolutely thumping majority—in favour of a devolved Scottish assembly or Parliament.

Among those who voted "yes" in the 1979 referendum was the Secretary of State. At that time I considered him a brave man because, from memory, I believe that he lost his shadow ministerial position and a great deal of favour among his own party for taking that courageous stance. However, his courage now seems sadly to have deserted him. He now seems to be putting his own political career and the interests of his party before the interests of his country. This is despite the signs that some people in his party are speaking out and taking actions which suggest not only a disillusionment with general Government policies, but also the desire for a greater say for the people of Scotland in the running of their own affairs.

Shortly after the general election, for example, the right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith) had the courage to stand up and say, "Enough is enough: I am not joining this discredited Government," or words to that effect. I suggest that that was partly because of the way in which the needs of the people of Scotland have been ignored by the Government.

Last autumn, a leaked Tory party document suggested that some Tory activists, including some in the higher echelons of the party in Scotland, were in favour of some form of devolution. More recently, Michael Fry, a former Tory party parliamentary candidate, prepared a paper which was submitted to the Scottish Tory Constitutional Reform Group, calling for what even I would consider to be fairly radical proposals for setting up a Scottish assembly with economic powers, including taxation, as well as legislative powers.

Sadly, despite the fact that some Tory party members in Scotland are speaking out against Government policy in such matters, there has been no response so far from the Tory Government. That is part of the reason why the parliamentary Labour party, especially the Scottish group, has taken the initiative of introducing the Scotland Bill referred to in the motion. Basically we are proposing that the power of the Scottish Office, which is at present the subject of administrative devolution, should also be the subject of legislative devolution.

It is worth reminding hon. Members who represent English constituencies—some do not seem to realise this—of the plethora of powers of the Scottish Office in matters such as housing, health, education, public transport, agriculture, the provision of social work services for the elderly, sick and disabled and, indeed, aspects of industry and the economy.

At present, that machinery of government consists of 10,000 civil servants, who are headed by a Secretary of State and four assistant Ministers, whose party represents and received the support of less than one quarter of the people of Scotland. How on earth can we describe that as democracy? How on earth can we describe as democratic a system in which the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) is part of the ministerial team? Having scraped home by the skin of his teeth in his own constituency he has found himself catapulted into being Minister for education, health, sport and the arts.

Is it any wonder that with people like that in charge—look at the team collectively and where they draw their support—we have such unpopular policies foisted undemocratically on the people of Scotland in matters such as housing, in which the Government are threatening to move back to the days of private landlordism; and in education, in which the Minister's proposals were recently rejected by teachers and parents?

There is also the poll tax, the iniquities of which are perceived by all the people of Scotland. We do not even need a debate in this place, or in the country, to convince the people of Scotland of the evils of the poll tax. Indeed, the people of Scotland, who are normally renowned for their discipline and obedience to law and order, are threatening a non-payment campaign throughout Scotland.

I do not suppose that anybody resorts to tactics of civil disobedience as a first resort. Certainly, from speaking to people in Scotland, I think that the majority would start on such a road with great reluctance. However, it is still a possibility. Therefore, I advise the Minister and his colleagues on the Government Front Bench that we are trying the parliamentary road by introducing the Bill. However, if the parliamentary road does not work because of the obstruction and intransigence of the Government, the Government risk a head-on constitutional clash.

I for one will do all that I can in this place, and outside this place, to provoke, and indeed encourage, a constitutional crisis, because I believe that my loyalty and the loyalty of any Member of Parliament ought to be not to this place—an institution of the British state—but to the people whom we represent. Until such time as the British constitution is successfully challenged and changed, this place will be incapable of responding to the legitimate needs and aspirations of the people of Scotland, including the necessary constitutional changes which involve setting up a Scottish assembly or Parliament.

8.57 pm

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): I want to turn the attention of the House to an aspect of bringing about a Scottish assembly which has not had its attention during the many hours that we have spent discussing it. In many ways, the running of an assembly in Scotland could show this House some improved ways of conducting business. I am quite sure, for example, that when a Scottish assembly is formed, its Members will be full-time and will not be doing this work as a pastime for a gentleman. I am sure that the democratic attitudes of the people of Scotland would not tolerate such an approach to running the country.

A Scottish assembly might even keep sensible hours, and start work at the same time as everyone else. It strikes me as quite amusing that this House is referred to as the mother of Parliaments. If a real mother conducted herself as this Parliament does, she would come to the attention of the social workers, what with keeping her children up late at night and giving them access to food and drink in quantities that are bad for their systems.

One aspect of the Scottish assembly is the democratic participation of women in government. In all the years in which this House has existed, there have been only a handful of women Members, and only a tiny handful of those have been from Scotland. All the parties have something to be ashamed of in that respect. It so happens that I am only the tenth woman Member in the history of the Labour party in Scotland, and I can say freely that the other parties have a record even more susceptible of improvement.

It is not merely a matter of the House being such a gentlemen's club—or, perhaps, public school. It is not very feasible for a woman with family responsibilities to travel here from Scotland to be a Member of Parliament. That is simply not on for the vast majority of ordinary women who, unlike the Prime Minister, do not have nannies and home helps to leave them free to conduct business.

In a Scottish assembly, I would expect a much larger participation by women in the affairs of Scotland, and that could only be to the good. I am not arguing that because I believe that women are kinder or nicer. Anyone who thinks of the Prime Minister will know that that is not true. But it is the women who tend to go to the doctor when the kids are ill; it is the woman of the household who is likely to visit the local councillor if the drains need unblocking, or if she wants a transfer. Her husband's name may be on the tenancy certificate, but it is she who takes up the problems. When so much Scottish assembly business will relate to local government and the Health Service, I believe that women will express a strong wish to participate. When Labour brings forward its manifesto for the Scottish assembly, we shall make a strong point of our wish for a Ministry for women.

Mr. Bill Walker: The hon. Lady is labouring under a dreadful misapprehension. An assembly in Edinburgh will be just as difficult for someone representing, for instance, the Western Isles to attend as is Parliament in London. If the hon. Lady thinks that an assembly in Edinburgh will open up opportunities for women in far-flung constituencies, she is entirely wrong.

Mrs. Fyfe: I shall be brief, because one thing that women are taught is not to talk for too long. The hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) is talking nonsense. Of course there are areas in Scotland from which it is difficult to travel to Edinburgh, but a Glaswegian, for example, can be in Edinburgh in an hour, whereas it takes three hours to get to London. That makes all the difference to someone who is trying to look after a family and a home. The lack of common sense among Conservative Members demonstrates—if nothing else does—how little they have to teach us about how to run an assembly, or anything else.

Another democratic aspect of the assembly will be that, instead of only attending occasional Scottish Questions in the House, Members of the assembly will find that they conduct the daily business. The Scottish people will be able to come into the public gallery every day and hear what the likes of Conservative Members in the House are saying. Conservative reputations should go down even further after that. Moreover, the press, and the media generally, will be able to pay close attention to all matters affecting Scotland.

I look forward to that day very much—if only because it will do a great deal for women in Scotland.

9.2 pm

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): The hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) demeaned the debate, and, I think, some of the participants, by branding what we have heard today as micro-politicians talking about micro-politics. In all humility, I am prepared to consider myself a micro-politician. However, if that is the case, I wonder how we should brand my Tory opponent, who came 25,000 votes behind me in the last election.

To some extent, the debate has also been demeaned by a singular lack of attendance by Scottish Tory Members. While I appreciate that there is more chance of meeting Lord Lucan in the House than of meeting a Scottish Tory, I had thought that they might be able to muster slightly more than, on one occasion, one Scottish Member—the Minister.

Today's debate is about not only the good government of Scotland, but the better government of Britain. Like my hon. Friends, I should like to clarify at the outset the question raised by the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) and his colleagues in the Scottish National party about the mandate. I accept the constitutional mandate of the Government to govern the United Kingdom, because I accept the unity of the United Kingdom. However, people's lives are rarely ruled by the dry, dusty pages of constitutional textbooks. Their perceptions, feelings and support are far more firmly rooted in the reality of their everyday lives and, in particular, on whether they perceive that they are governed in a manner that is responsive to their needs and consistent with their priorities and aspirations. By that standard only a fool would claim—and the Secretary of State for Scotland, whatever else he may be, is no fool—that the Government have either a political or moral mandate to govern Scotland in the way in which they have been governing that sorry country.

That need not be the case. The Government could respond to the demand for greater self-government for Scotland. As we have stressed consistently throughout the debate, the Secretary of State in a previous political incarnation responded to that demand for devolution. Of course, he has now changed his mind. Burdened with promotion to high office, borne down with honours

[Dr. John Reid]

bestowed on him by his leader and bought and sold for Treasury gold, he has sold out his conscience. He has turned his face against devolution and his back on the Scottish people and their demand for it.

In an almost bizarre refusal this afternoon to accept any of the volumes of objective evidence, the Secretary of State even refused to accept the fact that there might be a demand for devolution. He told us that the demand does not exist. He says: "It does not exist because I say it does not exist." He almost reminds me of the small boy running about telling every adult who will listen that he is not afraid of the bogy man. I must tell Conservative Members that this particular bogy man will not disappear, despite all the Secretary of State's scare stories. Indeed, the very volume of rumours, scare stories and propaganda emanating from the Scottish Office is the best testimony to the fact that the Secretary of State is only too well aware that the demand for devolution exists and is growing in Scotland.

Central to the propaganda is the contention that there is no demand for devolution. As I have said, that flies in the face of every known fact and every objective opinion poll. I raised the evidence from one opinion poll with the Secretary of State this afternoon, but he chose to ignore it. I referred to the Scottish assembly poll undertaken in 1987, the results of which correspond exactly with the System 3 poll referred to earlier by my hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan). Question 6 of the Scottish assembly poll asked:

"How will the Government's plans make life in Scotland?"

In reply, 10 per cent. answered "better"; 27 per cent. answered "no different" and 61 per cent. said "worse". Question 7 asked:

"Do you think that the Government cares about Scotland?"

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): No.

Dr. Reid: In answer to that, 20 per cent. said "yes" and 80 per cent. agreed with my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross) and said "no". They believed that the Government would make things worse. So bereft are the Government of a response to those statistics that, if they are not actually lying, they are involved in the manufacture of malicious and inaccurate facts.

Mr. Salmond: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Reid: No; I do not have much time.

The biggest, most malicious and most inaccurate of those facts is the Government's claim that the devolution of power would necessarily and inevitably be accompanied by a whole battery of additional taxes. Ministers have constantly argued that, but when they are asked to come to the Dispatch Box and state one item within the devolution Bill that would affect taxes, other than the right to vary the rates of income tax, they singularly fail to come forward. *[Interruption.]* I have been listening very carefully to the debate. Unlike some Conservative Members, I have been here from the beginning of the debate, and I shall stay here to the end.

The absence of devolution has allowed the imposition on Scotland of a whole range of policies and measures that are completely alien to the values of our countrymen and women. The classic example is the poll tax. While I am on this subject, I repeat my challenge to the Minister to deny the figures produced by the House of Commons Library, which show that within three years the poll tax, for an average family, will be running at £450 a head, which is equivalent to £2,000 per annum. I have repeatedly challenged the Government on that, but they have refused to answer. The poll tax and education have already been mentioned.

We now have a crisis in the National Health Service. A most devoted and committed work force has been brought out on strike at Hartswood hospital and others throughout Scotland. Why has a work force that is absolutely committed to the care of patients and that has never countenanced industrial action, a work force composed mainly of nurses and professionals who for 100 years eschewed militancy, been brought to what it considers to be extreme action? It is because we have been recruiting callous and indifferent people into the Health Service, or is it because they care a damn sight more about the Health Service than Ministers? It is easy for us to make up our minds about that.

We have heard tonight about what has been called "genuine" devolution. The Government do not want our form of devolution; they want genuine devolution. Yet the only example that they could clock up was a vote by 1,000 SSHA tenants at Castlemilk. If the Government think that that is such a good thing, why do they not instigate their brand of genuine devolution and give all SSHA tenants a chance to vote on whether they want the Scottish Homes document to go ahead? If the Government are prepared to meet that request, or that challenge, there may be something in genuine devolution.

The Health Service, education, local government and law — complete sections of Scottish life — have been misgoverned by the Conservative party, which does not, or will not, sympathise with or represent the wishes of the people of Scotland. That is why we have put the motion before Parliament tonight.

Devolution is not the shallow argument that the Government portray it to be. It has nothing to do with running away from nationalism. The fact is that, as the nationalist vote has steeply declined in Scotland, support for devolution has increased. As my hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith) said, a Scottish assembly would not be the panacea for all Scotland's ills. In itself, it would not be sufficient to save the steel industry and other industries in Scotland. We do not claim that a Scottish assembly will do everything, but because an assembly cannot do everything that does not mean that it cannot assist in many ways.

A Scottish assembly can assert a Scottish cultural and national identity. The values of Scottish people in some cases are markedly different from those of people in other parts of the country. That argument becomes stronger every day that the Government are in power. Since 1979, the north-south divide has caused unemployment in Scotland to increase by 105 per cent. Manufacturing output has fallen by 4·2 per cent. and total output has grown at an annual rate of only 1·3 per cent. compared with the national average of 2 per cent. In response to such statistics, and to the fact that the number of people living below the official poverty line in Scotland has increased by 140 per cent., the demand for devolution seems eminently sensible and reasonable.

The democratic road to devolution outlined in the Bill recognises the centuries of mutual dependence between the English and Scottish economies. That is why we are

arguing that the main levers of power should be retained at Westminister. The Government's dogmatic insistence on free-market policies has created one magic circle based in the south-east and an outer circle of poverty throughout Wales, the north of England and Scotland. The Government recognise that.

The wider implications are beginning to be seen. I welcome the new strident voices from the north of England, and later from Wales, demanding their own forms of decentralisation, because they have been marginalised for far too long in the politics of the Conservative party.

In my maiden speech I finished with a quote from the father of our party, Keir Hardie. He said that countries, like individuals, at some stages of their lives come to a crossroads, and woe betide them if they take the wrong path. In my maiden speech I pointed out that the road along which the Government were travelling was a far greater danger to the unity of the United Kingdom than any speeches that this micro-politician can make on this micro-political argument tonight. I give the same warning as other hon. Members have given. Pray that we are wrong. If hon. Members ignore the voices of rationality in the House, because they think that they are supporting the United Kingdom in all its unity, the irony is that it is they who will break up the unity of the United Kingdom.

9.15 pm

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): The hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) and, I think, the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn), suggested that the Scotland Bill was being introduced because we thought that we would never again gain power in Westminster; that we were seeking power in Scotland because Opposition Members saw themselves as Ministers only in that context.

It is interesting that the previous devolution Bill—this one is not that different—was introduced by a Labour Government. The previous Labour Government were prepared to give the people of Scotland their assembly; to give the people of Scotland the democracy that they still seek.

The chairman of the Conservative party in Scotland, Lord Goold, listened briefly to the debate. He did not stay long, and I am not surprised. He must have felt a great sense of despair as he listened to Conservative Members. The message that came through loud and clear from the Secretary of State and from every other Conservative Member was that the Tory party will never again manage to obtain a majority of parliamentary seats in Scotland. That is the assumption behind all that Conservative Members have said.

It is now assumed that the Labour party has always had a majority in Scotland, but that is not true. Since the second world war only one party has had a majority of votes in Scotland, and that is the Tory party. In almost every general election until 1970, the party with the majority of seats in Scotland was exactly the same as the party with the majority of seats in the United Kingdom. It is only in the last 18 years that there has been a divergence of political opinion within the United Kingdom.

At the end of the day, this debate is about democracy. The core of the debate is the Scottish people's demand for a greater say within the United Kingdom and the demand that the parties—or party—for whom they vote should be allowed to administer and legislate for them.

Since 1979, the Scottish people have made it clear at every national and local election, and at nearly every by-election and in every opinion poll, that they want neither the narrow nationalism and cheap populism of the SNP, nor the free market philosphy and dictatorial centralism of the Tory party. The way in which the Secretary of State dismissed in a cavalier fashion yet again the Scottish people's demands is an insult to the House, and, more important, to the Scottish people.

I had written down that the Secretary of State made a clever speech. I have to say that it was not. It was probably the worst speech that I have ever heard him make. It was, as usual, slick, and there were a few cheap jibes, but it was all over the place. He had no rational arguments and his speech lacked intellectual honesty and analysis.

I am glad to see the right hon. and learned Gentleman coming into the Chamber. Anyone who has read his speeches in the devolution debate in the 1970s knows that he has never managed to convince us, and probably never even managed to convince himself, of the reasons why he threw the principles that he held then out of the window.

The only conclusion is that the right hon. and learned Gentleman knew that he would hold no office under the present Prime Minister while he remained a devolutionist, and high office—his car, his residence in Edinburgh castle, his Dover house appointment—is more important to him than the people of Scotland, whom supposedly he represents.

The first—and really the only—argument that the Secretary of State advanced against our Bill and devolution was that he believed there was no support for it in Scotland. Elections prove him wrong. The last general election proved him wrong, as we can see from a comparison between what happened in his constituency and what happened in mine. His majority went down, and mine went up by 7,000 on a pro-devolution stance.

If the Secretary of State genuinely believes that the people of Scotland do not want devolution, he should test the matter by putting it to a referendum. Let the people of Scotland speak. We on the Labour Benches will accept the decision of the referendum. If the people of Scotland say no to devolution, we will drop our devolution plans. The Secretary of State is far too much of a coward to go down that road.

The second argument is that the United Kingdom is a unitary state and that if we have a Scottish assembly the whole unitary state will fall apart. Many countries are not unitary; they are not unitary states in the sense of everything being controlled by one legislature and one Administration. There is no reason why we should not be the same.

What Conservative hon. Members are doing, for their own purposes, is to confuse "unitary" with "centralised". There is a very big difference. We believe in the unitary state; they believe in the centralised state.

Conservative hon. Members, including the Secretary of State, have not always held the view that devolution is wrong. During the 1970s—between 1974 and 1979—the right hon. and learned Gentleman stood firmly behind the manifesto on which the people of Edinburgh, Pentlands elected him. It was the other Tory hon. Members who became turncoats and refused to accept what they themselves believed in.

[Mr. John Maxton]

The October 1974 election manifesto is very dear to Conservative hon. Members, because it was the last manifesto, until June last year, in which they said they would abolish the rating system. They keep returning to that manifesto, saying, "That is why we have a mandate to get rid of the rating system." If it is true that they are using that manifesto to abolish the rates, they might use it for other purposes as well.

That United Kingdom manifesto said:

"A recurring theme in our programme is the need to recognise that people want more freedom and more control over their own lives. This is what has shaped our policies for Scotland . . .

In Scotland we will: set up a Scottish Assembly; give the Secretary of State for Scotland, acting with the Scottish Assembly, the power to decide how to spend Scotland's share of the UK budget; establish"—

this makes nonsense of the Secretary of State's argument about taxation—

"a Scottish Development Fund . . . to provide substantial help with both the new problems created by oil, and with Scotland's old deprived areas; transfer the Oil Division of the Department of Energy to Scotland."

Those ideas were amplified in the Scottish supplement to the manifesto. With regard to the assembly it said:

"Devolution is our policy."

The word that the Secretary of State described as cold and unfeeling is the word that the Tory party used in its manifesto. It went on to say:

"Devolution . . . can free Scotland from the frustrations of centralisation. Scottish Conservatives have a good record of devolution in the creation of departments at the Scottish Office free to take their own administrative decisions over a wide range of functions."

The Secretary of State may not like the last bit so much: "we have long recognised the need for matching devolution in the legislative and political field."

On the proposal for a Scottish development fund, the manifesto said:

"Income from North sea oil will be used to create a Scottish development fund. This fund will be used to ensure that every part of Scotland derives the fullest benefit from oil."

It said that the fund would be used in oil areas to carry out essential infrastructural changes. It then said:

"The fund will also be devoted to making good any damage to the Scottish countryside resulting from oil development. And it will make possible a major programme of renovation and replacement of out-of-date housing and obsolete industry."

When I read that passage to some of my colleagues recently, they suggested that it had been written, not by the Scottish Tories, but by Mr. Jim Sillars of the Scottish National party. It makes nonsense of the argument that Scotland cannot have its own finance. If the Secretary of State was prepared to say, "We will give them an assembly; it will not levy income tax, but it will have an oil development fund," I think that my hon. Friends might be prepared to accept that.

It is worth remembering that it was not only devolutionists such as the Secretary of State and the right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith) who stood at that election on that manifesto. So did the other four Members who were elected in 1974 and who are still on the Tory Benches. So did the hon. Member for Tayside, North. I accept that he did not win in Dundee, East, but he stood on the basis of that manifesto, as did the hon. Member for Galloway and Upper Nithsdale (Mr. Lang), who stood in Glasgow, Pollok. So eight of the existing 10 Conservative Members in Scotland supported that manifesto in 1974.

Mr. Bill Walker: The hon. Gentleman should be aware that my position was the same as that of many members of his party at that time. I was opposed to devolution. I made that clear to the selection committee that selected me, and I stood on that platform. Of course, I did not get elected.

Mr. Maxton: That is the point. The hon. Member did not get elected.

Not only did the hon. Member for Tayside, North stand on the terms of that manifesto, but so did the right hon. Lady who is now Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. When she became leader of the Tory party in 1975, she was still supporting the policy of devolution. I understand that, in a speech in the city halls in Glasgow not long after she became Tory party leader, she said:

"An assembly must be a top priority to ensure that more decisions affecting Scotland are taken in Scotland by Scotsmen."

Even in the referendum of 1979, of which so much has been made by the Tory party, the Tories refused to campaign against devolution. What they campaigned against was the Scotland Act 1978. They left their options open. In mid-February 1979, Lord Home said at Edinburgh university:

"I should hesitate to vote no if I did not think that the parties will keep the devolution issue at the top of their priorities."

He went on to say that he would vote no because he wanted an assembly with tax powers, proportional representation and a well-defined formula for separating Scottish and English business.

To reinforce that view on the electorate of Scotland the Tory party chairman, Lord Thorneycroft, twisted the arm of BBC Scotland to reschedule its programmes to screen an interview with Lord Home two days before the referendum. Not only that, but on the eve of the poll the Prime Minister, who was then the Leader of the Opposition, put out a message through the press which started:

"A No vote does not mean that the devolution question will be buried."

So there is no principle whatever in the argument that has been put up against devolution. It is pure political self-seeking. It is a refusal to give Scotland the voice that its people want. It acknowledges that the Tories know that they cannot win control of a Scottish assembly and that they do not want to see any part of the United Kingdom coming under the control of any other political party.

What is most worrying is the refusal to recognise Scottish nationality. There is a Scottish national feeling. We are all aware of it. We see it in sport, in the arts and culture and in the media. There is a recognition of Scotland as a separate, national part of the United Kingdom. Before Scottish National party members start jumping up and down, let me say that does not mean that although people feel that they are Scottish, they want to be part of an independent nation. They want to feel that their national identity is properly recognised within the United Kingdom and that they have a greater say over their own affairs.

We have devolution. It can be seen in the Secretary of State, his Ministers and the 95 per cent. of civil servants who operate in Scotland, not in England, at Westminster

or Whitehall. We deal with separate Scottish legislation in this place. We have a separate Scottish Administration. All this means that we have devolution. The Secretary of State is devolution. He is part and parcel of devolution, whether he likes it or not. When he introduces a Bill on education, he speaks as Secretary of State for Scotland, not as Secretary of State for Education. When he reforms Scottish law, he acts as Secretary of State for Scotland, not as Home Secretary. When he imposes privatisation on the Health Service, or imposes the poll tax on local government, it is on the Scottish Health Service and on Scottish local government that he imposes it. He, the Governmennt, the House of Commons and the constitution of the United Kingdom recognise that Scotland is entitled to its own legal system, education system, transport system and Health Service.

If we recognise the right to that level of self-government, it is patently absurd to make the contents of Scottish law dependent on English votes and to give control of the Scottish Office to a politician whose twin qualifications are that he represents a Scottish constituency and is acceptable to English Members, however unacceptable he is to the mass of his fellow Scots. That is the present situation.

If the Tories were honest in their denial of devolution, they would demand the abolition of the Scottish Office and the full integration of separate Scottish institutions into United Kingdom Government Departments. It is open to conjecture whether the Secretary of State would keep his place in the Cabinet. His three junior colleagues would disappear into the obscurity of the Back Benches from which they were plucked. They and all the other Scottish Tory Members would lose their seats at the next general election and the drive towards independence would be irresistible, but at least it would be an honest line to take. It is the present line of having, on the one hand, devolution and having, on the other hand, no legislative and democratic control over it that is so patently wrong and to which the Scottish people object.

I wish to give one short quotation in respect of the mandate argument:

"I would never adopt the view that Scotland should be forced into the serfdom of socialism as a result of a vote in the House of Commons."

I have not heard a better argument for the mandate than that. That was Mr. Winston Churchill at the Usher hall in Edinburgh in 1950. I do not go as far as that. I do not claim that the Government do not have a mandate in the United Kingdom; they do, on matters relating to the United Kingdom. The Secretary of State for Scotland has no moral mandate in Scotland. That is where the mandate argument comes in.

Mr. Salmond: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Maxton: I shall not give way.

The Government's case is absurd and, unfortunately, very dangerous. They boast that they are the Unionists, but the Union is put at risk by their blind, stupid, stubborn refusal to accept the democratic rights of the Scottish people. The people of Scotland say, "We do not want to separate from the rest of the United Kingdom, but we want our national status to be recognised and we want to control our own affairs in our own way."

The Union between England and Scotland is like a marriage, freely entered into for the benefit of both partners. For most of the time since 1707 there has been benefit for both sides. That has clearly been the case in Scotland, and England has not been out of line politically. Once one partner is not allowed to act freely within the marriage and one partner orders and instructs the other to do what he or she does not want to do, strains are placed on the marriage and divorce becomes a possibility. That is what we are facing in Scotland.

If the Government continue to act as they have done, they will put the union of the United Kingdom at risk. Except for the trivial trio of the Scottish National party, the Opposition do not wish that divorce to take place. We believe in the Union. We want to keep the United Kingdom together. If the Government constantly deny democracy to the Scottish people, resentment will rise. So far, it has not reached the point of demands that we separate, but if the Government continue down that road it will.

If English Members believe in democracy and the Union between Scotland and England, and if they who now object so much to the poll tax being imposed on their constituents accept that it should not be imposed on the people of Scotland either, I call on them to join us in the defence of the United Kingdom by joining us in the Division Lobby. If they do not, I assure them that they will not have heard the end of devolution. The Scottish people have a right to be heard. We will use all legitimate means to ensure that their voice is heard and their will carried out.

9.36 pm

The Minister of State, Scottish Office (Mr. Ian Lang): The last remarks of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) came as a great disappointment to me. I had hoped that if the debate were to have any distinction, it might be the distinction of being the last that we would have on this subject. The play has been running a long time. It is time to ring down the curtain. It is taking on a certain period charm, but it is not filling the theatres. Before long, it will have to be relegated to the music hall.

What a changed climate has characterised our debate. What a contrast it is, as my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) said, from the high days of summer when all the fresh-faced, new Labour Members strode into Westminster in the mistaken belief that Labour had won the election. They know differently now.

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Lang: If the hon. Lady will allow me, I shall press on. I have not said anything controversial so far.

Still Labour Members parade the unsustainable devolution case and offer the same wild assertions, the same weak arguments and the same woolly slogans. In every repetition, those arguments become less credible. I believe that Labour Members find them less and less convincing.

The speech of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) was distinctly defensive and edgy, possibly because he is used on these occasions to being wrongfooted by the Liberal party. This seems to happen increasingly to the official Opposition. Twice before Christmas, the Labour party was wrongfooted by the Liberals on devolution.

More interesting is the continuing evidence that emerges of the lack of enthusiasm in the Labour party for devolution. When we voted on the Scottish Parliament

[Mr. Lang]

Bill, introduced by the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on 25 November, only 33 Scottish Labour Members and only 44 English Labour Members voted in support of it. I know that there are not many more than that among the English Labour party, but it does not show much enthusiasm.

Ms. Armstrong: The Minister does not seem to realise that there is a momentum for devolution not just in Scotland but throughout many English regions. Those of us from the northern region want to say to the Government that we believe in giving power to the regions and to all the people in England as well as in Scotland. How can the Minister say that the momentum is in the past? He has not been listening to what has been going on.

Mr. Lang: I can tell the hon. Lady about the views of English Labour Members from the regions. On 4 March 1986, the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) introduced a ten-minute Bill to set up a Scottish assembly. The Bill was opposed not by a Conservative Member, but by the hon. Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon).

A year before that, on 5 March 1985, the hon. Member for Cathcart introduced a Bill very similar in purpose, and that was opposed, not by a Scottish Conservative Member, or even an English Conservative Member, but by the then hon. Member for City of Durham, Dr. Mark Hughes.

But perhaps they were following the guidance of the Leader of the Opposition, who, in 1978, said:

"The irony of devolution is that it will smash beyond healing the unity of Britain . . . These devolution proposals offer a maximum of risk with a minimum of gain to the Scots people".

Opposition Members may say that this is history, but more recently the Leader of the Opposition reaffirmed those views, as reported in the *South Wales Echo* of 1 November 1985, when he said:

"Devolution reform will not provide a factory, a machine or jobs."

It is no wonder that, when in the last general election campaign he came to Scotland, he preferred to talk about what he was pleased to call "the real issues"—health, education and jobs.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas), in what I acknowledge was a sincere speech, was right when he conceded that devolution was not an issue at the 1987 election. Many of the opinion polls of that time prove him right. As he will know, an opinion poll published in *The Scotsman* of 13 March 1987 rated devolution as having 2 per cent. support as one of the most important election issues; by the election itself, a couple of months later, that 2 per cent. had increased to 4 per cent.

The hon. Member for Garscadden convened his great festival of democracy last autumn on Glasgow Green, which some 50,000 people were expected to attend, to celebrate the importance of devolution. In the event, 5,000 people turned up. That is the evidence of support for devolution in the country at large.

The Liberals at least have a measure of intellectual integrity in their arguments, which are smoother, slicker, better packaged — what one might call "designer devolution". They are also honest enough to concede the inevitable consequences of devolution — the disappearance of the Secretary of State and the resulting reduction in the number of Members of Parliament at Westminster. They are honest, but not very responsible, because they argue for federalism, which, of course, provides the comfortable position that Liberals like of favouring something for which a theoretical case can be made but which nobody actually wants and which cannot, therefore, be introduced.

I disagree with proportional representation, and also with federalism, but the nonsense of proportional representation particularly undermines the Liberals. It is no accident that one Thomas Hare, who in 1857 devised one of the first PR schemes, gave his name to posterity with the word "hare-brained".

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) quoted Gladstone, but, of course, Gladstone was opposed to proportional representation. Lloyd George, the other great god of the Liberal party, denounced it as a device for defeating democracy. But when the hon. Gentleman complains about the absence of proportional representation because, in Labour's plans, there is no representation for rural areas and so the assembly would be dominated by Labour, I disagree with him because I believe that proportional representation is what breaks the territorial link and damages the representation of rural areas.

The kind of Scottish assembly proposed by the Labour party would be dominated by the central belt, and centralisation within Scotland could be every bit as damaging to the diverse interests of the Scottish people as any kind of centralisation at Westminster. That would be even more the case, when, as the Opposition propose, the assembly would be of the single-chamber kind and would carry with it the Labour party's commitment to abolish one tier of local government.

When we ponder the essence of the Labour party's policies, we must turn to the report of the debate on 23 November last year, when the hon. Member for Cathcart said:

"Scotland is largely administered separately from the remainder of the United Kingdom. However, what Scotland does not have—and it is not the West Lothian question, or perhaps the Cathcart question; I do not care what it is called — is the bureaucratic structure required by that level of administrative devolution so that the views of the Scottish people can be represented and so that they can control their affairs."—[*Official Report*, 23 November 1987; Vol. 123, c.49.]

That is what it is all about — more bureaucracy. There can be no doubt at all that if the proposals of the hon. Member for Garscadden and his party were implemented, bureaucracy would be something that we would have in plenty. My reasons for opposing proportional representation are the same as my reasons for opposing the Labour party's Scottish assembly proposals. Proportional representation would destabilise the Government and weaken Westminster—the Parliament of the United Kingdom.

I raise the topic not to debate its merits in detail but because, as an issue, it reveals very clearly the motivation of the Labour party in bringing forward its proposals—it blows its cover. When, last November, my right hon. and learned Friend asked the hon. Member for Garscadden, if offered the choice between having no assembly and one based on proportional representation, which one he would choose, the hon. Gentleman would not answer the question. He said that it was a false choice and that once the Labour party had achieved an assembly the Scots

would consider the other matters involved. In other words, "Let us get Labour bottoms on to the leather benches of the Royal high school and then sort out the details."

Self-interest is the guiding principle behind the Scottish Labour party's conversion to devolution. The Labour party will support a Scottish assembly only if there is no proportional representation, and the Liberals will support it only if there is. So much for the high-principled concern for Scotland's interest.

A more important issue was raised in the debate, and it was recently introduced by the Labour party. It is one of the slightly newer ingredients of a tired old subject—taxation. In this regard, a dramatic extension of power is proposed in the Labour party's Scotland Bill. In the past, we argued that a Scottish assembly would leave us at the top of a slippery slope. We are no longer at the top of the slippery slope. With these new, stronger powers, we are already half way down it. Nothing could more clearly illustrate the way in which an assembly would go if it came into being.

Clause 11 of the Labour party's Scotland Bill includes a power to vary personal income tax. "Vary" is a very subtly chosen word, but "vary" equals "raise". The Labour party has opposed all our tax reductions over the past few years. Tax reductions are alien to the Labour party's philosophy. If it were to reduce taxation—let us give it the benefit of the doubt—there would be no gain to Scotland because the United Kingdom Chancellor recoups any reduction in taxation from the Scottish block. Indeed, the Bill provides for that. That would be inevitable. Otherwise the Scots would be asking the rest of the United Kingdom to pay for their self-voted tax reductions.

All that would be achieved is a switch of resources from the public to the private sector, which is not an obvious goal of Socialism. There would be a temptation for the United Kingdom Chancellor to reduce the Scottish block by the same percentage as any tax cut that the assembly might choose rather than by the cash amount. Thus, Scotland would be penalised. The benefits of any reduction in taxation by the assembly would be non-existent for the Scottish people. The Scottish Chancellor would not be master in his own house. Scotland would be irresistibly linked to the decisions of Westminster.

Given all the cries of Labour Members for increased spending on housing, education, health and industrial assistance, what is obvious to everyone is that the purpose of clause 11 is to vary taxation upwards. Having taken the power, it is inconceivable that it would not be used. One has only to recall the Labour party's £28 billion-worth of promises of extra expenditure throughout the United Kingdom at the last election.

In that regard, we have the view of the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey), a former Chancellor of the Exchequer. In the *Glasgow Herald* of 24 November 1986 he was quoted as saying:

> "We know in Scotland people will be willing to pay more for better services, and want the chance to pay more for the better services which the whole Tory approach to national government prevents them from doing."

That goes a long way to explaining his behaviour as Chancellor. It conjures up a remarkable picture of the Scots straining at the leash to pay more in taxation. Under these proposals, they would get their chance more than they know.

I am grateful for the intervention of the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) at the beginning of the debate, which clarified the position. Clause 11 relates to personal income tax, not to corporate taxation.

The tax base in Scotland, for income tax only, in the last year for which figures are available, 1985-86——

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): What about the poll tax?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman should listen; he might find it quite informative.

In 1985-86, the tax base was £3·4 billion, but the spending on the block of the Secretary of State for Scotland was £6·5 billion. If, for example, the Opposition wanted to spend an extra 10 per cent. — a modest enough ambition — in Scotland, which is £650 million, the income tax that they would need to raise would be £650 million, but, because of the gearing effect, the tax would rise not by 10 per cent. but by 19 per cent.

That may sound bad enough, but what would happen if the United Kingdom were to decide to reassess Scotland's demands on the United Kingdom Treasury? After all, there would be no Secretary of State for Scotland and there would be fewer Scottish Members of Parliament to try to stop it. It would be reasonable to say that Scotland has its own differential tax-raising powers and therefore can decide its own level of differential help. People would ask why England should go on subsidising Scotland. Alternatively, the Chancellor might take a macro-economic view and, taking account of his obligations to control public expenditure, which has delivered such fine economic benefits, for every increase in taxation he might decide to reduce the Scottish block in proportion. *[Interruption.]* I know that Labour Members do not like this, because it undermines their case.

For every £1 spent in England, £1·22 is spent in Scotland. That is hardly neglect by a remote central Government. As the United Kingdom Chancellor evens out disparities and controls overall public spending, Scottish spending would have to rise by 20 per cent. just to stand still. To meet that, revenue from income tax would have to rise by 38 per cent. just to keep spending at the £6·5 billion level promulgated by the Opposition. If the Opposition sought to improve services on top of that, they would need a further increase of 19 per cent. in tax, giving a total increase of 57 per cent.

Let us suppose that we have got income tax down to 25p in the pound by then. A 57 per cent. increase would be 14p in the pound extra in income tax for Scotland, leading to an income tax level of 39p. *[Interruption.]* I know that Labour Members do not like it, but those, albeit rough and ready, assumptions leave the inescapable message that the Opposition have not thought out their tax proposals. They want to give up the best of both worlds in favour of the worst of both worlds. The central plank of their policy is one of muddle-headed, half-baked lunacy, which would ruin Scotland and its people.

Mr. Salmond: I compliment the Minister's researcher on having produced these ingenious arguments. My calculation would be that Scotland had a budget surplus of revenue over expenditure of about £3·5 billion. Can we not use some of those funds?

Mr. Lang: I understand that the hon. Gentleman used to work in a bank before he came here. He is not a very fine example of that bank if that is his view of the position.

We have said that business would suffer if the proposals were implemented, and the Opposition have criticised us on the grounds that the proposals affect income tax only. We know the cost of income tax increases. However, Opposition Members forget that people work in companies and demand pay rises, and they would want substantial increases to meet the kind of increased tax that they would be paying to a Scottish assembly. They might take industrial action to secure those pay rises, and that would lead to loss of competitiveness, loss of production and a brain drain from Scotland. It is self-evident that companies would not expand in Scotland if they had a choice of going to another, low-tax area.

The effect of inward investment, on which we have been so substantially successful as we have reduced taxation, would be devastating. We have brought over 300 companies into Scotland over the past seven or eight years, investing £1·6 billion in the Scottish economy and creating tens of thousands of jobs, but the need for greater enticements that would result from the Labour party policy of higher taxation of individuals, or the Liberal party's policy of slashing corporate tax and consequently also burdening individuals, is easy to predict. How long can we expect regional assistance to stay at the same favourable basis in Scotland after we had our own tax-raising powers? At the moment, we have 10 per cent. of the population, but 30 per cent. of the assistance. We would be on a vicious circle of industrial decline. It is no wonder —*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) was listened to in silence. The same courtesy should be extended to the Minister.

Mr. Lang: It is no wonder that the business community in Scotland is united in opposition to the proposals. The chambers of commerce, the Confederation of British Industry, the Institute of Directors, the Scottish Financial Enterprise Group are all against it. I meet a large number of Scottish industrialists, and I have never yet met one who favours devolution of this kind.

Mr. Douglas: The Government have plans for changes in Scottish education, housing, industry and commerce and a whole range of other activities in Scotland. After this debate, we are entitled to know whether the Government have any plans whatever for changes in the constitutional relationship between Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lang: I see nothing wrong with the present constitutional arrangements, which provide for the full, substantial and separate debate of Scottish legislative programmes in this Parliament. We are willing to improve the administration of Scotland in any way that can be achieved without undermining the integrity of the United Kingdom.

The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) said that devolution was necessary for Labour because it could never win power without it. However, one cannot help wondering why the Scottish National party supports devolution. Devolution is the very antithesis of separation, which is what SNP Members seek. The quintessence of genuine devolution is that it is within the unity of a sovereign state. My hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) was right to quote Mr. Enoch Powell who said that powers devolved are powers retained. The truth is that the SNP wants a Scottish assembly not for the better government of Scotland but for the more turbulent government of Scotland—as a springboard to separation. I would be more inclined to seek the advice of a fox on the design of a hen-run than to seek the advice of the SNP on the construction of an assembly.

My hon. Friend the Member for Darlington was right to say that real devolution is the kind of devolution that we have given to parents, home-owners, the self-employed, small businesses and the owners of shares in Scotland by cutting state ownership and control. That kind of dispersal of power around the people of this country is a worthwhile form of devolution.

The hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) said that a unitary state can retain cohesion only if it recognises the diverse interests of all its constituent parts. I would say to him that a unitary state can survive only if it recognises, above all, the sovereignty of Parliament.

Mr. McLeish: No Opposition Member has questioned the sovereignty of Parliament. We are talking about bad government in Scotland and the fact that the Government are treating the people of Scotland with contempt. The unity of the United Kingdom could be under threat if that behaviour persists.

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman does not understand that it is precisely the sovereignty of Parliament that would be most seriously undermined by the Labour party's proposals.

We rightly hear repeated reference to the unanswered West Lothian question: how does one justify Scottish Members of Parliament voting on English matters at Westminster while English Members cannot vote on such matters in Scotland? The Liberals and the Labour party both leave that question unanswered. However, it is still central to the debate, and to ignore it is the height of irresponsibility.

There is another question—the Westminster question. Do Labour Members believe in the sovereign Parliament of the United Kingdom? The self-deluding nonsense that we hear about their mandate and their claims that they won in Scotland suggest that they do not. They must choose. We know that Labour Governments have governed Britain without a majority in England. Members of the Labour party stood at the general election for election to this Westminster Parliament, and they lost. Scottish Labour Members must either accept the will of this Parliament and the right of this Government to govern or they must face the logic of their position and join the separatists. There is no middle ground.

The truth is that the Scotland Bill is not a principled measure of constitutional reform. It is about power; it is not about the better government of Scotland. One guiding principle underlies it—brazen self-interest. It is not good for Scotland; it is good for Labour. The Labour party seeks power at all costs and at any price. Labour has abandoned all hope of power in the United Kingdom, so Scottish Labour Members will settle for power in Scotland and dish their English colleagues into the bargain. Members of the Labour party in Scotland who won 70 per cent. of the seats on 42 per cent. of the vote were elected to this Parliament of the United Kingdom and they do not

command a majority here. I ask this Parliament to protect the unity of the United Kingdom and to protect the people of Scotland from these damaging and cynical proposals.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 226, Noes 316.

Division No. 155] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Ms Hilary
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Ciwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, J.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Darling, Alastair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Dunnachie, James
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Galbraith, Samuel
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Douglas
Hinchliffe, David
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, James
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Tom
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, John
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rowlands, Ted
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerald
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dafydd Elis
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Ms Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A. J.
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Anthony
Wray, James
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Cook and
Mr. Alun Michael.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bigge-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John

Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Timothy
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Hon Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on Amendments):—*

The House divided: Ayes 310, Noes 227.

Division No. 156] **[10.15 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baldry, Tony
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon

Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Timothy
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Hon Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Ms Hilary
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Cleiland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry

Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, J.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Darling, Alastair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Dunnachie, James
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Galbraith, Samuel
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Douglas
Hinchliffe, David
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, James
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Tom
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, John
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rowlands, Ted
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerald
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dafydd Elis
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Ms Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A. J.
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Anthony
Wray, James
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Cook and
Mr. A. W. Michael.

Question accordingly agreed to.

MR. SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House rejects the arguments for constitutional change that would be disruptive, unworkable, costly to implement and destabilising in their effect; and in particular rejects the added tax burden that would fall on the people of Scotland from a Scottish Assembly with tax-raising powers.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Income and Corporation Taxes Bill *[Lords]* may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Garel-Jones.]*

Immigration Rules

10.29 pm

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): I beg to move,

That the Statement of Changes in Immigration Rules (HC 1987-88, No. 208), a copy of which was laid before this House on 14th December 1987, be disapproved.

We tabled the motion opposing the rules for reasons which I shall describe as briefly as possible in the restricted time at my disposal. I know very well that the Government have promised that in the not-too-distant future there will be a debate on the rules, which will enable the House to discuss the procedures in general and the changes before the House tonight, which must be approved by the House if they are to be in place by 1 February and therefore passed into administrative law. But we wished to take the opportunity of debating the proposed changes tonight because it seemed to us that every opportunity should be seized to deal with something that is wrong in principle and in our judgment will be catastrophic in practice.

I have no doubt that the Minister of State will describe the changes proposed by the Government almost entirely in administrative terms, and suggest, as the Home Secretary suggested at the beginning of his speech on Second Reading of the Immigration Bill, that the only purpose and intention of the changes is to improve the administrative efficiency of immigration control.

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): Will the right hon. Gentleman say whether more people will benefit or more will suffer by the rules?

Mr. Hattersley: My entire speech will be devoted to the proposition that more people will suffer than will benefit.

I was delighted to give way to the hon. Gentleman, because I had hoped I would have an opportunity to remind him that last time we debated these matters, after much passing of notes from the Front Bench, he announced, reading the Minister of State's note, that the primary purpose rule, as at present constituted, was invented by the Labour Government. I hope that the hon. Gentleman has had the opportunity to check up on that, and that he will correct himself during the evening.

I was saying that the Minister of State will no doubt argue, as the Home Secretary argued, when he dealt with this subject, slightly inappropriately, on the Immigration Bill, that the purpose of these administrative changes is to improve the efficiency of the immigration and nationality department of the Home Office. No Opposition hon. Member, certainly nobody who deals with immigration matters in his or her constituency, doubts that there is a desperate necessity for administrative changes in the Home Office.

The fact is that the immigration and nationality department of the Home Office is in absolute chaos. Men and women who do no more than to apply to exercise their legal rights wait for months, sometimes years, to receive the vouchers and the visas which should be theirs automatically. Letters remain unopened in Lunar house for months. Indeed, checking up today I discovered that, on the latest information, in late December the department was opening—not reading, but opening—letters received during the early weeks of October. That is ludicrous. It is within the experience of all hon. Members who deal with such questions that people who want and need immediate attention from the Home Office are unable to obtain it.

The absurdity to end all absurdities is that many visitors to this country who want to leave at the end of their prescribed period are now unable to do so because the Home Office has their passports; they are lost at Lunar house and the Home Office cannot return them in time for the visitors to leave by the prescribed date.

In fact, the Home Office immigration and nationality department is in a shambles, for reasons for which the Government are largely responsible. Over the past eight years, this Government have complicated and extended the immigration rules. Over the past eight years, they have allowed to exist a shortage of staff in the department, which has made the delays and the late replies inevitable. Over the past eight years, the Government have built up a number of extra barriers outside the official regulations, which are in themselves time-consuming.

I give as my example the third and fourth interview. Everybody with immigrants in his or her constituency will have seen applications from genuine husbands and fiancés to join their wife or fiancée in this country, in response to which there has been a letter from the Home Office saying that an interview is necessary. When the applicants have written to the Home Office and said that there has been an interview, they have been told that a second or a third interview is necessary. Everybody knows that those extended interviews are intended to inhibit and deter legitimate immigrants from entering this country.

The position is further complicated by the subjective tests that the Government have invented. The family admitted for settlement, after careful scrutiny by an embassy or a high commission abroad, is required to submit itself to futher scrutiny after a year in Britain. That is intolerable in terms of civil rights and is an additional burden for the Home Office. Most of all, there is the problem of the primary purpose rule, to which I shall return in a moment.

Most of the administrative hurdles which have caused the chaos were created with the specific intention of inhibiting and curtailing legitimate and legal immigration. The immigration and nationality department of the Home Office and the administration of immigration will remain in chaos until the Government change their ways.

The proposals before us barely touch the problem. What is more, they could be — and I fear, with this Government's record, will be — interpreted in a way which further damages the rights of immigrants, prospective immigrants and the families of immigrants. That is only one reason why we shall vote against the proposal tonight.

We will also vote against the immigration rules, and amendments to them, whenever there is an opportunity for as long as they contain the unacceptable features which characterise them. I give as the obvious example the primary purpose rule — the obligation on the man or woman who wishes to come to this country for marriage to accept the onus of proof that the marriage is the primary, indeed the only, purpose of the application to come into the country. That rule discriminates against the black and Asian British. It disrupts and destroys genuine marriages, and it panders, as it is intended to do, to racial prejudice. The Minister of State should tell the Home

[Mr. Hattersley]

Secretary that we will take every opportunity—tonight is one opportunity—to demonstrate our distaste for such rules while they remain in force.

The rules were instituted with the idea of delaying immigration. The regulations place an obligation on a junior civil servant to read the mind of a fiancé and on someone in a high commission or an embassy to try to guess the true intention of an applicant. All these things cause delay and chaos.

The vote tonight is meant to send a second message to the Government. We will not accept the exclusion of Members of Parliament from the consideration of immigration applications by constituents. The Minister of State has developed the habit, in his bland way, of saying in the final sentence of his letter to hon. Members about legitimate cases that he will notify the constituent direct when he has made up his mind about that person's future. That is meant to prevent the Member of Parliament from fulfilling his or her proper function of arguing the case of the constituent. The intention is to remove from the Member of Parliament the right to protect his or her constituent.

Now that the Home Secretary has replied to my complaint on the matter, 12 weeks after receiving my original letter, I want to tell the Minister of State that those of us with constituency cases to argue on the immigration rules will go on arguing them; we will not abandon the rights of our constituents to junior officials at the Home Office, and certainly not to the Minister of State.

I welcome the fact that we are to debate the rules in their entirety next month. As for the specific changes that the Minister of State will put forward, I have nothing to say about au pairs, although I suspect that the Minister may feel that it is a subject worthy of his attention. I will not argue with him about that. The proposal for fiancés is sensible. We welcome it. I hope that it will be implemented in the spirit in which the rules are drafted.

We are told that visitors will normally be allowed to remain in this country for six months, as distinct from what happens under the present rule, which allows—some White Papers imply that it is a normal rule—for a year. In fact, the six-month period in the new regulations is more or less what the present rule says. A period of six months will "normally be appropriate." The present rule says that that is the period that should be granted and normally it will not be reduced below six months, unless there is a special reason. In the experience of many Opposition Members, there are innumerable special reasons for visitors which result in visas or permits being granted for less than six months. One special reason which I encounter every Saturday morning is that the visitor comes from Bangladesh, Pakistan or India.

I want the Minister of State to be categoric. He has seen the tables; he knows the figures. He knows that a visitor from Bangladesh has a worse chance of getting a visa, permit or entry voucher than a visitor from any other country. He knows that it is almost as bad for people from Pakistan and that it is nearly as bad for those from India. I want the Minister to tell us categorically whether the Government mean what the regulations say.

Can we be told, clearly and loudly enough for the immigration officers to hear and understand, that six months will be the general rule for all legitimate visitors? To convince us that that is really his intention, and that it is not his intention to reduce the maximum period and then issue visas for much shorter periods within the six-month maximum, will the Minister of State consider publishing the instructions which he will issue to immigration officers telling them now to apply the six-month rule?

Those of us who have dealt with the Department and have telephoned and argued with duty officers on Saturdays and Sundays know that there is something called the code 3 procedure. It is a technique by which immigration officers who have no evidence which justifies the exclusion of a visitor or the limiting of a visitor's permit impose a limitation because they feel uncertain about the visitor. That is absolutely unacceptable and intolerable. I hope that the Minister will make it clear that the six months is the six-month norm, the six-month rule, and that six months will be the period allowed except when there is hard evidence to justify an alternative.

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): Will the right hon. Gentleman explain exactly what he means by a legitimate visitor?

Mr. Hattersley: It is a visitor against whom there is no evidence to suggest that he or she will not leave at the end of the period of his or her visit. I think that I have in my constituency probably 20, 30 or 40 applications a month for a visitor's permit. Some are granted willingly by the Home Office, some are granted grudgingly after intervention, and a few are not granted at all. I cannot recall the last occasion when the Home Office wrote to me and said that a legitimate visitor, approved after my intervention, had remained in the United Kingdom longer than the period of his or her visit; yet the rumour—I am sure that the hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) has spread it in his time—is that visitors come here and disappear into the inner cities. I cannot recall when that last happened in Birmingham.

Mr. Carlisle: Would the right hon. Gentleman therefore say that his judgment on legitimacy is to be followed rather than the judgment of Home Office officials or Home Office Ministers?

Mr. Hattersley: The rule which I want to see applied is that a visitor should be allowed into this country for the six-month period unless there is hard evidence to demonstrate why that should not happen. The hon. Gentleman should support that rule because, if a white South African comes here, that is exactly the rule that will be applied to him. Unfortunately, it is not the rule that will be applied to a citizen of Pakistan, India or Bangladesh.

It is our view, as I think it is of everyone who has examined the proposals, that this will not end the administrative chaos in the Home Office. That will only come about by radical changes which, in the interests of the immigration and nationality department's reputation and in the interests of prospective immigrants and their families, ought to be brought about. I offer the Minister of State four proposals for change which would end the backlog, the waiting, the unopened letters and the chaos.

First, there ought to be an independent inquiry into the administration of the department and into the staff levels of the Home Office where immigration matters are considered. I concede that the Rayner inquiry into some aspects of Government efficiency brought some benefits.

If Lord Rayner could be persuaded to do such a job for the immigration department of the Home Office, I would welcome it. In any event, somebody should.

Secondly, we should abolish the probationary period for people who are already here, who have come here with visas after they have been vetted, scrutinised, cross-examined, interviewed in the subcontinent or elsewhere. The idea of double jeopardy—the interview before one comes and another complicated process after one has got here—is preposterous.

Thirdly, we need the removal of subjective tests, which are wrong in principle and time-wasting in practice. By that I mean the reading of visitors' minds, trying to determine their intention, and also the primary purpose rule, with the onus on the spouse to prove that he or she comes here for no other purpose than marriage.

Fourthly, the six-month period should be the normal practice save where there are exceptional reasons why it should not be. Instead of that, we will get additional complications. We will get them from the Immigration Bill now going through the House of Commons. All the Bill will do to the regulations is make them more difficult to apply and increase the length of the queues.

But I do not believe for a moment that the Minister of State will accept our advice. Not only is he not empowered to do so, but our advice would bring into the system something that the Government would not accept—an honest, objective and fair test of the real and honest immigrant; whereas the Government's regulations are meant to deter and inhibit even the honest and legitimate immigrant. That is why the Home Office is in the chaos that it is tonight, and that is why it will remain in that chaos until the Government take an honest and honourable view about these matters.

10.47 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Tim Renton): I have listened with astonishment, almost with disbelief, to what the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) has said. He lectures us about the delays at Lunar house, and he is right—they are excessive. One reason is the great number of applications that we received for registration for British citizenship before the end of last year.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): The delays are too long.

Mr. Renton: I suggest that the hon. Member listens for a moment.

We received a great number of applications. This is a once-for-all problem. The matter is now over and the applications are in, but they have to be dealt with. I fully agree with the hon. Member that the delays are far too great, and I will come to that later. But when we come forward with constructive proposals in this statement to deal with the delay, suggesting that we should ease the entry time limits for businessmen, au pairs, fiancés and visitors and, in this manner, as I shall shortly explain, substantially reduce the caseload at Lunar house on mechanistic, routine work in order that the immigration and nationality department can spend its time on more complex matters—including the representations made by hon. Members—the right hon. Gentleman says that Opposition Members will vote against them on principle.

What a ludicrous contradiction there is in the right hon. Gentleman's mind.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North) *rose*——

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East) *rose*——

Mr. Renton: No, I will not give way just at the moment; the debate is a short one and I hope that both hon. Members will have time to make their own contributions.

What a contradiction there is in the right hon. Gentleman's mind. We have come forward with these proposals. I find it impossible to believe that the Labour party will oppose them, because they would achieve precisely one of the objectives on which hon. Members are lecturing us.

Then the right hon. Gentleman complains about the proposals that we may have in mind for changes in the handling of hon. Members' representations in immigration cases. We are not debating those tonight, and it would be out of order to do so, but let me repeat something, because I want to make certain that the right hon. Gentleman is not confused about this. He talked about a full debate next month on the regulations. The debate next month will be on the Report and Third Reading of the Immigration Bill. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has written to the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook.

Mr. Hattersley *rose*——

Mr. Renton: I should like to make this point, and then I shall give way.

We are still working on changes, along the lines that my right hon. Friend announced on Second Reading, in the handling of Members' representations on immigration cases. *[Interruption.]* It would be helpful if the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook would listen. I am trying to set him right, because he appeared to be in ignorance in his earlier remarks.

My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary outlined our ideas on this matter in a letter to the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook on 20 January. I should like to read one paragraph of it. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will not object to this, but I know that he has distributed this letter widely to his colleagues. It says:

> "We have no intention of removing the rights of an MP to write to Tim Renton or myself about individual cases. The review which we have undertaken is intended, within the balance to which I have referred above, to produce proposals for dealing more efficiently with this vast amount of correspondence. Indeed, I hope that as a result we shall be able to offer an improved service to Members and their constituents."

On both points—these modest proposals and our thoughts about how to deal with changes in the handling of Members' representations—the right hon. Gentleman is leading the Labour party into blind opposition. We are trying to do precisely what he requests to make the system better.

Mr. Hattersley: The Minister graciously informs us that the Home Secretary has no intention of preventing us from writing to him. That is not much of a concession. The idea that the Home Secretary might have any view on whether I should write to him is, at best, impertinent and, at worst, something more authoritarian. The question is not whether I or my right hon. and hon. Friends can write to the Home Secretary; it is whether he replies to us. The evidence of the past six months is that he has chosen not to write to us but to deal with our constituents without telling us how he is dealing with them. That is the question, and I should be grateful for an answer.

Mr. Renton: How gloriously pompous the right hon. Gentleman manages to sound. It brings back the worst moments when he was shadow Chancellor.

It is annoying to be lectured about delays in immigration procedures and in tackling immigration cases and at the same time be told, when we look for ways of making the procedures work more efficiently to help hon. Members, that the Labour party will oppose everything we suggest.

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): The Minister has been kind enough to say that my right hon. Friend's question was irrelevant, but he has not answered it. He has written to me on more than one occasion saying that he will reply to my constituents, but not to me, about representations that I have made. That is a matter of privilege for this House and has implications in every Department of the Executive, which has the power to decide whether to answer Members of Parliament. There is no point in anybody coming to a Member of Parliament because the answer can be given by a junior clerk, who would have dealt with the case even if the representations are made by a Member of Parliament. Will the Minister now answer my right hon. Friend's question and not make pompous and silly observations?

Mr. Renton: No, I shall not be led down that path, for the simple reason that, providing the business managers can agree, we shall have a debate on these proposals. We do not wish to ram our suggestions through the House; we shall have a debate about what the hon. Lady has said. This not a matter of privilege; that suggestion has already been raised.

What we wish—the hon. Lady must take my word for it—is to have a procedure that will enable officials and Ministers, whoever they are, to deal efficiently and effectively with the complex and difficult cases that concern hon. Members. I suggest to the hon. Lady—I know the correspondence to which she is referring—that she waits until she hears our proposals and we shall then debate them. If she still finds them wrong, she can tell us so.

Let me move on to these modest rules changes. What we are debating tonight implements the proposals which my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary announced on 16 November during Second Reading of the Immigration Bill, and which were laid before the House on 14 December. I hope that the confusion of the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook has been clarified. These rules are totally separate from the Immigration Bill and from any rule changes consequent upon the passage of the Bill.

I stress again to the House that the purpose of these is to prove the effectiveness of the immigration control and to provide a better service to the genuine applicant. We are introducing them now rather than waiting until after the passage of the Bill, because we believe that these improvements are urgent in view of the current pressures on immigration control.

Here I come back to the point made by the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary said on 16 November that the immigration and nationality department's backlog of work at the end of 1986 was some 47,000 cases. At the end of 1987, it was about 77,000 cases, the equivalent of seven months' work. I find no comfort in that, and that is why I am suggesting some changes. If the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook were not so blind, and such a mixture of obduracy and apathy, he would support rather than vote against them tonight.

It is common ground that the present position is unsatisfactory, both for the applicants and for the staff seeking to deal with this volume of work. To give hon. Members who might not have as many immigration cases as others an idea of the scale involved, I point out that the immigration and nationality department received over 250,000 new cases last year, an increase of 10 per cent. over the position three years earlier.

Mr. Vaz: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Renton: No; the hon. Gentleman may have a chance to catch your eye during the debate, Madame Deputy Speaker.

The Department received about 750,000 pieces of correspondence last year. The public inquiry office alone dealt in 1987 with a record number of 192,000 personal callers, an increase of over a quarter in one year, and 162,000 telephone inquiries. The problem is not the result of any lack of commitment on the part of the staff in the Department. They have given excellent service in maintaining immigration control to Governments of all parties. At the root of this is the fact that some 2·5 million members of the ethnic minorities live in the United Kingdom, and there is continuing immigration of work permit holders, business men and others, and continuing family reunion. Understandably, this gives rise to an increase in the number of visitors to this country, which will continue.

Hon. Members have no doubt witnessed this increase themselves in their constituencies and surgeries. Within the Department, the speed at which applications can be resolved is itself influenced by increasing complexity in case law, as the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) will know, and a diversion of work caused by dealing with inquiries about unresolved cases. Against that background, we need to ensure that our procedures represent the most effective and efficient means of conducting fair but firm immigration controls. It is against that background that we are bringing in these changes.

What is at the heart of what we are proposing? One of the principles underlying the present immigration control is that a person is granted a period of leave on arrival and further periods of leave in this country. These together allow him to stay, if he so chooses, either until he completes the maximum period allowed or until he reaches the point at which he is eligible to apply for settlement. This has been a sensible principle and it is one which in some cases will need to be maintained. For example, students on long-term courses are usually admitted for the duration of their course. On the other hand, a student embarking on a series of short courses may not always be clear whether he will continue his studies in the United Kingdom, or for how long. The immigration and nationality department will need to be satisfied that he or she continues to attend classes, and to have sufficient money to pay his fees and support himself and any dependants.

The rule changes establish the new principle that, once a person has been given entry into a particular category, he should normally be given the maximum period allowed in that category up to the point at which he or she would have to leave the country or seek to remain on a

completely different basis. The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook gave the impression that the changes would be trifling and would have very little effect. I have to tell him that he is wrong. I certainly hope that he is wrong; I believe that he will be wrong. The proposal will remove the need for extensions of stay within the same category and will take about 40,000 cases annually from the total completed workload at Lunar house, which in 1987 was some 233,000 cases. That is a reduction of nearly 20 per cent.

There will be a number of benefits from this approach. Many people who now have to apply to the department for an extension of stay will not in future have to do so at all. Others will have to do so much less often. The resources of the department — hon. Members on both sides of the House should approve of this — will be able to be deployed to deal more quickly with non-routine applications, thereby improving both the effectiveness of immigration control and the service to the genuine customer and, I hope, to hon. Members. That is the principle behind the rules changes, and that is why I find it incomprehensible that the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook is not advising his hon. Friends to vote for them.

I shall now deal with the effect for particular categories. Au pairs are currently admitted to the United Kingdom for 12 months and they may apply at the end of that period for a further 12 months' stay, bringing them to the two-year maximum permitted. The rule changes will enable the immigration officer to admit an au pair on first arrival for the full two-year period of her stay here.

Business men and self-employed persons are currently admitted for an initial 12 months, with subsequent extensions of stay of 12 months at a time up to four years, at which point they are eligible to apply for settlement. We are keeping the requirement that business men and self-employed persons are first admitted for 12 months only. This will enable us to ascertain at the end of the initial year that the person has set up or entered into the business for which he was admitted. Provided we are satisfied of this, the person will normally then receive a single extension of three years to bring him to the four-year point.

We believe that these changes will be widely welcomed by foreign business men wishing to establish businesses and create jobs in this country. They will particularly benefit business men from the ethnic communities, as Indian business men, for example, represented some 10 per cent. of all business men receiving an extension of stay in 1986.

The present provisions for persons of independent means, sole representatives of overseas firms as defined in the new paragraph 32, writers and artists are the same as those for business men, except that, after an initial 12 months, a sole representative may be granted a three-year extension of stay. The rules changes will accord the same treatment to all four categories and will permit them to be admitted for up to the four-year maximum on arrival.

For visitors, we propose two changes, one in the rules themselves and one in procedure. The rules change is that the maximum length of a visit will be reduced from 12 months to six months. The procedural change — I repeat this to the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook — is that, with very few exceptions, all visitors will be admitted for six months on entry. This contrasts with the present practice, whereby, although many visitors are admitted for six months, a sizeable minority are admitted for shorter periods but may apply for an extension.

I believe that this reduction to six months is entirely justified on its merits. Six months is an adequate — indeed, very generous — provision for a visit. It will meet the needs of the overwhelming majority of non-EEC visitors, who totalled about 5·4 million in 1986. In fact, less than 0·5 per cent. of all visitors apply for an extension beyond six months. It will nevertheless reduce the scope of abuse by that small minority who use the present period of 12 months to establish a more permanent basis of stay. Moreover, it will benefit the genuine visitor who will no longer have to come to the immigration and nationality department to seek an extension of stay, and remove a large number of applications for the department itself.

My hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) was absolutely right to point out that the winners under these proposals far outnumber the losers.

Mr. Sydney Bidwell (Ealing, Southall) *rose*——

Mr. Renton: If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I shall not give way. I wish to make haste and finish my remarks. Many other hon. Members wish to speak, and time for the debate is short.

The effect of the changes is that more visitors will potentially benefit from the procedural change of admitting them for six months than will lose from the reduction to six months. In fact, there will be about eight times as many winners as losers. Taking 1986 as the most recent example for which figures are available, about 280,000 visitors were admitted for less than six months, while less than 10 per cent. of that number — about 25,000 — were granted an extension of stay for more than six months. That shows the degree to which more will benefit than will lose. It does not apply just to visitors from countries such as the United States and Australia, although they will benefit too. Nearly 24,000 visitors from India were admitted to the United Kingdom in 1986 for less than six months, while only 5,000 were granted an extension of stay for longer than six months.

The United Kingdom is virtually alone in its generosity to visitors to stay for 12 months. Most west European countries — for example, France and West Germany — require all visitors to obtain a visa if they intend to stay more than three months. Some countries — for example, the Nordic countries — limit a visit to, say, three months in any six-month period. Some countries, such as Canada, limit a visit to a short initial period on entry, with the possibility of an extension of stay. Our proposal has none of that bureaucracy. For most visitors, it will do away with the need to seek an extension of stay. Six months will also be no less a period than that permitted to a British person wishing to visit many other countries — for example, a British visitor to India.

On Second Reading, some anxiety was expressed that a six-month maximum for a visit would not properly take account of compassionate reasons for a longer stay. As my right hon. Friend then said, it will always be possible on compassionate grounds to allow visitors to stay for longer than six months. The same situation arises now, when there are compassionate reasons for a visitor wishing to stay more than 12 months. Discretion will, however, continue to be exercised only very sparingly and in genuinely deserving cases.

[Mr. Renton]

Finally, I should also mention that affianced people of both sexes will be admitted for six months, instead of three months at present. This will reduce the need for a fiancé to apply for an extension of stay if, for example, through illness, a marriage has to be postponed.

The changes relate only to time limits and to the length of extensions of stay. They have nothing to do with primary purpose. They have nothing to do with third or fourth visit interviews for those seeking settlement in this country. The criteria for entry into such categories remain unaltered, as do those for extentions of stay. The changes that we are introducing for au pairs, business men, visitors and others will enable us to give them——

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Renton: If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I shall not give way.

Mr. Faulds: It is a perfectly valid point.

Mr. Renton: I know the hon. Gentleman well. His points are always valid. I hope that he will be able to make them in his own speech.

The changes will enable us to give more generous periods of stay than at present. Therefore, transitional provisions are not needed. This is the last point that I have to make to the House.

We shall start to implement the changes with immediate effect from 1 February. There will, however, be certain visitors already in this country, or who will arrive before 1 February, who will be among that 0·5 per cent. annually who wish to stay longer than six months. For those people, paragraph 18 of the statement of changes will enable them to seek an extension of stay as a visitor for up to the 12 month maximum.

My hon. Friends and, I hope, Opposition Members will see that the rule changes represent a sensible and balanced new approach to immigration control. They will cut bureaucracy and red tape in just the way that the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook urged. They will improve service to the genuine customer, and they will enhance the effectiveness of immigration control. I commend them to the House.

11.9 pm

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): This debate is taking place a few days after a meeting between the Minister of State and a group of black religious leaders. After that meeting they issued a statement, which said:

"we have sought to impress on Mr. Renton our vigorous opposition to the present immigration policies of the British Government. The effect of these policies time and again, for the communities that we represent, is that families are divided, individuals are restricted or even prevented from visiting their relations here, people are deported and losing homes, jobs and even families, others are being detained for days, weeks and months as they seek to get into Britain. This must lead us to the conclusion that even current legislation and the way it is put into effect is racist. New legislation like the current Bill deepens the frustrations and anger already present in the black community — something which could have consequences undesirable to us all."

Those black leaders pressed four specific points on the Minister of State, urging him to take note of their representations and, when we reach Report stage of the Immigration Bill, to withdraw grotesquely offensive clauses which will create considerable difficulties as far as black and Asian communities are concerned.

That delegation was made up of Canon Ivor Smith-Cameron of the General Synod of the Church of England——

Mr. John Carlisle: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The hon. Gentleman is referring to a meeting which took place at the Home Office and which has nothing at all to do with the motion before the House— *[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. I have understood the hon. Gentleman's point of order. It is for me to decide what is relevant.

Mr. Madden: The delegation consisted also of Rev. Barry Thorley, vicar of St. Matthew's, Brixton; Pastor Io Smith, co-chair of the Conference for Christian Partnership; Mr. Ivan Weekes JP, secretary for community relations, Methodist division of Social Responsibility; Rev. Kennedy Bedford, executive secretary of the community and race relations unit of the British Council of Churches; Ms. Leela Ramdeen, chair of the Cardinal's Continuing Committee for the Caribbean Community—*[Interruption.]*—Sheikh Gamal Solaiman, head imam of the Islamic cultural centre, Regent's park mosque—*[Interruption.]*—and Dr. Gurdeep Singh Sethi, Sikh author and journalist.

One benefit of televising the proceedings of this House would be that black and Asian citizens of this country could see and hear the derision with which the names that I have just read to the House have been greeted by Conservative Members.

The Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants has produced, as always, an excellent briefing document, which states:

"The main aim of the new rules is to reduce casework, and thus reduce the chronic and growing delays in dealing with applications, in the immigration division of the Home Office at Lunar House. In the briefing, we argue that the new rules will not, of themselves, produce the administrative benefits claimed for them and that their only certain result will be a restriction on visitors' rights which will particularly affect family visitors. We put forward alternative proposals . . . for improving administrative efficiency while protecting the interests of applicants."

The joint council has produced the booklet "Out of Sight" which is a useful commentary on the effects of the introduction of the new visa control system. I recall the Home Secretary, before the introduction of visa control, telling the public that those of us who were extremely sceptical about the effects of the new visa controls were scaremongers. I remember the notorious letter from the Home Secretary to Piers Merchant, the failed Conservative candidate for one of the Newcastle constituencies in the general election, that those of us who criticised the introduction of visas were troublemakers and professional pessimists. I object strongly to the fact that the Home Secretary — the architect of the present administrative shambles at Lunar house—has not even seen fit to attend the House tonight, still less to speak in the debate. I believe that the senior Minister, rather than the Minister of State, should take responsibility for that administrative shambles, which now pervades the Home Office, and be called to account to explain to the House what he is doing to resolve the crisis.

To my surprise, the one thing that we did not receive from the Minister of State, although we were often treated to it in the Standing Committee on the Immigration Bill, was the delivery of third-rate poems and fifth-rate limericks. Rather than the laid-back nonchalance and apathy with which the Minister has treated the serious criticisms made of the administrative shambles over which he now presides, the House would have benefited from some real information on what he intends to do about it.

If the Minister thinks that the new rules will reduce case work in the Home Office by the 25 per cent. that he has claimed, he is seriously mistaken. What will he do for the many people who come here genuinely and legitimately, particularly elderly people, who wish to stay with relatives and friends? Many of them will want to stay for far longer than six months, but tonight we are discussing the reduction of the legal limit from 12 to six months. Under Government pressure, the Immigration Bill has removed rights of appeal in such cases. Will the Minister seek to deport elderly people who wish to spend longer than six months with their relatives and will he stop us from being able to represent their cases in compassionate terms? If he thinks that he will then see a reduction in the number of representations and letters to the Home Office, he is again seriously mistaken.

What will the Minister do about other genuine and legitimate visitors who come to be with a sick relative, or a woman who is having a baby? They will often want more than six months here, and we shall doubtless be asked to make representations applying for extensions of leave. Will the Minister deport those people? Is he really going to say that Members of Parliament will be powerless to make representations on their behalf? He is entirely wrong if he thinks that the new rules will result in the benefits that he has mentioned.

Let us not be under any misapprehension. In the Home Office, there are now 150,000 unopened letters; it takes a month for the letters even to be sifted into categories. In B2, the work has reached a level of seven cases per officer. One poor officer has 69 case files on his desk. There is an 18-month backlog in case work inquiries. It is indeed a shambles. I agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) that the only responsible action that the House can take is to press for an independent inquiry into the administrative chaos that now grips all sections of the Home Office.

I remember the previous Minister of State, previous Home Secretaries and the present Home Secretary, among others, telling us that the introduction of visas would resolve all the problems: they were being introduced only to reduce the queues and the inconvenience at Heathrow and other ports of entry. What has been the reality? I am told that, on Home Office figures, 17,000 people have been refused visits to this country; Foreign Office figures show that 34,000 have been refused visits. All are black or Asian. If the Minister is to reply, I ask him to apologise to me and to other critics of the visa control system. We have been proved right, and he has been proved wrong.

I want to refer to a very disturbing and worrying case. Sylvian Laurent, a 19-year-old Dominican girl, arrived at Gatwick airport recently at 10 am. She had come here for a two-month holiday in my constituency with her grandmother. She carried with her a visa, issued by the British authorities, valid for six months. She also had a letter from her grandmother inviting her for the two-month holiday. In addition, she had a letter from an employer, who happens to be her uncle, who owns a firm based in Dominica, confirming that after the holiday she would return to Dominica to take up a job. She also carried a letter from the Labour Commissioner at the office of the Attorney-General and Minister of Legal Affairs, Immigration and Labour in Dominica stating:

> "Sylvian's grandmother was pleased with her performance at high school, and decided to reward her with a two months vacation commencing on 14 January. She is expected to take up employment . . . on 14 March.
>
> I have known the applicant and her prospective employer for quite some time now and would be grateful for the issuance of the relevant visa to facilitate her travels, since, to my mind, she is a genuine visitor."

Immigration officers questioned that girl from 10 am until 5 pm. They refused the grandmother access to Sylvian throughout the day. She was tired, frightened and anxious, and it is not surprising that she refused all offers of refreshment. Finally, she was refused entry. She was allowed in to be removed within a few days. Had she not contacted my office and had I not stopped her removal and made representations to the Minister, she would be on her way back to Dominica within days of this debate.

How could immigration officers have suspected that she was coming here as a student, when she was travelling with her school certificates which she wanted to show her grandmother, because she was very proud of them, or that she was coming here to work, when she had a letter stating clearly — had the officers read the letters they would have known this—that she had a job to return to with a firm in Dominica? I cannot understand that. If my powers to intervene had been removed, that girl would have been sent back within a few days of this debate.

I delivered a letter to the Minister's office today asking for a full explanation why the immigration officers were not prepared to accept that Sylvian was a genuine visitor. I stated that Sylvian and her family were so distressed that she was asking that the six-month stay to which her visa entitles her should be granted and that she should have a personal apology from the Minister.

That young woman came here with a visa. I believe that she was treated most disgracefully. I am also aware, from the many cases that are referred to me, that many others who are entitled to come here are also refused visas. Those people are genuine and legitimate visitors. Unless the Minister gives a categoric assurance tonight that the overwhelming number of applicants will be given a six-month visa, black and Asian people will treat these rules with the same contempt as they treat all our laws, procedures and rules concerning immigration. They do not believe the Minister or the Government.

Since 1971, claims about abuse have been the traditional excuse for introducing more and more restrictions on entry to this country. The rules will do nothing to resolve the administrative difficulties that they are supposed to put right. I hope that the Minister will ensure that the chaos is dealt with and that all legitimate and genuine visitors to this country, especially black and Asian visitors, will be treated properly, fairly and equally.

11.24 pm

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): I cannot answer the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) in the voice of passion and indignation that he adopted throughout his speech. However, I doubt whether he represents the true voice of the Asian and black people in this country.

[Mr. Nicholas Budgen]

There is a pleasant irony in this debate. These small measures are liberalising measures which are brought forward for two main reasons. The first is to try, as usual, to assuage the criticisms of the Labour party. The second is to try to reduce the administrative chaos.

I reflect, as one who has taken an interest in these affairs for some time, that if, for instance, Mr. Whitelaw, as he then was, had been introducing these measures a few years ago, there would have been the usual Tory pantomime. I and my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, South (Mr. Morris) would have been going round the Tory party with an offensive early-day motion and we would have got about 100 signatures to a motion saying that we did not want these liberalising measures.

There would have been a much-publicised meeting of the Home Affairs Committee and Mr. Whitelaw would have come out sweating and swearing. Later in the week, on advice, the *Daily Mail* would have wondered whether the Prime Minister supported Mr. Whitelaw in his time of travail. We would then have voted against the liberalising measures.

But here we are about to go into the Lobby in support of liberalising measures which might have been brought forward by any Administration — perhaps not by a Labour Administration, because Labour Administrations are so often tougher on immigration than Tory Administrations—and we shall agree to them.

Yet my hon. Friend the Minister said that he was surprised that the Labour party intended to vote against these small but liberalising measures. I cannot say that I am surprised. The Labour party has always huffed and puffed about any proposals which have any effect of controlling immigration. In doing that they reflect the view that was so passionately, but I would suggest so mistakenly, put forward by the hon. Member for Bradford, West.

I would contend that the hon. Gentleman does not represent the voice of the Asians and the blacks in Britain at the present time. I have some small credentials for claiming to know their voice. The first parliamentary election in which I took part was in 1970, when I unsuccessfully opposed the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell). There were a number of immigrants in Small Heath in the late 1960s and 1970s. Immigration was certainly an important issue when I first contested Wolverhampton, South-West in 1974.

The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) spoke in rather proud terms of having had to deal with 20, 30 or 40 cases a month. If we are swopping the number of immigration cases with which we have had to deal, my recollection is that when I was dealing with those cases in the days before the introduction of visas—I have checked my recollection with my right hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison), who was the Minister who had to deal with them—I was dealing with 30 or 40 cases a week.

It may be that my views on immigration are not widely shared on the Labour Benches, but I did have, and do have, widespread contacts with a cross-section of the black and Asian community in the west midlands. All I can say is that I have not received many representations to the effect that the new visa system is unfair, racist or authoritarian.

Constituents come to me and ask me whether I can help them with individual problems, but as far as I can judge the visa system is in general supported by the immigrant community. I suggest to the Labour party, with all decent diffidence, that if it continues to adopt the tone that is adopted by the hon. Member for Bradford, West it will be to its electoral disadvantage.

It is certainly noted by the white community that the Labour party votes against all reasonable changes in the immigration rules, even if they are of a liberalising nature. The tone that the hon. Member for Bradford, West adopts is increasingly the tone that the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook adopts. I am not surprised that the Labour party adopts this tone, but it is not the tone that is adopted by the broad mass of the immigrant community. It is adopted by those gentlemen who are employed by the race relations industry and by those Asians and blacks who wish to become Labour party candidates, but it is not the voice of the broad mass of the immigrant community who are now happily settled in this country.

I enjoy the irony of this debate. I dare say that if those of us who wish to keep a strict control on immigration had observed these liberalising rules we might have objected to them. We shall not object to them, but I suggest that it is extraordinarily unwise of the Labour party to oppose these rules on the grounds that they do.

11.31 pm

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): Although the Minister has been in his present job for but a few months, I know that he appreciates all too well that the immigration rules are not only a creature of the law, but a rather peculiar creature of the law. They are not a statute but they have the effect of a statute. They probably have a more direct effect on the everyday lives of people, and on their hopes and aspirations, than many Acts of Parliament, but they are not subject to the same law-making process of statutes, or to the same process of amendment.

I am sure that the Minister recognises that there has been a great deal of litigation, much of it entirely fruitless, because of the way in which these rules are created and amended. I am sure that he recognises, as a realist, that parts of these rules bring United Kingdom law into disrepute — and nothing more so than the primary purpose rule; although I am bound to concede that the production of a wholly objective test to replace the primary purpose rule would be extremely difficult. Nevertheless, surely something better than the primary purpose rule can be devised.

There are some welcome parts in these rule changes, but at first sight they seem to be largely another set of gratuitous and unnecessary restrictions. However, what we have heard so far tonight from the Labour party has been no more than the beating of breasts. Indeed, I feel bound to say that we have heard them beating their breasts so hard that I can hear the echo of the Labour party's conscience from its period in government.

I should like to put to the Minister a number of questions that are put in a genuine spirit of inquiry, so that we can hear his answers on issues that are the subject of this debate, and so that I can decide how to vote tonight and advise my right hon. and hon. Friends.

Will the Minister tell us exactly what is the reason for reducing the visitors' leave period? Will he confirm that

visitors whose maximum stay is reduced from 12 months to six will be able to apply while still here for variation of leave for special reasons?

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): Will the hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Carlile: No, because I do not want to take too long.

Will the Minister confirm that the Government have no plans to change the rules so that in future visitors will be unable to apply for variation of leave for special reasons while they are still in the United Kingdom? Will the Minister also confirm that visitors will still have a right of appeal if they are refused variation of leave for special reasons? Will he also tell us whether he really believes that the immigration and nationality department will be saved a great deal of time by this change? Or is it not more likely that the Department will be faced by a huge number of applications for leave to remain, and possibly appeals thereafter?

I ask the Minister to confirm that the reduction to six months is an attempt to produce a standard, to standardise entry leave for visitors, and that generally six months will be the period that is permitted.

Mr. Vaz: Will the hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Carlile: No, I shall not give way. I wish to proceed with my speech and thereby give other hon. Members the opportunity to participate in the debate.

Will the Minister confirm that there will not be discrimination against visitors because they come from Bangladesh or other parts of the Indian subcontinent? Will he confirm that visitors will not have their period of leave determined by reason of the country whence they come? *[Interruption.]* If the Minister can hear me above the braying from Labour Members sitting behind me who are not prepared to take their chance to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will he confirm that the reduced maximum stay for visitors will not result in a worsening position at entry clearance posts abroad? Will entry clearance officers at British posts abroad issue visas more readily to persons wishing to travel to the United Kingdom for personal and family reasons? I trust that he will understand that this is an especially important consideration in the Indian subcontinent.

The proposed changes place a limit of four years' stay on persons of independent means, writers and artists unless they apply for permanent settlement. Will the Minister explain why this change is taking place? These people are not a drain on public funds and they may do a great deal of good in enhancing the reputation of the United Kingdom abroad, without ever intending to settle here permanently. With the restrictions proposed to paragraphs 121 and 122 of the rules, many of those who are admitted as persons of independent means, writers and artists may lose the right to seek settlement if they have been abroad for lengthy periods during their four years in this country. Will the Minister confirm that those persons will not be handicapped because, for good reason, during the course of their work they have been abroad for lengthy periods during their four-year stay?

Finally, will the Minister explain why there is such a differentiation between business men and ministers of religion, missionaries, members of religious orders, journalists and representatives of broadcasting organisations? Why are the Government choosing to discriminate in favour of business men as opposed to foreign correspondents, for example?

I ask the Minister to demonstrate that the Government are seeking to follow a logical strategy that makes the immigration rules, House of Commons 169, as amended, appear to be a coherent code for immigration officers to administer and for those who are seeking to understand the rules. I hope that we shall hear an answer from the Minister that will enable us to take the view that such a coherent policy is being applied. As I read the proposed changes, it appears that is not the position.

11.38 pm

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): My comments will be shorter than I had intended them to be, because of the time constraint that has been placed upon the House, but I hope that they will reflect clearly the speech that I had prepared.

It was fascinating listening to the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden). During the consideration of the Immigration Bill in Committee he talked about the immigration rules, and throughout this evening's discussion of the rules he talked about the Bill. He read out long quotations from various sources. The hon. Gentleman makes Senator Biden seem like an original thinker.

The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) made a dishonest statement—perhaps I should say an inaccurate statement—when he said that when I intervened on 16 November during the consideration of the Immigration Bill I said that the primary purpose rule — he stressed "as currently instituted"—was introduced by the Labour Government on 22 March 1977. I said no such thing, and the record bears me out. It is a fact that the primary purpose rule was originated under the Labour Government on 22 March 1977. My hon. Friend the Minister confirmed that, and added that the rule dealt specifically with marriages of convenience. On the record is the honest case.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Minister that it is total hypocrisy and humbug to vote against the rule changes which will help those who are trying to visit this country and stay here some time longer. A total of 40,000 cases a year will be saved by the introduction of the rules. There are 7 million visitors to this country. I have been to Lunar house and seen the extent of the documentation there. It is not always possible to introduce new technology there, when the documentation must be kept in original form, when the documentation of personal interviews is, by its very nature, copious and detailed. I believe that the rule changes are wholly desirable. For my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) to admit that the changes are liberalising and that he will vote for them gives added confidence to all of us on the Government Benches.

We have been through the figures, which show that five times more visitors from India will benefit than will lose; from Pakistan, five times more; from Bangladesh, over twice as many.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North) *rose*——

Mr. Hanley: I have no time to give way. I shall speak to the hon. Gentleman outside the Chamber later.

[Mr. Hanley]

To say that the rules are racist is blatantly dishonest, because more than 10 times more visitors will now receive six months on entry than will be limited by the six-month maximum. Moreover, as my hon. Friend said about business men, the rules will apply irrespective of nationality. Business men from India, representing more than 10 per cent. of all business men, will receive an extension of stay; indeed, they received extensions in 1986. The business men from India who will benefit from the rule changes number more than the total from the United States, Australia and Hong Kong.

I wish now to comment on some of the quotations from the brief from the United Kingdom Immigrants Advisory Service, which was quoted at length—including the joke, which did not go down very well—by the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile). I shall be selective in a different way. UKIAS said:

"The reduction to 6 months is not of itself objectionable and visitors will still be able to apply for variation of their leave for special reasons, and they will have a right of appeal if refused."

That is from UKIAS's brief, which Opposition hon. Members—and I—approve of so much.

It is no wonder that the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook did not want to talk about the change with regard to au pairs, because UKIAS said, "This is welcome." It is also no wonder that Opposition hon. Members did not choose to quote the statement that the change proposed for writers and artists

"is a change for the better."

In other words, UKIAS welcomes these changes. I am glad to say that.

If UKIAS is not good enough for Opposition hon. Members, may I quote the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants?

Mr. Corbyn *rose*——

Mr. Hanley: I have already told the hon. Gentleman that I shall not give way.

If Opposition hon. Members are not happy with UKIAS, they will certainly be happy with the JCWI, which tends to take a line that is against the Government's views on immigration. I wish to quote from the brief, which has been selectively quoted by Opposition hon. Members, the following passage:

"JCWI welcomes the more realistic period to be granted to fiancés and fiancées. We also welcome the move towards giving people the length of stay for which they are eligible and which they want: the present system creates unnecessary bureaucracy and is very unsettling to applicants, who cannot be certain how long they will be able to stay."

In other words, JCWI welcomes the changes in substance.

Since the JCWI and the UKIAS seem to approve of the changes, since the changes will benefit vastly more people than they will harm and since they will get rid of 40,000 cases a year from Lunar house, everybody—not just on the Government Benches—should welcome them. But there should be an urgent review of staffing levels and administrative systems throughout the immigration and nationality department. My hon. Friend the Minister knows that. He is also man enough to admit it. Therefore, I hope that during the year ahead we will see even further changes for the better.

11.44 pm

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): Some of the changes to the immigration rules, especially those which refer to au pairs, fiancés, people of independent means, writers, artists, business people and the self-employed, are broadly to be welcomed, though they are long overdue. These changes and those for visitors are aimed essentially at reducing the number of times an overseas national must apply for his stay to be extended while he is in the United Kingdom.

In regard to the changes for visitors, which are perhaps the most important of the rule changes, there are serious doubts whether the Government's aims and intentions will be fulfilled, with the threat that visitors' rights will be diminished.

The Home Secretary, who is not here, announced on Second Reading of the Immigration Bill that under the new rules visitors, with small exceptions, will be granted stays of a maximum of six months. When he made that statement, had he read the draft instructions to immigration officers? The instructions, which are unpublished, determine in practice how the rules are to be operated. We are doubtful whether the Home Secretary's statement will be fulfilled in practice.

The Government's track record on the treatment of visitors is far from satisfactory. When the Home Secretary introduced the new visa requirements in 1986, he said:

"The changes have been made . . . because of the pressure on Heathrow airport in particular."

He said later:

"The changes will improve conditions for all passengers arriving at our ports and for all those in this country who come to greet them.—[*Official Report*, 27 October 1986; Vol. 103, c. 86-91.]

I have documents from members of the immigration service which show that nothing at Heathrow has changed since then.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): As the hon. Gentleman is referring to evidence on the working of the visa system, it may be useful to him and to the House if I give him a straight quotation from my borough's community relations officer——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. An intervention must be a direct question or a very brief comment.

Mr. Arnold: It is a very brief comment. I want to quote the experience of my borough's community relations officer, a Labour councillor, who went to see the operation of the visa system. He said that he was sceptical before his visit to India, but now he thinks that everything is being done fairly. That is what a Labour councillor has said.

Mr. Randall: That was an abuse by the hon. Gentleman, bearing in mind that so many hon. Members want to speak.

As I was saying before I was interrupted, there have been no changes at Heathrow. There were three-hour delays in 1985-86 before the visa system was introduced; in 1987 we have the same delays.

Detention figures indicate that between 14 October and 13 November last year 173 people spent the night in appalling conditions on the floor at Heathrow, with no blankets, no food and no drink. That was not the most busy time of the year. I understand that among those who had to stay in those conditions was a pregnant woman. I also understand that the premises do not comply with the

fire regulations. So the problems that the Home Secretary claimed the visa system would eliminate still exist at Heathrow. The Government have failed to tackle the root causes of the problems which are the grossly inadequate administrative systems and staff numbers at Lunar house.

Several right hon. and hon. Members referred to the chaos at Lunar house. Clearly, the magnitude of the problems makes the Government look administratively incompetent. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) and other hon. Members said, an independent inquiry is required to investigate and report on the scandal there.

I should like to ask the Minister five brief questions. First, will he increase staffing levels at Lunar house to cope with the growing demand, or will he rely only on efficiency improvements? Clearly, black and Asian family visitors suffer most from the 1986 visa system. It appears that this is because entry clearance officers abroad are changing the criteria for issuing visas. If these rules are approved, it is likely that the same pattern of refusals will occur in the future. Problems for visitors will increase substantially, especially for family visitors who wish to stay for periods beyond six months. Family visitors will tend not to be guaranteed a six-month stay initially. Family visitors tend to be refused entry because of suspicions about their finances or intentions.

We must all admit that there are difficulties in accurately assessing the precise effect of the new rules. What happens in practice is determined largely by the contents of the unpublished document "Instructions to Immigration Officers". Those secret instructions describe how the rules should be operated in practice. Accordingly, I ask the Minister, secondly, to tell us where in "Instructions to Immigration Officers" there is any reference to the discretion that an officer has outside the rules to decide what period of stay is stamped in a visitor's passport.

Thirdly, on what grounds under the new rules and new instructions will an immigration officer grant a stay of less than six months?

Fourthly, in practice does the Minister really expect significantly fewer people to be granted stays of less than six months?

Fifthly, will the Minister tell us what will happen to code 3 applicants, who are regarded by immigration officers as suspicious and are therefore allowed entry of less than six months? Is there a risk that they will not be admitted at all?

Tonight's debate has demonstrated that the Home Office function that deals with those foreign nationals who wish either to visit or to stay in Britain for a limited period is an administrative shambles. It is highly questionable whether the benefits that the Government claim will arise from the new rules will materialise. If so, the current incompetent administration at the Home Office could continue. Visitors will not benefit unless the vast majority are given visas which last for six months, without any increase in the visa refusal rate as a result of immigration officers refusing entry to those who previously would have been granted permission to stay for shorter periods. A certain consequence of the new rules is that visitors, especially family visitors, will find it much more difficult to extend a visit beyond six months, if needed. They will not be able to appeal against a decision that they should leave. That is why the Opposition will vote against the changes.

11.53 pm

Mr. Renton: In the short time available, I should like to thank my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) for his useful intervention and my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) for pointing out so succinctly that, including those from the countries of the Indian subcontinent, five times more people will benefit from the rule changes than will suffer —a point singularly not taken on board by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall). I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) for his helpful speech. It is nice to get such help, even at times from an unexpected quarter.

To both the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) and the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) I give an assurance, repeating what I said earlier, that six months will be the norm for visits. I give them both that assurance. Exceptions will be limited to cases where there is a specific reason for granting less than six months, such as passengers in transit or people who come here for short-term medical treatment. I hope that, on that basis, the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery will be able to persuade his hon. Friends in the Liberal party — all those who are here—to vote with us tonight.

The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery asked me some other questions. On his question about variation of leave and its still being possible to apply for that within six months, yes, I can assure him that that will remain the same, especially for compassionate reasons. Rights of appeal will remain unchanged, and there will therefore be an appeal right for those who make in-time applications. I will reply to his other, detailed questions by letter.

I turn now to the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden). The House will have heard tonight, from the tone of high-pitched indignation with which the whole of his speech was delivered, what we have suffered in the Standing Committee on the Bill for 62 hours. For 62 hours we have had that noise delivered to us. I do not see what was his point in reading out that list of people from the British Council of Churches. I invited them to come to my office——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I would like to see the Minister's handsome face, even if only in profile.

Mr. Renton: You bowl me over, Madam Deputy Speaker, with your kind words. Thank you very much.

I invited them to my office. We had an extremely useful and friendly discussion—far more friendly, I fear, than it would have been if the hon. Member for Bradford, West had been with us.

I can assure the hon. Member, as I said earlier, that on compassionate grounds people will be allowed to stay for more than six months, as they are now. But I have to say to the hon. Gentleman, who demanded an apology for misquotation of figures, that I have already given him in Committee the answer to the figures that he misquoted about the Foreign Office list. I have already told him that the figure that he quoted was not of total refusals but that it did not allow for applications that had been withdrawn or that were still pending receipt. I told him that in Committee, and I am amazed that he came back to that here tonight.

Mr. Stuart Holland (Vauxhall): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Renton: No, I will not, because I have only a minute or two more.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West made one point with which I would particularly agree, when he referred to the huff and puff that we hear from Opposition Members on this issue. They lecture us when we aim to improve procedures. They lecture us when we try to bring more efficiency into the difficulties that certainly exist at Lunar house at the moment. They tell us that they will vote against these reasonable rule changes. They tell us nothing at all about what they would do. Why do they not tell us their policy, their proposals? The simple reason is that they are scared to bring their policy and their proposals on these issues into the open.

When the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook was shadow Home Secretary, he told us that he would cancel the British Nationality Act 1981. His successor, the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), told us that he would cancel the Immigration Act 1971: all this—and only 1,000 more immigrants a year. We all know that that is impossible, that it is a total contradiction.

When my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes said that Labour's policies on this issue were dominated by hypocrisy and humbug, I would add another ingredient—hysteria. Those are the characteristics that dominate the Opposition's immigration policies. If they have the gall to vote against these reasonable amendments to rules tonight, they will be confirmed in that hypocrisy, humbug and hysteria.

I warmly commend the rule changes to the House.

Question put:-

The House divided: Ayes 202, Noes 257.

Division No. 157] **[12 midnight**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Ms Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, J.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Darling, Alastair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Dunnachie, James
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Galbraith, Samuel
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Douglas
Hinchliffe, David
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, James
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Tom
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, John
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerald
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Walley, Ms Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon A. J.
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Anthony
Wray, James
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes
Mr. Frank Cook and
Mr. Frank Haynes.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John

Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Janman, Timothy
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Hon Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon C.
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thurnham, Peter
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Richard Ryder and
Mr. Stephen Dorrell.

Question accordingly negatived.

Income and Corporation Taxes Bill
[Lords]

Considered in Committee.

[MISS BETTY BOOTHROYD *in the Chair*]

12.11 am

The Attorney-General (Sir Patrick Mayhew): Let me say briefly at the outset that the Committee is faced with an unusually large number of amendments to this Bill, despite the fact that it is purely and simply a consolidating measure. As my hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General made clear on Second Reading, this massive work of consolidation has taken four years to complete. Owing to the very tight timetable that had to be imposed upon the introduction of the Bill, the textual amendments and corrections could not be fully completed. Therefore, the amendments before the Committee correct purely typographical errors or comprise changes of a purely technical consolidating character. I thought it right to make that clear.

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): This is a somewhat indigestible diet for the time of night. I should tell my hon. Friends that the Attorney-General, with his characteristic courtesy, gave me advance notice that this problem had arisen because this is such a heavy Bill. We have to accept his word for it that everything that is before us is of a purely textual nature and that not a jot of the law is altered by the Bill. If he can give us that assurance, we shall all be anxious to make progress.

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): Can my right hon. and learned Friend give us an idea of the time scale for the completion of the Bill, including the final publication of the Act?

The Attorney-General: It is intended that the Act shall take effect on 6 April this year. Accordingly, if the House approves, further stages will be considered at a suitable time before that.

Clauses 1 to 8 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 9

COMPUTATION OF INCOME: APPLICATION OF INCOME TAX PRINCIPLES

Amendment made: No. 1, in page 6, line 39, leave out '70' and insert '69'.—*[The Attorney-General.]*

Clause 9, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 10 to 18 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 19

SCHEDULE E

Amendments made: No. 2, in page 16, line 28, at end insert

'and subject also to section 170'.

No. 3, in page 16, line 36, at end insert

'and subject also to section 170'.

Clause 19, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 20 to 35 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 36

SCHEDULE D CHARGE ON SALE OF LAND WITH RIGHT TO RECONVEYANCE

Amendment made: No. 4, in page 33, line 21, after 'immediately', insert 'after'.

Clause 36, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 37 to 42 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 43

NON-RESIDENTS

Amendment made: No. 5, in page 39, line 8, after '22(2)', insert 'and (3)'.

Clause 43, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 44 to 135 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 136

PROVISIONS SUPPLEMENTARY TO SECTION 135

Amendment made: No. 6, in page 113, line 2, leave out 'this section" and insert 'section 135'.

Clause 136, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 137 and 138 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 139

PROVISIONS SUPPLEMENTARY TO SECTION 138

Amendment made: No. 7, in page 120, line 18, leave out 'that office or employment' and insert

'the office or employment by virtue of which he acquired the shares'.

Clause 139, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 140 to 173 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 174

EXCLUDED EMPLOYMENTS

Amendment made: No. 8, in page 152, line 34, leave out 'or' and insert 'and'.

Clause 174, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 175 to 177 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 178

CANCELLATION OF REGISTRATION

Amendment made: No. 9, in page 155, line 17, leave out '176' and insert '174'.

Clause 178, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 179 to 189 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 190

PAYMENTS TO MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT, REPRESENTATIVES TO THE EUROPEAN ASSEMBLY AND OTHERS

The Attorney-General: I beg to move amendment No. 10, in page 168, leave out lines 28 to 31.

The amendment leaves out a saving for a time before the Single European Act came into force. In fact, the Act came into force in 1987, so the saving is not required.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 190, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 191 to 217 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 218

INTERPRETATION OF SECTIONS 213 TO 217

Amendments made: No. 11, in page 194, line 15, leave out 'trade' and insert 'trades'.

No. 12, in page 194, line 20, leave out first 'of' and insert 'in'.

No. 13, in page 194, line 35, leave out 'and 218' and insert 'to 217'.—*[The Attorney-General.]*

Clause 218, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 219 to 241 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 242

SET-OFF OF LOSSES ETC. AGAINST SURPLUS OF FRANKED INVESTMENT INCOME

Amendment made: No. 14, in page 215, line 45, leave out '393(8)' and insert '393(9). — *[The Attorney-General.]*

Clause 242, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 243 to 280 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 281

TAX REPAYMENTS TO WIVES

Amendment made: No. 15, in page 250, line 29, leave out '(4)' and insert '(6)'.—*[The Attorney-General.]*

Clause 281, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 282 to 348 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 349

PAYMENTS NOT OUT OF PROFITS OR GAINS BROUGHT INTO CHARGE TO INCOME TAX, AND ANNUAL INTEREST

The Attorney-General: I beg to move amendment No. 16, in page 323, leave out lines 30 to 31 and insert—

'*(d)* to any payment to which section 369 or 479(1) applies; and subsection (1) above does not apply to any small maintenance payment within the meaning of section 351.'.

This amendment is to take smaller maintenance payments out of clause 348(1) rather than, as the Bill is presently drafted, out of clause 349(2).

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 349, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 350 to 408 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 409

COMPANIES JOINING OR LEAVING GROUP OR CONSORTIUM

Amendment made: No. 17, in page 386, line 20, after 'to', insert 'in'.—*[The Attorney-General.]*

Clause 409, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 410 to 412 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 413

INTERPRETATION OF CHAPTER IV

The Attorney-General: I beg to move amendment No. 18, in page 391, line 39, after 'company' insert

'or, in the case of a company within section 402(3)*(b)*, of its holding company'.

The Second Deputy Chairman: With this, we shall take Government amendments Nos. 19 and 20.

The Attorney-General: These are to achieve a more faithful consolidation of provisions in the previous Act. This point has been raised by a solicitor in the private sector, for which all concerned are most grateful.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 19, in page 391, line 42, leave out second 'the' and insert 'that'.

No. 20, in page 391, line 43, leave out 'of the company'. —*[The Attorney-General.]*

Clause 413, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 414 to 426 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 427

REDUCTION OF CHARGE UNDER SECTION 426 IN CERTAIN CASES

The Attorney-General: I beg to move amendment No. 21, in page 407, line 15, leave out 'this section' and insert 'section 426'.

This is necessary to reflect the splitting of the previous legislation.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 427, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 428 to 502 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 503

LETTING OF FURNISHED HOLIDAY ACCOMMODATION TREATED AS A TRADE

Amendment made: No. 22, in page 485, line 34, after '833(4)*(c)*', insert

'and of Chapter I of Part III of the Finance Act 1971'.—*[The Attorney-General.]*

Clause 503, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 504 to 512 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 513

BRITISH AIRWAYS BOARD AND NATIONAL FREIGHT CORPORATION

The Attorney-General: I beg to move amendment No. 23, in page 494, line 1, leave out subsection (1).

The amendment seeks to leave out a provision that is no longer required, as the time during which a trigger event could occur has elapsed. In so far as any rights or liabilities have accrued and are still alive, they will be preserved by the provisions of schedule 30.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 513, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 514 to 600 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 601

CHARGE TO TAX: PAYMENTS TO EMPLOYERS

The Attorney-General: I beg to move amendment No. 24, in page 579, line 23, at end insert 'or'.

The Second Deputy Chairman: With this we may take Government amendment No. 25.

The Attorney-General: The first amendment corrects a typographical error. The second reinstates a reference to

[The Attorney-General]

the old law, rather than to that law as re-enacted in the consolidation, as the application referred to in clause 601(3)*(e)* would have been made before 18 March 1986. It is thought to be misleading to refer in that context to the consolidation.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 25, in page 579, line 28, leave out '590(5)' and insert '19(3) of the Finance Act 1970'.—*[The Attorney-General.]*

Clause 601, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 602 to 614 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 615

EXEMPTION FROM TAX IN RESPECT OF CERTAIN PENSIONS

Amendment made: *No. 26, in page 589, line 16, at end insert 'or'.*—[The Attorney-General.]

Clause 615, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 616 to 645 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 646

MEANING OF "NET RELEVANT EARNINGS"

Amendment made: *No. 27, in page 616, line 23, after 'under', insert 'section'.*—[The Attorney-General.]

Clause 646, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses, 647 to 686 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 687

PAYMENTS UNDER DISCRETIONARY TRUSTS

Amendment made: *No. 28, in page 649, line 11, leave out 'founded' and insert 'found'.*—[The Attorney-General.]

Clause 687, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 688 to 712 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 713

DEEMED SUMS AND RELIEFS

Amendment made: No. 29, in page 676, line 1, after 'before', insert 'on'.—*[The Attorney-General.]*

Clause 713, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 714 to 718 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 719

UNREALISED INTEREST IN DEFAULT

Amendment made: No. 30, in page 683, line 5, leave out '(5)' and insert '(4)'.—*[The Attorney-General.]*

Clause 719, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 720 to 752 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 753

NOTICES AND APPEALS

Amendment made: No. 31, in page 719, line 6, leave out '13' and insert '12'.—*[The Attorney-General.]*

Clause 753, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 754 to 845 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Schedule 1 to 6 agreed to.

Schedule 7

TAXATION OF BENEFIT FROM LOANS OBTAINED BY REASON OF EMPLOYMENT

Amendments made: No. 32, in page 845, line 21, after 'sections', insert '354(5) and (6)'.

No. 33, in page 845, line 24, leave out '354' and insert '354(1) to (4)'.

No. 34, in page 845, line 27, after 'sections', insert '354(5) and (6)'.

No. 35, in page 845, line 35, leave out '354' and insert '354(1) to (4)'.—*[The Attorney-General.]*

Schedule 7, as amended, agreed to.

Schedules 8 to 17 agreed to.

Schedule 18

GROUP RELIEF: EQUITY HOLDERS AND PROFITS OR ASSETS AVAILABLE FOR DISTRIBUTION

Amendment made: No. 36, in page 914, line 2, leave out second 'or' and insert 'and'.—*[The Attorney-General.]*

Schedule 18, as amended, agreed to.

Schedules 19 to 26 agreed to.

Schedule 27

DISTRIBUTING FUNDS

Amendment made: No. 37, in page 973, line 17, leave out '760(3)(b)' and insert '760(3)(c)'.—*[The Attorney-General.]*

Schedule 27, as amended, agreed to.

Schedule 28 agreed to.

Schedule 29

CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS

The Attorney-General: I beg to move amendment No. 38, in page 985, line 33, column 2, leave out 'and (6)(a)' and insert ', (6) and (7)(a)'.

The Second Deputy Chairman: With this it will be convenient to take Government amendments Nos. 39 to 139.

The Attorney-General: As this is such a prodigious number of amendments, perhaps I should state that other Acts refer to specific enactments the references to which are rendered out of date by this consolidation. Schedule 29 amends those references to bring them into conformity with this consolidation. In other words, it achieves translations. It will be for the convenience of the Committee if we take the amendments together.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 39, in page 985, line 41, column 1, leave out '602(2)' and insert '602'.

No. 40, in line 48, column 2, leave out '602(2)' and insert '602'.

No. 41, in line 49, column 2, leave out '605(2)*(a)*' and insert '605(3)*(a)*'.

No. 42, in page 986, line 29, leave out '602(2)' and insert '602'.

No. 43, in line 31, leave out 'that subsection' and insert 'subsection (2) of that section.'.

No. 44, in line 42, after '267(3C)', insert 'or 278(5)'.

No. 45, leave out lines 44 and 45 and insert—

'*(c)* in subsection (4), in paragraph *(a)* for "85 of the Finance Act 1972" there shall be substituted "239 of the principal Act", and in paragraph *(b)* for "85" there shall be substituted "239"; and'.

No. 46, in page 988, leave out lines 9 and 10 and insert—

'15. In the Capital Gains Tax Act 1979—

(a) for "the Taxes Act", in each place where it occurs except sections 1, 31 and 34(4)*(a)*, the definition of "the Taxes Act" in section 155(1) and paragraph 6(8) of Schedule 1 and any provision mentioned in paragraph *(b)* below, there shall be substituted "the Taxes Act 1988";

(b) in sections 16, 26, 29A, 32, 35, 75, 84, 87, 98, 107 and 136(10), paragraphs 4 and 5 of Schedule 5 and paragraphs 12 and 21 of Schedule 6 for "the Taxes Act" there shall be substituted "the Taxes Act 1970";

and in addition the 1979 Act shall have effect subject to the amendments specified in relation thereto in paragraphs 16 to 28 and 32 below.'.

No. 47, in page 999, line 8, after '333', insert 'of the Taxes Act 1988'.

No. 48, in page 1000, line 5, leave out '619(7)' and insert '620(9)'.

No. 49, in line 10, leave out '(2)' and insert '(5)'.

No. 50, leave out lines 12 to 19.

No. 51, in line 22, leave out '579' and insert '519'.

No. 52, in line 27, at end insert—

'5(1)*(c)*	from "243(6)" to "1972"	8(5) of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988
5(2)	from "the said" to "1972"	sections 8(5) and 822 of the 1988 Act (over-deductions from preference dividends before passing of annual Act)'.

No. 53, in page 1001, line 3, at end insert—

'12(3)	154 or 251(1)	113 or 337(1)'.

No. 54, in line 12, after '134', insert '(twice)'.

No. 55, in line 24, after '348', insert 'or 349(1)'.

No. 56, in line 26, at end insert—

'85(4)	111	54'.

No. 57, in page 1002, line 1, at end insert—

'2, para. 8(1)*(c)*	78(1) or 306(1) of the principal Act	32(1) of the principal Act or section 306(1) of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1970'.

No. 58, in line 7, at end insert—

'61(1)*(c)*	463	706'.

No. 59, leave out line 20 and insert—

'30	47 or 48 (twice)	824 or 825 of the principal Act or section 47'.

No. 60, in line 24, leave out '349' and insert '350'.

No. 61, in page 1003, line 6, leave out '(6)' and insert '(5)'.

No. 62, in line 7, leave out 'that subsection' and insert 'section 615(3) of that Act'.

No. 63, in line 9, leave out '(6)' and insert '(5)'.

No. 64, in column 3, leave out lines 15 and 16 and insert 'section 102, 113(5), 263(5) and (6), 343(10) or 783(9) of the principal Act, or paragraph 22 of Schedule 7 to the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1970, or '.

No. 65, in line 19, column 3, at beginning insert 'sections 6 to 12 and '.

No. 66, in line 26, leave out '5(3) ' and insert '5(4)'.

No. 67, in page 1004, line 6, leave out '5(3) ' and insert '5(4) '.

No. 68, in line 12, columns 2 and 3, leave out

'286(4)	419(3)'

and insert—

'286(5)	419(4)'.

No. 69, leave out line 22.

No. 70 in page 1005, line 2, after '204', insert '(three times)'.

No. 71, leave out line 6 and insert—

'last para.	from "11" to "to the principal Act"	102, 113(5), 263(5) and (6), 343(10) and 783(9) of the principal Act, to paragraph 22 of Schedule 7 to the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1970'.

No. 72, in line 10, column 2, at beginning insert 'Chapter'.

No. 73, in line 10, column 3, leave out 'III of Part XII' and insert 'section 468'.

No. 74, in line 11, column 3, at beginning insert 'section'.

No. 75, in line 16, column 2, at beginning insert 'Chapter'.

No. 76, in line 16, column 3, leave out 'III of Part XII' and insert 'section 842'.

No. 77, leave out lines 24 and 25 and insert—

'540(2)	1979	1979 and any reference in this Act to the Taxes Act 1988 is a reference to the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988'.

No. 78, in page 1006, leave out line 22 and insert—

'44(6)	63 of the Finance (No. 2) Act 1987	404 of the Taxes Act'.

No. 79, in line 23, leave out 'the Taxes Act 1988' and insert 'that Act'.

No. 80, in page 1007, line 10, after 'of', insert 'Part XIV of'.

No. 81, in line 12, at end insert—

'para. 13	533 of the Taxes Act	839 of that Act'.

No. 82, in line 17, at end insert—

'69(4)	80	34
134(2)	1970	1988'.

No. 83, in page 1009, line 6, column 1, leave out '(b)'.

No. 84, in line 6, column 2, leave out '(twice)' and insert '(three times)'.

No. 85, leave out line 11 and insert—

'para. 3(1)*(d)*	section 174	sections 388 and 389'.

No. 86, in line 16, leave out '349' and insert '350'.

No. 87, in line 20, leave out '349' and insert '349(1)'.

No. 88, in page 1010, line 20, leave out '238(1)' and insert '231(5)'.

No. 89, in line 22, leave out '701(8)' and insert '701(9)'.

No. 90, in line 23, leave out '59(10)' and insert '58(10)'.

No. 91, in page 1011, line 2, leave out '41(3)' and insert '41(2)'.

No. 92, in line 12, at end insert—

'1(2)	Taxes Act	Taxes Act 1970 and Part VIII of the Taxes Act 1988'.

No. 93 leave out line 17.

No. 94, leave out line 20.

No. 95, in page 1012, leave out lines 4 and 5 and insert

[The Attorney-General]

'74(2)	sub-paragraph (6) of the said paragraph 5	section 427(4) of the Taxes Act 1988
74(2)	sub-paragraph (2)*(b)* of that paragraph	section 426(2)*(b)* of that Act
74(5)	formed part of the said paragraph 5	were included in sections 426 to 428 of the Taxes Act 1988.'.

No. 96, in line 9 at end insert—

'89(1)	paragraph 1 of the said Schedule 8	section 251(2) of the Taxes Act 1988'.

No. 97 leave out line 15.

No. 98, in line 18, leave out '125(8)' and insert '124(8)'.

No. 99. leave out line 21.

No. 100, in page 1013, line 2, at end insert—

'155(2)	42(1)(2)	282(1) and (2)'.

No. 101, leave out lines 22 and 23.

No. 102, in line 26, column 2, at beginning insert 'subsections'.

No. 103, in page 1014, line 2, at end insert—

'64(9)*(b)*	154(2) or 155(1) of the Taxes Act	113(2) or 114(1) of the Taxes Act 1988'

No. 104, in line 3, leave out '66' and insert '65(5) , 66(5)'.

No. 105, in line 3, leave out 'Income and Corporation'.

No. 106, in line 5, at end insert—

'73(6)	533 of the Taxes Act	839 of the Taxes Act 1988'.

No. 107, in line 7, leave out '108(8)*(b)*' and insert '108(9)*(b)*'.

No. 108, in line 19, leave out '213(2)*(a)*' and insert '213(3)*(a)*'.

No. 109, in line 21, leave out '213(1)' and insert '213(2)'.

No. 110, leave out line 25 and insert—

'84(2)	(4) of section 481	(5) of section 745'.

No. 111, in page 1015, line 10, column 3, leave out '345(1) *(a)*' and insert '345(1)'.

No. 112, leave out lines 15 and 16.

No. 113, in line 20, at end insert '1988'.

No. 114, in line 22, at end insert '1988'.

No. 115, leave out lines 23 and 24.

No. 116, in page 1016, line 9, at end insert—

'12, para. 3(3)*(b)*	341 of the Taxes Act	488 of the Taxes Act 1988
3(3)*(e)*	Chapter III of Part XI of the Taxes Act	Part XI of the Taxes Act 1988
3(3)	533 of the Taxes Act	839 of the Taxes Act 1988'.

No. 117, leave out lines 15 to 19.

No. 118, in line 23, after 'the', insert 'Income and Corporation'.

No. 119, in line 24, column 3, after 'the', insert 'Income and Corporation'.

No. 120, in line 24, at end insert—

'8, para.11(2)	533 of the Taxes Act	839 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988'.

No. 121, in page 1017, line 17, at end insert—

'113(8)	532 of the Taxes Act	838 of the Taxes Act 1988'.

No. 122, in line 27, column 2, at beginning insert '(5) of section'.

No. 123, in line 27, column 3, at beginning insert '(6) of section'.

No.124, in page 1018, leave out line 4.

No. 125, in line 5, at end insert—

'12(2)*(c)*	II of Part I of the Finance (No.2) Act 1987	IV of Part XIV of the Taxes Act 1988
13(4)*(b)*	the Finance Act 1978	Schedule 9 to the Taxes Act 1988
21(3)	230 of the Taxes Act	657 of the Taxes Act 1988
72(4)	Finance Act 1978	Taxes Act 1988
86(3)	Finance Act 1978	Taxes Act 1988'.

No. 126, in line 9, at end insert—

'96	234(3) of the Taxes Act	210(4) of the Taxes Act 1988'.

No. 127, leave out lines 12 and 13 and insert—

'151(1)	218 of the Taxes Act	615(3) of the Taxes Act 1988'.

No. 128, line 19, column 2, at end insert 'of the Taxes Act'.

No. 129, in line 19, column 3, at end insert 'of the Taxes Act 1988'.

No. 130, leave out line 21 and insert—

'174(1)*(a)*	VII of Part II of the Finance Act 1984	V of Part VII of the Taxes Act 1988
174(1)*(a)*	92(3)	757(3)
174(1)*(b)*	1 of Schedule 9 to the Finance Act 1984	4 of Schedule 4 to that Act
174(1)*(b)*	2(2)	7(2)
178(1)	358 of the Taxes Act	468 of the Taxes Act 1988
204(5)	from "478" to "1981"	739 or 740 of the Taxes Act 1988
272	52 of the Finance Act 1974	519 of the Taxes Act 1988
272	the definition of the Taxes Act	"the Taxes Act 1970" means the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1970; "the Taxes Act 1988" means the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988;'.

No. 131, in line 26, at end insert—

'68(7)	Taxes Act	Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1970'.

No. 132, in page 1019, line 5, after '5(4)*(a)*', insert ', 6*(d)*'.

No. 133, in line 5, at end insert—

'19, para. 16(3)	from "Part I" to "1983"	Chapter III of Part VIII of the Taxes Act'.

No. 134, leave out lines 23 to 26.

No. 135, in page 1020, line 4, at end insert—

'In the Housing Associations Act 1985 c. 69

Section		
62(2)	341	488
62(2)	1970	1988'.

No. 136, leave out lines 14 to 17.

No. 137, in line 21, at end insert—

'69(6)	535 of the Taxes Act	841 of the Taxes Act 1988'.

No. 138, in line 22, leave out '65(8)' and insert '78(9)'.

No. 139, in page 1021, line 8, at end insert—

'In the Insolvency Act 1986 c. 45

Sch. 6		
para.1	204 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1970	203 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988
para.2	69 of the Finance (No. 2) Act 1975	559 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988'. — *[The Attorney-General.]*

Schedule 29, as amended, agreed to.

Schedule 30

TRANSITIONAL PROVISIONS AND SAVINGS

Amendments made: No. 140, in page 1033, leave out lines 15 to 18.

No. 141, in line 38, leave out from 'which' to 'immediately' in line 39 and insert

'paragraph 9 or 17(1) of that Schedule applied'. — *[The Attorney-General.]*

Schedule 30, as amended, agreed to.

Schedule 31

REPEALS

Amendments made: No. 142, in page 1036, leave out line 6.

No. 143, in page 1038, line 3 at end insert—

'1979 c.14.	Capital Gains Tax Act 1979	Section 155(5). In Schedule 7, paragraph 5; in paragraph 8, in Part I of the Table, the entries relating to sections 265, 352 and 526 of the 1970 Act, the Finance Act 1972, section 29 of the Finance Act 1970, section 67 of the Finance Act 1976 and section 45 of the Finance Act 1977, and paragraph 3 in Part II of the Table; and in paragraph 9 the entries relating to sections 186, 246, 265, 266, 305, 352, 359, 360, 474, 488, and 489 of the 1970 Act, the Finance Act 1972, the Finance Act 1973, sections 26 and 30 of the Finance Act 1974, section 42 of and Schedule 8 to the Finance (No. 2) Act 1975, section 67 of the Finance Act 1976 and the Finance Act 1978 (except section 64(5)).'.

No. 144, in page 1039, column 3, leave out lines 32 to 35 and insert

'Section 50(10)*(a)* and *(c)*.'.

No. 145, in page 1039, line 53, column 3, leave out *'(d)'* and insert *'(e)'*.

No. 146, in page 1040, line 9, column 3, leave out 'and 21 to 23' and insert ', 21 and 22'. — *[The Attorney-General.]*

Schedule 31, as amended, agreed to.

Bill reported, with amendments; considered, read the Third time and passed, with amendments.

PETITION

Gipsy Sites (Avon)

12.35 am

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): Before I present my petition, I congratulate you, Madam Deputy Speaker, on your verbal dexterity and stamina.

This petition to the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled sheweth that

the undersigned do hereby object to the intention of Avon county to develop gipsy encampments at Marsh Junction, St. Philips Marsh.

It is signed by 3,000 individuals who live and work in the area. It says:

The three proposed sites are within an area designated for an urban development corporation and their establishment would be in direct conflict with the purposes of the urban development corporation, which are to remove urban blight and promote regeneration.

The sites will be adjacent to housing and surrounded by industrial and commercial concerns that distribute cars and trucks, produce equipment for the Ministry of Defence, manufacture and store hazardous chemicals and deal in high-value, theft-attractive items of a wide variety.

Already, existing commercial concerns have been warned that insurance premiums will be raised to such a level that the viability of a number of companies will be seriously in doubt and thousands of present and potential jobs are threatened in an area of high unemployment should Avon county council's proposals be endorsed.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House will call upon the Secretary of State for the Environment to reject any proposals for gipsy sites in the St. Philips Marsh area.

This petition has my wholehearted support.

To lie upon the Table.

Barker and Dobson plc (Takeover)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

12.36 am

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): Barker and Dobson plc, a small confectionery manufacturer and supermarket chain, has made a hostile takeover bid for the Dee Corporation, the country's third largest food retailer.

Dee is the largest distribution company in the country, with sales last year of £4,836·6 million. In terms of reported sales, profits and net assets, Dee is at least 20 times larger than Barker and Dobson. Gateway, a wholly owned subsidiary of Dee, accounts for approximately 13 per cent. of the United Kingdom's packaged grocery sales and employs about 68,000 people.

In addition, Dee owns F. A. Wellworth, the second largest and fastest growing food retail business in Northern Ireland, and Linfood Cash and Carry, one of the two largest food cash-and-carry wholesalers in Britain.

The financing of the Barker and Dobson bid relies on two key elements. The first is massive borrowings of about £1·6 billion, which, on the basis of the latest published accounts of both companies, would leave the enlarged group with negative net tangible assets of more than £600 million if the bid were successful. Barker and Dobson, with net assets of £30 million, is borrowing £1·25 billion to acquire Dee, which has net assets of £670 million.

Secondly, Barker and Dobson has stated that it expects to meet its debt obligations by selling all the five subsidiaries of Dee, other than Gateway, but Gateway's superstores will also be sold.

In his offer document, the chairman of Barker and Dobson said:

"our programme for action will . . . include the sale of Dee's".

That will leave only Gateway's supermarkets in a severely truncated company.

The financial structure of the bid has major implications for Dee's business and employees. The £1·6 billion of borrowings, which is to be provided by a syndicate of largely foreign banks, led by Citibank of New York, would be at a floating rate of interest: 35 per cent. must be repaid in 18 months, 35 per cent. in 30 months and the remainder in 36 months. The financing package appears to stretch Barker and Dobson beyond prudent limits. What happens if interest rates rise? What happens when the borrowing facilities run out in three years? What happens if the asset-stripping exercise does not go according to plan, or if the company has a bad year? Even if the financial implications in themselves were insufficient for a reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, it is clear from the DTI press notice that great concern is felt about the consequences of this bid. If Barker and Dobson is successful, it could open the floodgates to even higher leveraged bids.

The asset stripping of the Dee group and the huge borrowing liability have implications for competition in the United Kingdom food industry and for Dee's customers, employees and suppliers. The growth of Gateway as a major food retailing force has been accepted by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission as creating "a countervailing force" against such established and fast-growing food retailers as J. Sainsbury, Tesco and Asda. Argyll's acquisition of Safeway has meant that there are now five leading food retailers in the United Kingdom. Barker and Dobson's bid would reduce the number of leading retailers to four, as it has stated that it will sell off the Gateway superstores and change 100 of Gateway's smaller stores to service another market.

Barker and Dobson's financing structure demands a very early sale of Gateway's superstores at a very full price. The key issue is not the combination of Barker and Dobson's almost negligible retail sales with those of Gateway. It is the sale of Gateway's superstores space of 3·2 million sq ft, plus its associated development programme, to another competitor. J. Sainsbury, Tesco and Asda are in the best position to offer to pay the highest price needed by Barker and Dobson, as they stand to gain substantial incremental benefits from the extensive additional selling space, and it is believed that a piecemeal sale would achieve that price.

The elimination of an important competitor and the simultaneous and significant strengthening of one of the other four leading food retailers must work against competition. F. A. Wellworth supplies an estimated 20 per cent. of the Northern Ireland food market. To which company will this important share of that local market fall?

Linfood Cash and Carry has a turnover of some £900 million. In order to secure an acceptable price, Barker and Dobson would have to sell to one of Linfood's two principal competitors: Booker or Nurdin and Peacock. Following such a sale, the buyer would dominate the United Kingdom wholesale trade, and prices charged to the small independent traders might well rise.

In 1987, the Dee Corporation opened 42 new stores, creating a total of 7,168 new jobs, of which 1,753 were in Scotland and 803 in Yorkshire and the north-east. Since the Dee Corporation took over Fine Fare some 20 months ago, 2,075 jobs have been created, of which 1,700 were in Yorkshire and the north-east—a total of 11 per cent. of Dee's investments.

Between now and the end of 1990, Dee proposes to open a further nine stores in Scotland, creating a total of 2,200 jobs. The proposed break-up of Dee would put this development programme in jeopardy. Many of the head offices and its divisions would be closed or severely reduced in size. Gateway alone has about 1,700 employees at Bristol and Keynsham. The new 250,000 sq ft head office, which is due to be completed in 1988, might become superfluous.

The sale of the superstores would have an effect on Gateway's distribution arrangements and lead to warehouse closures and job losses. Rationalisation would lead to a number of store closures and additional job losses.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): I recognise the hon. Gentleman's general concern and his specific concern about jobs. Barker and Dobson took over a Budgen facility on the edge of my constituency and over the past year the number of those employed there has increased by 13 per cent. The record is quite good. I am not necessarily disagreeing with the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Lofthouse: The hon. Gentleman is talking about a tiny firm when comparison is made with the Dee Corporation. I take the view that there is only so much

food to be sold in all areas and only so much money to be spent. The number of jobs to be made available is governed by those factors.

The proposed sale of the superstores would entail a costly disentanglement process, which would be destructive to the remaining Gateway business. This could lead to the loss of a number of key employees. In the systems area, for example, Gateway has the largest IBM System 38 in Europe.

The sale of the superstores would reduce customer choice in the food retailing sector. The prices of goods sold in stores transferred to the Budgen formula could increase by over 5 per cent. That is the average differential between Gateway and Budgen prices. It should be said that the Budgen range is significantly different from the range that is available at Gateway. It is likely that prices in the residual Gateway chain will rise. With a severely truncated chain of stores, the new company will not be able to buy on such favourable terms. An additional upward pressure on prices will be the requirement to service significant levels of acquisition debt despite the forced sale of assets.

The proposed sale of the superstores is likely to increase the buying power of the four remaining major food retailers, with an inevitable effect on suppliers' margins. Dee has a policy of promoting branded goods, unlike other major food retailers, and this is important for manufacturers seeking shelf space in certain markets. The need to service the massive debt and meet the demanding repayment schedule would be likely to have twin effects. Prices would have to be increased, and every possible means to improve buying terms would be necessary. It is the trade creditors of Dee—they represent about £600 million at the date of the last published accounts—who will suffer most if the group gets into financial trouble. The banks are proposing to exercise strict security over the group's assets.

Dee has been investing heavily in the long term and during its last financial year it has expanded its sales area by more than Sainsbury and Tesco put together. It is a term of the banking agreement that Barker and Dobson has entered into that Dee's capital expenditure programme should be severely curtailed. It is worth mentioning that when Dee bought Fine Fare it was stated that it would take three years to integrate Fine Fare into Gateway. Only one and a half of the three years has expired and the job is well under way and on course.

The financing arrangements proposed by Barker and Dobson for the bid, replacing equity with debt, are akin to junk bond financing in the United States, which has contributed to the structural problems of that country's economy. The implications of this opportunistic bid, which is possible only because of the proposed asset stripping and massive borrowings on which it relies, deserve the closest possible scrutiny by the authorities.

There would be a spin-off in my constituency. I may say, incidentally, that I have no connection with, and no brief for, any of the companies. Barker and Dobson is a small firm attempting to take over a much larger firm and then dispose of many of its assets. That is the only way in which it will be able to finance its borrowing.

All the takeover bids in the nation cause me great concern. Only last year in Pontefract, Tesco—one of the big four, and probably in the running for some of the assets—took over the Hillard chain after a brutal battle. While that takeover was happening, a local property developer was negotiating for land and buildings on the outskirts of the town for a large supermarket complex. Since he has obtained the land and planning permission we find that Tesco is the interested party. It is preparing, with the local authority, to obtain more land, and it has informed the local authority that it intends to close the major supermarket that it purchased only last year. I do not wish to throw any suspicions about, but people in Pontefract wonder whether it knew when the takeover was happening that another big supermarket would be going up and the one that serves the centre of the town would be closed and sold for trading in other goods.

That is the takeover bid scene. I ask the Minister to request his right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State to reconsider his decision not to refer the bid to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. I believe that the case I have presented tonight warrants great consideration and thorough investigation of the bid.

12.52 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate and Consumer Affairs (Mr. Francis Maude): It is useful to have a chance to air these issues in the House, even at this time of night. The fact that many of my hon. Friends are here to listen to what is said is evidence of that. I note in particular that my hon. Friends the Members for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes), for Bury, South (Mr. Sumberg) and for Bury, North (Mr. Burt) are present.

The hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) has aired matters in a temperate way. It is not helpful to overstate the case on these difficult and delicate matters, and I am grateful to him for the way in which he raised them.

My right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State decided last week, and announced his decision then, not to refer the proposed takeover to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. His decision was in accordance with the advice that he had received from his adviser on mergers, the Director General of Fair Trading. I am sorry that I cannot discuss in any detail the reasons for that decision. Representations are made to us by the Director General of Fair Trading in confidence and I must respect the confidentiality of the advice which he provides to my right hon. and noble Friend. I can say, however, that all the representations on this matter were considered carefully by the Director General, and by my right hon. and noble Friend in reaching his decision.

The hon. Gentleman talked about the concentration and the high level of merger activity among major food retailers. It is true that in 1984 it was reckoned that the 10 largest grocery retailers had about 54 per cent. of total grocery and provisions sales. Following some takeover activity—the takeovers of Safeway by Argyll, of Hillard by Tesco and of Fine Fare by Dee—that share seems likely to have increased now to over 66 per cent. of the market. In certain local and regional markets, the concentration ratios may be even higher.

Our present mergers law and policy are perfectly capable of dealing adequately with the trend towards concentration. The Fair Trading Act 1973 provides for a case-by-case scrutiny of mergers. Each merger or merger proposal which qualifies on the basis of the assets or market share test laid down in the Act is considered by the Office of Fair Trading, and the director general advises the Secretary of State on whether it should be referred. Each merger proposal must be considered on its own merits, in the light of all the circumstances at the time. Only if a

[Mr. Francis Maude]

merger is referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission and the commission concludes that it would be against the public interest does my right hon. and noble Friend have powers to take action against that merger.

Despite the trend towards increased concentration in the food retailing sector, it would be wrong to assume that any merger in this sector is by definition anti-competitive and hence against the public interest; on the contrary. It is worth noting, in defence of this view, that when the Mergers and Monopolies Commission reported in 1983 on the merger between Linfood and Fitch Lovell it reached the conclusion that some mergers

"which would strengthen the ability of middle ranking chains to survive and continue to compete, and which might even go some way towards redressing the balance between them and the largest chains, should not be prevented without good reason."

Mr. Lofthouse: Does the Minister agree that in the example I have given in Pontefract Tesco is now the major owner of supermarkets in the district? If the bid goes through, and Tesco purchases the supermarket from Barker and Dobson, another supermarket in my constituency will be owned by Tesco, which will have a large private monopoly. What competition is there?

Mr. Maude: I take the hon. Gentleman's point. He will recognise that we realise its importance from the way in which my right hon. and noble Friend's announcement was made.

The Office of Fair Trading recently found that competition in the retailing sector was still strong and that, in general, lower buying prices were being passed on, to the benefit of consumers. It is clear that the matters are being kept under constant review by the Director General of Fair Trading.

Each merger or merger proposal in this sector will continue to be looked at, with a view to assessing its probable effect on competition, by the Office of Fair Trading, with the possibility of a reference to the MMC if public interest issues are raised. My right hon. and noble Friend's announcement that the proposed takeover by Barker and Dobson was not to be referred emphasises the close scrutiny which would be given to any divestment of assets following a successful acquisition by the bidding company.

The announcement read as follows:

"This proposed merger is pursuant to a plan which is said to include also the divestment of certain assets of the combined company. The divestments account for a substantial proportion of retail food distribution in the UK. Any such divestments would fall to be considered under the merger provisions of the Fair Trading Act in the usual way, in order to determine whether they should be allowed to proceed. Such consideration would need to take account of concern about the concentration of food retailing, both in the country at large and in particular parts of it. The weight given to such issues would be course depend upon who were the intending buyers".

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield): I am grateful to the Minister for giving way and to my hon. Friend for allowing me to intervene. We know that the Barker and Dobson bid can only be financed out of the disposal of assets after the bid. That is beyond dispute. May I put to the Minister two points? First, given that almost certainly the assets will be disposed of to one of the other main competitors, would we be more prescient if we investigated the competition aspects of the body now rather than waited for the bid to go through and a disposal to occur? Secondly, a leverage bid means that the buyer can finance the sale only by disposing of the assets. Is it not time that we had a good look at those bids in principle and measured them against the public interest?

Mr. Maude: I shall come to the hon. Gentleman's second point about the principle of leverage bids. On his first point, he said that the proposed bid involved a necessary divestment after the merger, and asked whether we should look at it on that basis. The answer is not to look at it at this stage. We must look at this merger and the market share of the combined companies.

If the bid were successful and the combined company chose to divest some assets to another purchaser or several purchasers—it is clear that a number of different types of assets are contemplated—it would be for us to look at the implications of sales to particular purchasers to find out the effects of the mergers on competition. That would be the right time to do that. We cannot speculate on the implications of hypothetical buyers, but we can make it clear, as we have done, that we are aware of the concern and that the Director General of Fair Trading will look carefully at the implications of any divestments.

Mr. Colin Shepherd (Hereford): Dee Corporation has utilised a substantial sum of public money, certainly in my constituency, in developing a major distribution warehouse which would be part of the sell-off proposals. Since this would be redundant and part of the original proposal, would it be the Government's policy to claw back that public money? I should like to know the answer.

Mr. Maude: I am not sure that I can provide it. I do not know for what purposes and under what conditions the money was given, so I do not think that I can provide an authoritive answer, or indeed any answer.

Mr. Blair: I should like to press the Minister on his statement that he cannot look into the bid now. What would happen if the bid were successful and the new company decided to dispose of the Gateway superstores to one of the main competitors, so that a reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission became activated? What would be the position in terms of certainty and for the employees and shareholders if, having bought the company knowing that it could finance the sale only through the disposal, there was then a reference to the MMC and the bid were blocked?

Mr. Maude: That would have to be considered at the time. We cannot speculate on it at this stage. I must proceed; there are only three minutes left and I want to deal with the important point of leveraging.

The White Paper which we published a couple of months ago made it clear that the result of the review of mergers policy was that competition should continue to be the principal, although not the exclusive, consideration that my right hon. Friend bore in mind in deciding whether to refer the proposed merger. There are other public interest matters to be taken into account, but we made it clear that we would look principally at competition.

It is sometimes suggested that a leverage bid and the shareholders' response to it are intrinsically contrary to the public interest. I do not accept that. There have been two recent cases where leveraging of the bid has been considered to have raised public interest issues which

deserved further investigation by the commission—the Elders IXL's proposed takeover of Allied Lyons and the offer by Gulf Resources for IC Gas. They were considered by the commission.

There were other cases where a reference was not considered appropriate because shareholders and the market were best placed to decide on the merits or otherwise of the proposals. Two cases which spring to mind are the Demerger Corporation's bid in 1986 for the Extel Corporation and Valuedale's bid later the same year for Simon Engineering. It is worth noting that in both cases the offers were unsuccessful in the market and were rejected by shareholders.

The fact is that highly leveraged bids can and do fail in the market, which shows that shareholders — for a number of the reasons raised by the hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford—are quite often unprepared to support offers which seem to them too risky. That has been shown to be the case.

The financial arrangements and the pereceived ability of the bidding management team to carry the offers through, along with the size of the potential benefits which have to be set against the risks, are all matters for the shareholders to consider, and this is a healthy check on highly leveraged proposals. There are also checks in the City code on takeovers and mergers.

These are matters which have to be considered in each individual case. There is nothing inherent in a highly leveraged bid which means that the public interest requires it to be considered by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. Each case has to be considered on its own merits. We make it clear that competition is the principal consideration that we shall keep in mind, and that will continue to be the case. If this bid turned out to be successful and divestments were subsequently made, competition would be our principal consideration at that stage.

But my right hon. and noble Friend has decided not to refer this proposed merger, in full consideration of all the issues and in accordance with the advice given to him by the Director General of Fair Trading, and I have, I am afraid, to tell the hon. Gentleman that I cannot hold out the prospect of that decision being reconsidered.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at six minutes past One o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 28 January 1988

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

ASSOCIATED BRITISH PORTS (NO. 2) BILL
Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Tuesday 2 February.

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL BILL
Read a Second time, and committed.

BRITISH RAILWAYS (NO. 2) BILL

CARDIFF BAY BARRAGE BILL

CITY OF LONDON (SPITAFIELDS MARKET) BILL
Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Tuesday 2 February.

DARTMOUTH-KINGSWEAR FLOATING BRIDGE BILL
Read a Second time and referred to the Examiners of Petitions for Private Bills.

FALMOUTH CONTAINER TERMINAL BILL

INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT CENTRE FROM BUCKINGHAM BILL
Orders for Second Reading read.
To be a Second time upon Tuesday 2 February.

LONDON REGIONAL TRANSPORT (NO. 2) BILL
Read a Second time and referred to the Examiners of Petitions for Private Bills.

NORTH KILLINGHOLME CARGO TERMINAL BILL

ST. GEORGE'S HILL, WEYBRIDGE ESTATE BILL

SOUTHERN WATER AUTHORITY BILL
Orders for Second Reading read.
To be a Second time upon Tuesday 2 February.

TORBAY HARBOUR (OXEN COVE AND COASTAL FOOTPATH, BRIXHAM) BILL
Read a Second time, and committed.

LONDON REGIONAL TRANSPORT BILL *(By Order)*
Order read for resuming adjourned debate on consideration [10 December]. That the Bill be now considered.
Debate further adjourned till Thursday 4 February.

TEIGNMOUTH QUAY COMPANY BILL *(By Order)*

YORK CITY COUNCIL BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

HAMPSHIRE (LYNDHURST BYPASS) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*
Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Thursday 4 February.

Oral Answers to Questions

NORTHERN IRELAND

Stalker/Sampson Inquiry

1. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will meet the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary to discuss the latest implications of the Stalker/Sampson inquiry into allegations involving misconduct by the security forces.

8. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received seeking publication in full of the Sampson report on the administration of the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Tom King): My right hon. and learned Friend announced on Monday that the Director of Public Prosecutions (Northern Ireland) had with his agreement concluded that no further criminal proceedings should be brought in respect of the incidents in 1982 which led to the setting up of the Stalker/Sampson inquiry. The report of that inquiry, being that of a police investigation into possible criminal offences, will, in accordance with practice, not be published.

However, I would wish to make it clear to the House that this is not the end of the matter. The Attorney-General's statement was concerned with the responsibilities of the Director of Public Prosecutions and himself in the matter of criminal proceedings. He reported that the Director of Public Prosecutions had concluded that there was evidence of the commission of offences of perverting, or attempting or conspiring to pervert, the course of justice, or of obstructing a constable in the execution of his duty, but that, after consideration of the public interest, and in particular matters of national security, it would not be proper to institute crimial proceedings. The next step now is for the findings of the report, including the evidence referred to in the statement, to be considered in the context of the question of disciplinary proceedings.

In addition, the circumstances surrounding and following the incidents in 1982 gave rise to concern about procedures, responsibilities and control within the RUC. The inquiry report addressed those aspects and recommended a special inspection by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary. This inspection, of which I informed the House on 15 July, has now been completed and I received the report on Monday. It is now being urgently studied, and I have asked the Chief Constable for his early comments. I wish to make a full statement to the House as soon as possible on this and any other matters that fall within my responsibilities.

Mr. Lloyd: Obviously the Secretary of State's announcement that there will be a further statement will be welcomed, and hon. Members on both sides of the House will wait for it with some impatience, given the length of time that has passed. Does the Secretary of State accept that when John Stalker, as deputy chief constable of Greater Manchester, was taken off the case, it was widely rumoured that he had already recommended prosecution against some of the lower-serving ranks and that he intended to question senior RUC officers under caution? Because of that, and because it is important that the RUC should be respected throughout the community in Northern Ireland, does the Secretary of State also accept that the Attorney-General's decision earlier this week not to prosecute has left the RUC in a very difficult position in that it will not have the confidence of the whole of the community in the north of Ireland?

Mr. King: I want to begin by apologising to the House for the length of my reply earlier. However, because of the great concern that exists over this matter, I though it proper not to duck the issue and to try to explain it as fully as I could.

I understand entirely the issue about the confidence of the minority community in the RUC. I bitterly regret the events that took place in 1982. Contrary to the impression that no one was charged, I must state that four constables were charged with the offence of murder four years ago. Those issues have been the subject of the most exhaustive investigations. The team working under Mr. Stalker largely continued with those investigations under Mr. Sampson. The team carried out an exhaustive inquiry at the request of the DPP, the findings of which, in respect of criminal proceedings, were announced by my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General on Monday. I trust that people will appreciate, not only how long ago the offences took place, but the steps that have been taken since, and will therefore judge the RUC on its present performance, not on certain matters that gave rise to serious concern in 1982.

Mr. Flannery: Does the Secretary of State agree that after hundreds of years of British occupation of Ireland it is inevitable that the Irish people are deeply suspicious of British justice? Does he further agree that when Mr. Stalker was taken off the case there was no natural progression from Mr. Stalker to Mr. Sampson? Mr. Stalker was removed in the most curious circumstances, and we do not yet know all the details. The minority community and the Government of the Republic of Ireland are deeply concerned about this. Therefore, will he seek a judicial inquiry, under the Tribunals of Inquiry (Evidence) Act 1921? I know that he said he will make another statement, but the fears and suspicions remain and they have been fuelled by the Attorney-General's statement on Monday.

Mr. King: I noticed during the Attorney-General's statement on Monday that hon. Members on both sides of the House paid tribute to the total integrity of the Director of Public Prosecutions (Northern Ireland) whose decision was announced by the Attorney-General. I remind the House that the Director of Public Prosecutions, because he was not satisfied with the evidence, insisted upon the inquiry being set up in the first place. That point should be remembered. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that that part of the Sampson report that I have seen which is within my responsibility incorporates Mr. Stalker's draft conclusions and Mr. Sampson's comments upon them. Therefore, in that respect, there is real continuity.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: Are not the safety and continued effectiveness of members of the security forces and of the security services and those who help them an important part of the national interest that the Director of Public Prosecutions was bound to consider? Should not

responsible Members of this House have a care for that? Is my right hon. Friend aware that we await his further statement with confidence and believe that those in charge of the Royal Ulster Constabulary will be as concerned as anyone else to see that the disciplinary proceedings—if there are any—are carried out to the full to ensure that a proper outcome is reached?

Mr. King: I heard my hon. Friend commenting on that this morning. He was absolutely correct to say, as I said in my statement, that this is not the end of the matter. It is possible, as he said in his interview this morning, that disciplinary proceedings could have serious consequences for the individuals concerned.

The difficulty and the challenge faced by the Attorney-General, as well as the Director of Public Prosecutions (Northern Ireland), is that they are constitutionally required to consider the public interest. Very difficult decisions are involved. We have taken — as did my predecessors—the most thorough steps to try to ensure that such matters are as fully investigated as possible. Anyone who honestly considers the progress of this matter will recognise that exhaustive investigations have taken place and respect the integrity of those who had to make decisions on the basis of those investigations.

Mr. Peter Robinson: Does the Secretary of State believe that the action of the Government of the Republic of Ireland in calling off a cross-border security meeting between the Garda Siochana Commissioner and the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary was a vulgar threat, suggesting to the Government that if they did not toe the line there would be no support for cross-border co-operation?

Mr. King: No, Sir. We attach the greatest importance to cross-border security co-operation. Anyone who has heard today's news of what is clearly a very significant arms find on the shore of Donegal will realise the value that is increasingly being obtained from that close co-operation.

Mr. Alton: Is not one of the most unsatisfactory aspects the veil of secrecy that has been pulled across the proceedings? Does the Secretary of State not recognise that if confidence in the RUC is to be established among members of the minority community—many of whom ought to be encouraged to join and support the RUC—it will be necessary to publish the proceedings of the inquiry, at least to Northern Ireland Members of Parliament and to the Intergovernmental Conference? Will he consider that? Will he also say what lessons have been learnt for the future, and what changes will be made to ensure that this does not happen again?

Mr. King: I have referred to procedures, responsibilities and control within the RUC. It is important to remember that the incidents that gave rise to the present concern took place six years ago, and that a number of changes were made soon after that by the Chief Constable in recognition of some of the points of concern. I have no doubt that that is one of the reasons for the increased confidence in the RUC, which has followed the lessons learnt from some of the most unfortunate aspects of those regrettable incidents.

Mr. Hayes: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is of paramount importance that this whole sorry affair should not stand in the way of cross-border security, particularly cross-border co-operation as a generality? Is it not important that the inquiries are undertaken swiftly and that there is a clear conclusion, so that the public can have confidence in the RUC again?

Mr. King: I agree with my hon. Friend about the importance of confidence in the RUC, and I bitterly regret that the events of so many years ago — and the controversy over them—have the potential to damage some of that confidence. That, however, is the reality. One of the problems that we face in fighting vicious terrorists is that issues of national security and the protection of individuals must always be in our minds. That was mentioned by the Attorney-General, who referred to the public interest, and it applies particularly to issues of national security. But we are trying to recognise the lessons that can be learnt.

Mr. Hume: Does the Secretary of State accept that in most societies the national interest is best served by unequivocal and impartial implementation of the rule of law? Is it not best served by the community as a whole having confidence in both the police services and the administration of justice? Will he tell us what contribution to that national interest was made by the Attorney-General's statement this week? There is evidence of a clear attempt to pervert the course of justice—not in a minor case of theft, but in cases involving the deaths of five people. Does the Secretary of State recall the Prime Minister's statement some time ago that there should be no hiding place anywhere in these islands for anyone who commits a crime? Does he accept that the implication of the Attorney-General's statement is that there is a hiding place for selected people who, in spite of the fact that the incidents happened five or six years ago, are still either in the security forces or the security services?

Mr. King: First, I know that the hon. Gentleman will recognise that too many people comment on this and blithely ignore the fact that four people have already faced a charge of murder in a court of law. Furthermore, it is simply unacceptable to imply that there has been any attempt to cover up, when my right hon. and learned Friend made it absolutely clear that there is evidence, and when I have made it clear to the House that that evidence will not be suppressed. It will be made available and taken into account in the context of disciplinary proceedings. I made the clearest statement that this is not, therefore, a cover-up to seek to suppress the fact that there is evidence and that that evidence will have to be considered. My right hon. and learned Friend informed the House that in the national interest and in the interests of national security it is not proper for there to be criminal proceedings in these respects.

Mr. McCusker: What disciplinary action is to be taken against those secret service agents who were up to their necks in this matter, who may well have initiated all the actions and whose presence is confirmed by reference to the national interest?

Mr. King: The hon. Gentleman will know that it is not for me to comment on the points that he has raised.

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson: Has my right hon. Friend seen the report in today's edition of *The Guardian* that Mr. Alan Dukes, the Irish Opposition Leader, says that the British Government gave an assurance to Dublin in 1986 that charges would probably be made against senior RUC

officers following the Sampson-Stalker inquiry? Will my right hon. Friend comment on that statement and say whether there is any accuracy in it?

Mr. King: If by "charges" my hon. Friend means that prosecutions will be brought, that is a matter not for Ministers but for the Director of Public Prosecutions in conjunction with the Attorney-General.

Mr. McNamara: Will the Secretary of State confirm that the disciplinary proceedings will be in camera, and not in public, so we shall still not know even part of the truth? Will he also confirm that when he was consulted by the Attorney-General he advised that, on the grounds of public interest and national security, there should not be any prosecutions based on the Stalker-Sampson report, and that that advice was based on the knowledge that, if prosecuted, the officers named in *The Times*, Chief Superintendent Andy Anderson and Chief Inspector Ronnie Flanagan, had let it be known that they would reveal in the witness box the whole background to the shoot-to-kill allegations and the attempted cover-up, implicating senior officers and others who either formulated the policy or had knowledge of it?

Mr. King: I understand that it is not the practice of my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General to comment on whom he consults when determining his assessment of the public interest or national security. Obviously, therefore, it is not proper for me to comment.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

2. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he next plans to meet Ministers from the Republic of Ireland for discussions under the provisions of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Mr. Tom King: I hope to do so very shortly.

Mr. Allen: First, I thank the Secretary of State, his Parliamentary Private Secretary and the Northern Ireland Office for arranging the visit to Northern Ireland for those hon. Members who had no previous experience of Northern Ireland. I hope that I speak on behalf of those hon. Members of all parties who went on the visit in hoping that that educational experience can be extended so that we can speak from first-hand knowledge rather than from reflex.

On the Anglo-Irish Agreement, will the Secretary of State place on the agenda of future meetings the question of fair employment? When we were over there, we heard that some progress had been made on electoral boundaries and housing, but that one outstanding factor was fair employment, allowing Catholics and Protestants to have an equal say in employment in the major industries in Northern Ireland. Will the right hon. Gentleman tell us what progress has been made on that?

Mr. King: First, I thank the hon. Gentleman for his opening comments. I welcome those hon. Members who may not be familiar with Northern Ireland but who are willing to acquaint themselves more clearly with the situation there. I think that I speak for every hon. Member representing a Northern Ireland constituency when I say how much we welcome the interest of other hon. Members in such matters. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for taking the time.

On the hon. Gentleman's second point, fair employment and equality of opportunity in employment have been a live subject in discussions in the Intergovernmental Conference. There is no doubt that as our proposals develop that will continue to be the case.

Mr. Wilkinson: Will my right hon. Friend point out to the Irish authorities that if they continue to boycott ministerial meetings under the Anglo-Irish Agreement following the Attorney-General's statement, they could find that that boycott is a two-edged sword? If such meetings resume, will my right hon. Friend make it clear to his Southern Irish counterparts that the defeat of the IRA is the first priority and that any political tinkering or change can come only after the campaign against the terrorists has been won?

Mr. King: There is no question of a boycott. In fact, we have arranged an extra, special meeting and, as I said in my original answer, we hope that it will be held shortly. I certainly look forward to close and continuing co-operation. Furthermore, I would not wish to strike such a note today, when we have heard welcome news of a very substantial arms find on the shore of Donegal. We pay tribute to the Garda's work in that respect. I know that every law-abiding person in Northern Ireland will welcome the news.

Mr. Mallon: At the next meeting of the Intergovernmental Conference, will the Secretary of State explain to the representatives of the Irish Government how the Attorney-General's decision is compatible with articles 7 and 8 of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, which the British Government signed? In more immediate terms, what advice has the right hon. Gentleman to offer to all those young people — both Catholic and Protestant — who, through force of circumstance in their own communities, are sitting in gaol? How does he intend to persuade them to have confidence, not just in the police, but in the whole process of justice?

Mr. King: I should like to think that the hon. Gentleman recognises the progress that has been made in that respect. I have been the first to say that the events of 1982 and the problems that they have posed have undoubtedly cast a shadow over recent attitudes. These are very difficult issues indeed.

On compatibility with the agreement, Irish Ministers well understand that it is implicit in the agreement that issues of national security have to be borne in mind. That is one of the difficult challenges that we face. I do not think that hon. Members will challenge the integrity of the Director of Public Prosecutions—who, I repeat, set up the inquiry in the first place—in his determination to ensure that he was privy to all the facts, or, indeed, that of my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General.

Mr. Couchman: Is my right hon. Friend satisfied that the extradition issue has now been sorted out? If not, will he pursue the issue again when he next meets Irish Ministers so that we can all be sure that there will be no haven for terrorists as a result of technical complications in extradition matters in the Irish Republic?

Mr. King: We are working very closely indeed with the Irish Government on these matters, and we have made progress. No two cases are ever quite the same and different issues arise from them, but I hope that there will be a continuing improvement in these matters, to which we attach the greatest importance.

Mr. McNamara: May I make it clear that no one denies the integrity of the Director of Public Prosecutions? However, we say that his decision was based upon evidence, given to him by the Attorney-General, from which he could reach no other conclusion. It is that evidence that we seek to examine. Will the Secretary of State now confirm that what he said in reply to the hon. Member for Newbury (Mr. McNair-Wilson) represented a denial of what Mr. Dukes stated——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question is about the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Mr. McNamara: That is right, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Dukes said that at the meeting of the Intergovernmental Conference on 8 December 1986 the right hon. Gentleman did not say, or give the impression, to Mr. Peter Barry or to Mr. Dukes that charges would be preferred against senior officers of the RUC following the receipt of the Stalker inquiry and that, on that basis, those Ministers did not press for the matter to be published. Will the Secretary of State also tell the House, on this, the 300th anniversary of the arrival of William of Orange and the declaration of rights, why the Government are breaking the concordat between Parliament and the Crown by suspending and dispensing with the law?

Mr. King: I shall not respond to the last part of the question, which took the hon. Gentleman into confused waters. As to the first part of his question about would-be prosecutions, which was slightly different in phraseology from that of my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Mr. McNair-Wilson), he knows perfectly well that that is not a matter for me. It is a matter for the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Attorney-General.

Mr. Gow: When my right hon. Friend next meets the Irish Foreign Minister and the Irish Minister for Justice, will he comment on, or put forward views and proposals about, the administration of justice in the Irish Republic?

Mr. King: We have no present proposals to do so.

Health and Personal Social Services

3. **Mr. McWilliam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he intends to increase funding for the purposes of improving health and the personal social services in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Richard Needham): The public expenditure White Paper published last week provided details of the planned increase in expenditure on the health and personal social services in Northern Ireland over the next three financial years. In 1988-89 expenditure will rise to £845 million in total.

Mr. McWilliam: Does the Minister agree that his Department's recent announcement about the level of health expenditure in Northern Ireland has been widely condemned by those concerned with health care in the Province? Does he accept the calculation of the Province's health boards, which show that they are facing a £20 million shortfall in health expenditure for next year? Will he accept that the Department's announcement completely fails to meet the crisis in health care in Northern Ireland?

Mr. Needham: No, Sir, I will not accept that. I hope that the hon. Gentleman is aware that in Northern Ireland we spend 23 per cent. more per year on the Health Service than we do in other regions of the United Kingdom. I understand the difficulties with regard to expenditure by the health boards this year, but I should point out that our record on health expenditure in Northern Ireland is second to none. As a percentage of GDP we spend 12·4 per cent., which is almost twice as much as West Germany.

Mr. Kilfedder: Despite what the Minister has just said, it has been reported that health authorities throughout Northern Ireland have warned him that a crisis will develop in the Health Service unless more money is made available. Will he reconsider this matter and provide sufficient money? If not, hospital wards will have to close and the people of Northern Ireland will suffer further.

Mr. Needham: I understand that there are problems with the health boards this year, but I must refer to the high levels of expenditure in the Province. There will be a 5·3 per cent. increase in expenditure this year. Many other countries in Europe are having to cut back on health expenditure.

Rev. Martin Smyth: I acknowledge the amount of expenditure on health care, but does the Minister recognise the greater need of Northern Ireland and that, for cardiac surgery and ophthalmology, there are three times as many people on the waiting list as there were in 1982? A slight injection of funds would be helpful. Will he acknowledge that in the Eastern Health and Social Services Board there will be a shortfall of £8 million and that, as a result, with regard to cardiac care, people will be dying?

Mr. Needham: I agree with the hon. Gentleman about the increased level of need in Northern Ireland, which is why we spend 23 per cent. more. As to the particulars that the hon. Gentleman referred to, I shall have an opportunity to discuss with the chairman and general manager of the Eastern Health and Social Services Board its programme for next year, which is a matter for them.

Sir John Farr: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, however generous we would like the British taxpayer to be to deserving cases in Northern Ireland, we must continually bear in mind that its Health Service is almost completely funded by mainland money? Such assistance should not be too disproportionate to other similar and parallel benefits in other parts of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Needham: The Government accept that there is an additional need for health care in Northern Ireland, which is why we provide funds for it and will continue to do so at a high level.

Mr. Jim Marshall: Is the Minister aware that he sounds very much like the Prime Minister in his recitation of statistics? Does he realise that his position is equally as incongruous as that of the Prime Minister, in that the statistics that he relates bear little relation to the needs and requirements of the Health Service and social services in the Province? Since the Treasury is awash with money, will he join us in urging the Chancellor of the Exchequer to increase funding for the Health Service in the Province?

Mr. Needham: That is the first time that I have ever been compared to the Prime Minister, and I am grateful to the hon. Member. I am sure he is aware that the

Treasury in Northern Ireland is not awash with money. We have had a very difficult time this year and have made all the money that we can available to the Health Service. We have a first-rate Health Service in Northern Ireland and will do everything that we can to maintain it.

Children (Cross-community Contacts)

4. **Mr. Page:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he is taking to increase cross-community contacts between children at school in Northern Ireland.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Dr. Brian Mawhinney): I introduced a new cross-community contact scheme in September last year which provides additional annual resources of £200,000 to assist schools, colleges, youth groups and reconciliation bodies in the organisation of new cross-community activities for young people under 19. So far 120 applications have been received, of which 52 are from the schools sector, involving a total of 131 different schools.

Mr. Page: While I warmly welcome this initiative, may I ask whether my hon. Friend agrees that if we can get the two communities to mix when they are youngsters there is a chance that they might mix when they are adults and thus stop the tearing and ripping at each other that has been taking place for centuries?

Dr. Mawhinney: I agree with what my hon. Friend says and I am heartened by my belief that an increasing number of people in the Province feel similarly.

Mr. A. Cecil Walker: Is the Minister aware that encouraging the setting up of so-called integrated schools would only contribute to the breaking down and closing of schools within the maintained and controlled sectors? Is he further aware that such action would not result in the cross-community relations that he would wish to see achieved and that pupils who would be attracted towards integrated education will integrate themselves naturally in their daily lives? Does the Minister not feel that it would be better to deploy existing education resources for the encouragement of cross-community activities in existing schools where there is already a co-operative effort towards that end?

Dr. Mawhinney: The hon. Gentleman will know that I have done precisely what he urged in the last part of his question and have devoted increased effort and resources to trying to improve cross-community contacts in existing schools. He will also know that I and my predecessors have always said that we would seek to educate the children of Northern Ireland according to the wishes of their parents, and there are many parents—an increasing number, I believe—who would like to see their children educated in circumstances that are different from the traditional ones that have pertained in Northern Ireland for the past 65 years.

Mr. Cash: The Education Reform Bill is, of course, going through the House at the present time. Could my hon. Friend give some indication of the extent to which, in relation to the curriculum which children in Northern Ireland are experiencing, there is a deliberate attempt to ensure that they are taught on a non-sectarian basis? Surely that would be a great help for the future.

Dr. Mawhinney: I hope and expect to be issuing a consultation paper on education reform in Northern Ireland in the reasonably near future.

Job Creation

5. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what economic initiatives the Government plan to boost employment in Northern Ireland.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Peter Viggers): In the context of the Pathfinder programme which I introduced last year I set up six task forces to identify strengths and weaknesses in the Northern Ireland economy and to promote constructive change. This has been enthusiastically received. Regional conferences have been held throughout the Province, leading to keen discussion. This takes place against a background of falling unemployment.

Mr. Grocott: Can the Minister explain an aspect of Government policy that puzzles a lot of us? It is that in Northern Ireland public investment is considered to be a sensible way of boosting the economy and creating jobs, but in the rest of the United Kingdom it is regarded as Keynsian nonsense and a waste of money.

Mr. Viggers: No. I gather that the hon. Gentleman was recently in the Province and I hope that he enjoyed his visit. I must put him right on the tone of his question. The Industrial Development Board and the Local Enterprise Development Unit will strengthen enterprise in Northern Ireland and will promote investment by the private sector. I am delighted to say that, for the last four years, the Industrial Development Board alone has promoted investment by the private sector of £1 billion in industry and commerce.

Mr. Bowis: Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the best boosts to jobs and the economy of Northern Ireland would be the removal of the iniquities of the protection racket, particularly in the construction industry? Will he bring forward at an early stage fiscal measures to remove those iniquities?

Mr. Viggers: Although law and order issues are not directly within my field of responsibility, I can confirm that vigorous steps are being taken to counter this threat.

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: Will the Minister, in his conversations with his colleagues in the Northern Ireland Office, ask the Minister responsible for health in Northern Ireland to ensure that when the Antrim area hospital is built——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question is about employment.

Mr. Forsythe: —as much as work as possible is given to competent local contractors?

Mr. Viggers: No doubt the Minister with responsibility for health matters heard the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Barry Porter: Does my hon. Friend agree that the best way to boost employment in the Province would be to make some progress on the political front? Do he and his right hon. Friend agree that the time has now come to implement the parliamentary tier proposals contained in the Anglo-Irish Agreement? Given the events of the past

few days, that would at least provide an opportunity for those of differing and sometimes opposing views to come face to face to discuss their differences and to make some positive moves forward.

Mr. Viggers: The Government have always taken the view that political progress on security and progress on the economy are interlinked. In matters regarding the economy, for which I am responsible, the rate at which unemployment is diminishing now appears to be accelerating. A 1,000 a month reduction in the level of unemployment in the past six months has now accelerated to a rate of 1,400 per month in the past three months. We find this very promising.

Maghaberry Prison

6. **Mr. A. Cecil Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many *(a)* male and *(b)* female prisoners are in residence in Maghaberry prison; what is the total number of available places; and when full occupancy will be achieved.

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Mr. John Stanley): The female prison at Maghaberry has 56 cells and was designed to accommodate all the female prisoners in Northern Ireland.

On 27 January, 31 female prisoners were in custody there. On the same date there were 93 prisoners in the male prison at Maghaberry, which has a capacity for 432. It is expected that there will be around 100 male prisoners there by the middle of next month, with the build-up continuing thereafter. At present it is not possible to estimate when full occupation of the male prison will be achieved.

Mr. Walker: Is the Minister aware that some years have elapsed since Maghaberry prison was supposed to come into service? I would like to make the Minister aware of the grave suspicion that, during the construction of that prison, Republican elements employed there were guilty of certain acts, as a consequence of which the prison is not being opened when it should be. In view of the fact that the Crumlin road prison is grossly overcrowded, as I know from my own experience, will the Minister tell the House whether he will consider moving some prisoners from Crumlin road to Maghaberry if and when that prison is ever commissioned?

Mr. Stanley: The main reason for the delay in the opening of the new Maghaberry prison was the need to carry out major redesign work following security experience of similarly designed prisons elsewhere in the United Kingdom. As to the hon. Gentleman's comment about overcrowding at Belfast prison, I am glad to be able to tell him that the number of prisoners there yesterday was only 14 above the authorised capacity of 500.

Rating Reform

7. **Mr. Gow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received seeking the introduction of the community charge in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Stanley: The representations that my right hon. Friend has received from members of the public currently amount to one letter.

Mr. Gow: Why are the inestimable benefits of the community charge to be conferred upon the people of Tonbridge and Malling, and even Eastbourne, but withheld from the people of Fermanagh and South Tyrone?

Mr. Stanley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his enthusiastic support for the community charge, which is certainly shared in Tonbridge and Malling and Eastbourne. However, my hon. Friend is well aware that the structure of local government and the financial arrangements for local government in the Province are very different from the rest of Great Britain. My hon. Friend will be aware from my original answer regarding the community charge that we believe that it is right to monitor the progress in the Province.

Security

9. **Mr. William Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he is now satisfied with progress in the fight against terrorism.

13. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the security situation in 1987.

Mr. Tom King: Since I last answered questions in the House on 10 December, five civilians, two members of the UDR and one RUC officer have died as a result of the security situation in the Province. The period has been marked by much effective work by the security forces, but the threat remains high. On 21 January I announced new arrangements for the deployment of security forces in border areas.

I shall circulate the record for 1987 in terms of the number of people charged with terrorist offences and the amount of weapons and ammunition recovered, both by the RUC and the Garda, in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Ross: As the IRA has now been proven, as a result of the find in County Donegal today, to have been running in weapons by the shipload, and since there is evidence in Northern Ireland that Protestant paramilitaries are moving weapons by the carload, is it not pathetic for the Minister to come to the House and read off such a litany? When will he be satisfied with progress and when will he eliminate terrorism? Those are the questions that we want answered.

Mr. King: I find that a disappointing supplementary question, especially from the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) who, above all, should welcome the fact that such a substantial quantity of arms has been found in Donegal and the fact that those arms will now not be used, possibly against his constituents. The fact that the hon. Gentleman knows about the shipments for the Loyalists is precisely because the RUC achieved the recapture of those weapons.

Mr. Bennett: Does my right hon. Friend agree that security affects both sides of the border? What co-operation has he had on security matters as a result of discussions with the Government of the Irish Republic lately?

Mr. King: Such co-operation is ongoing and extremely close. The evidence of today is further proof of its benefit.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Sackville:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 January.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Sackville: Does my right hon. Friend agree that our economic prospects are better now than at any time during the —*[Interruption.]* That improvement applies equally to the north-west as to the south-east. Is my right hon. Friend aware that there is well over £100 million worth of new development currently under way in Bolton town centre? That is the sort of news that we want from the north of England, rather than the doom and gloom from the Labour Benches, which does so much to reinforce outdated prejudices and deter new investment.

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend. Enterprise is thriving and unemployment is falling in all parts of the country. I congratulate Bolton on its attitude. It is welcoming private enterprise, and the £100 million is an extremely large investment on any count. The real divide is between those cities that welcome private sector enterprise and those which would rather discourage it and have higher unemployment.

Mr. Kinnock: Does the Prime Minister recall saying, just five weeks ago, on 21 December, that charges for patients in National Health Service hospitals

"could not possibly come in during the lifetime of this Parliament because I remember very vividly during the election I confirmed we would rule it out. We have introduced extra charges which we think people can afford but we are not talking about extra charges beyond those which we have introduced."

Does the Prime Minister still stand by those words?

The Prime Minister: Yes, of course. I made that clear when I was asked a similar question in the House but a short time ago.

Mr. Kinnock: Is the Prime Minister saying — it is important that she make a formal announcement about this — that there is no possibility in this Parliament of direct or indirect charges for visits to the doctor, for hospital visits, for family planning services or anything else? If she is — and it is what she said in the election — will she be good enough to make a formal announcement, instead of letting it seep out through Bernard Ingham?

The Prime Minister: I have been asked this question in this House about board and lodging charges, and I have answered it in this House. The statements made during the general election stand. I have said so before, and I say so again. They stand for the lifetime of this Parliament. By the time the next Parliament comes we shall have completed the internal review. We shall then make our promises, which will stand for the following Parliament.

Decentralisation

Q2. **Mr. Fallon:** To ask the Prime Minister what steps she is taking to decentralise the work of government.

The Prime Minister: Over 5,500 Civil Service posts have already been transferred from London since 1979 under the Government's dispersal programme, and a similar number of posts have been dispersed on the initiative of individual Departments.

Mr. Fallon: Is my right hon. Friend aware that many private companies previously based in London and the south-east have now discovered the advantages of lower-cost enterprise and the higher quality of life that the north can offer? Bearing in mind the very high cost of London weighting allowance and commuter subsidies, would it not make more sense, where it is cost-effective to do so, to transfer more administrative and clerical work from Whitehall to the provinces?

The Prime Minister: I have indicated some of the posts that have gone and some that separate Departments are also considering. There are nearly 34,000 civil servants working in the northern region. I agree with my hon. Friend about the importance of locating Civil Service jobs outside London and the south-east where possible, because the costs are very high there. This is resulting in separate Departments looking at their plans. By the end of this year, the DHSS will have created a further 500 jobs at its Newcastle central office.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: The hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) undertook some time ago to persuade the Prime Minister to move a substantial number of defence jobs from the south to the north. Why has he been so unsuccessful?

The Prime Minister: I have said that there are nearly 34,000 civil servants working in the northern region, and in fact four out of five civil servants work outside Greater London. There are already a very considerable number of jobs in the northern region, and, as I have said, there will be more DHSS jobs by the end of this year.

Mr. Wilkinson: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is thoroughly refreshing to have a closed question of this kind at this time?

The Prime Minister: That is a matter for the House. I try to answer the questions that are put down.

Engagements

Q3. **Mr. Buchan:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Buchan: I have been listening with growing astonishment to the right hon. Lady's claims about decentralisation, since only yesterday she intervened to take direct control over education in Paisley. Are not the regulations she announced yesterday monstrous, arbitrary and possibly illegal? Does she realise that her intervention in favour of one school out of six is an attempt to condemn the other five good schools to closure? Will she not follow the advice given by every commentator and every newspaper in Scotland, led by the *Glasgow Herald*, which used the headline:

"Government sledgehammer"?

That is the right hon. Lady; it is a good phrase. The *Herald* said:

"Yesterday was a dismal day for what still remains of local democracy."

Will the right hon. Lady now recognise the evil and stupidity of her action and withdraw it?

The Prime Minister: Extensive representations were made to keep in existence a very good school, very popular with parents. What the hon. Gentleman cannot stand is that that school gives great opportunity. Parents wanted it to be kept in existence. It is a very popular decision, which will bring opportunity to many pupils. The hon. Gentleman speaks about legislation. One can lay down regulations only under existing legislation.

Q4. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Smith: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the strike proposed for next week by certain nursing unions can only hurt patients? Will she therefore condemn the action and invite the Leader of the Opposition to do the same?

The Prime Minister: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I agree with my hon. Friend. Strike action in the Health Service harms the patient and puts heavier burdens on those with higher professional standards who refuse to strike. I condemn such action. I had hoped that it might be condemned by all parts of the House. At any rate, it is condemned by those who care about the Health Service.

Q5. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mrs. Mahon: How does the Prime Minister justify her previous remarks? Why cannot she defend the nurses who are taking action in defence of the National Health Service as vigorously as she defended the workers in Solidarity against the dictatorial rule of General Jaruzelski?

The Prime Minister: Harming patients is taking action against the National Health Service.

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: Does my right hon. Friend share my deep disquiet at the disclosure in the House of individual medical histories? Does the unethical practice adopted by right hon. and hon. Opposition Members achieve anything, save adding to the distress of the parents concerned?

The Prime Minister: I am not aware of a particular case. I would have thought that the general proposition put by my hon. Friend is correct.

Mr. Steel: Will the Prime Minister recognise that, following——

Mr. Dobson: It is Vatman.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members must not interrupt in that way.

Mr. Steel: Following her unsuccessful attempt to divide the nurses' unions, will the Prime Minister recognise that the one thing that she could do to restore morale in the National Health Service would be to state unequivocally that the nurses' pay award will be funded in full, without cuts in the budgets of health authorities?

The Prime Minister: We had that identical question either last Question Time or the time before. Identical questions get identical answers. As Government we shall deal with the proposals from the review body in the way in which we have dealt with them before. When we know what the proposals are we shall decide precisely how they are to be funded.

Mr. John Browne: Does my right hon. Friend accept that our nation led the world in the exploration of land, sea and air, bringing great commercial, political and cultural advantage to our country? Does she believe that our national interest is greatly served by leading in the exploration of the new domain of space? If so, will she please give due weight to Lord Shackleton's report and give a clear indication to the House of precisely what is our national space strategy?

The Prime Minister: Money spent on research in space has be weighed against the other competing demands for research money. That is what we are doing. We are keeping, of course, the full subscription to the mandatory programme of the European Space Agency. Some of the other programmes are optional. I understand that ESA itself is reviewing some of its programmes.

Q6. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Pike: Will the Prime Minister try to find time today to discuss with the Government Chief Whip and her ministerial colleagues, the hon. Members for Pendle (Mr. Lee) and for Rossendale and Darwen (Mr. Trippier) the outcome of a meeting that they attended with me earlier this month with Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale district health authority, when that authority listed a contingency plan for cuts within the Health Service which it said would affect patient care and levels of service within the area if nurses' pay is underfunded next year? Does she recognise that Sir John Page, of the regional health authority, said this week that the health authority, which has now withdrawn that ploy, must submit another? Does she accept that the cuts are already at an unacceptable level? Will she make additional funds available now?

The Prime Minister: I took the precaution of inquiring about the position of Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale health authority. According to our records, the number of in-patients is up by 7·5 per cent.——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Oh, come on.

The Prime Minister: I am coming on. Day cases have gone up by 80 per cent., capital building completed has cost £6 million—the phase 3 development of Burnley general hospital. A pharmacy is under construction at a cost of £1·9 million. In the pipeline, it is planned to spend £5·9 million on Pendle community hospital. Waiting lists are down by 30 per cent. since 1983. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would like to say thank you.

Q7. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. King: Is my right hon. Friend aware that February's edition of the authorative motoring magazine *Car* has tested 12 cars on a price-quality audit? No. 10 was a Mercedes-Benz, No. 9 was a Citroen, No. 8 was a Toyota, No. 3 was an Audi, No. 2 was a British-built Ford

Fiesta, and the Birmingham-built Metro was at the top of the list? Is that not further evidence that the car manufacturers in the midlands have Vorsprung the world?

The Prime Minister: Yes. That points to the success of Birmingham and the west midlands as one of the premier car-producing areas in Europe. I congratulate them and wish them well. The west midlands is doing extremely well and the economic forecast is good.

Official Secrets Act

3.32 pm

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook) *(by private notice)*: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on Government policy on changes to the Official Secrets Act.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hurd): I gave the House an account of the Government's intentions in this respect, and of the issues which we are considering, in the debate on the Bill introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) on 15 January. In my interview for the BBC "Analysis" programme to be broadcast tonight—during which I discuss in general terms the balance to be struck between the obligations of civil servants and the public's right to know—I set out again some of the ground which we are covering in our review of these matters. In particular, I gave examples of different types of information which might or might not require the protection of the criminal law. The analysis I offer is in accordance with the Franks report and has been common ground since 1972.

As the House knows, we hope to publish our proposals in a White Paper in June, and the House will have an opportunity to debate those proposals before the summer recess. My interview tonight—a full transcript of which I propose to place in the Library of the House—gives no details of our proposals.

Mr. Hattersley: Does the Home Secretary recall that during the dabate on official secrets 13 days ago he claimed that the Government had not yet decided on a new policy? He then went on to dismiss and deride as silly the idea that he or the Government should describe their interim conclusions. Why has he now agreed to say in a broadcast what he refused to say in the House? Does he not realise that by announcing on the BBC, rather than in the House, that the Government do not support the parliamentary oversight of the security services he is guilty of arrogance, which amounts to contempt or to bone-headed stupidity? Will the right hon. Gentleman begin by telling us which it was?

Does the Secretary of State also understand that the central theme of his broadcast — the division of Government information into different categories of sensitivity—is so near to the principle of the Shepherd Bill, the Protection of Official Information Bill, that, had he made his position clear a week last Friday rather than last night, the passage of the Bill through the House would have been absolutely irresistible? We assume that that is why he chose to say it on the radio rather than in the proper place, which is the House.

How many of the ideas that the Home Secretary advanced in his broadcast were canvassed in those parts of his Commons speech which he first circulated to the press and then cut out or had cut out of his speech before it was delivered?

Finally, why does the Home Secretary demean himself in all these ways to pander to the Prime Minister's obsession that the security services are her personal and private property?

Mr. Hurd: In the interview tonight I simply repeat the arguments that I used in the House when we debated the supervision of the security forces a year ago when the right hon. Gentleman had different responsibilities — *[Interruption.]* On Friday 15 January we were discussing the Official Secrets Act. The right hon. Gentleman is talking about the supervision of the security services. If he looks up what I said in the debate when we discussed that particular matter, he will see that the two are the same.

In our debate on 15 January I sketched out the areas that the Government, and then the House, would need to define for protection from the criminal law. That is exactly what I shall do again in the broadcast tonight. I am not defining Government proposals in any detail. If the right hon. Gentleman and the House were able to establish that I was doing that, I would indeed be guilty of discourtesy to the House. When he, or any hon. Member who is interested, looks at the full transcript of the interview, he will see that I did not do that.

Mr. Richard Shepherd (Aldridge-Brownhills): How will my right hon. Friend canvass the views of the House in respect of ministerial certificate and public interest defence?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend has written to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister putting forward one suggestion. I am anxious, in the interval that exists now, before we publish the White Paper, when we are completing our own review and thereafter when the House will debate the White Paper, to obtain the views of as many right hon. and hon. Members as possible. I do not think that they will be particularly slow in putting them forward.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): The Home Secretary says that he is anxious to discover the views of a wide variety of people on the various issues with which I understand he did not deal in the broadcast, about methods of classification, going to the courts and so on. Why not formalise that before the White Paper so that people can perhaps appear before a Select Committee on very difficult issues? That would save time and enable the Government to act with all-party support.

Mr. Hurd: The right hon. Gentleman put forward that suggestion in our debate. My feeling, which has been reinforced since then, is that the sensible and logical way to proceed is for the Government to set out their proposals in the White Paper and then for the House to debate it. But in the background to that there will be a continuous exchange of views and ideas, such as the right hon. Gentleman favours. Anyone who looks at the transcript of the "Analysis" broadcast will see the stress that I constantly put on the responsibility of the House in deciding these matters.

Mr. Cranley Onslow (Woking): Does my right hon. Friend expect that the Committee stage of any legislation which might result from the White Paper and the subsequent debate will be taken on the Floor of the House?

Mr. Hurd: We have not got as far as that, but I take account of the implication of my right hon. Friend's question.

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): Are the presss reports correct that the Home Secretary proposes to divide official information into roughly three categories? If so, is that not exactly the same as the principle of the Shepherd Bill which he was so determined to defeat?

Mr. Hurd: In the interview tonight I draw on the basic analysis which stems from the Franks report. I do not put forward detailed proposals; I set out an analysis which has been common ground for a long time. It was not on those grounds that we disagreed with the Bill of my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd).

Mr. John Wheeler (Westminster, North): Will my right hon. Friend comment on the accuracy of the statements made in the BBC news release yesterday, which has been widely reported in one leading national newspaper of record?

Mr. Hurd: It may be that which has led the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) astray. I was somewhat surprised to read, when I was told of this yesterday, that, according to the BBC handout, I was tonight going to talk for the first time in detail about the forthcoming White Paper. Any listener who tunes in tonight in that expectation may well ask for his licence fee back.

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): Will my right hon. Friend go further than that and completely ignore the vapourings of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley)? Will he roundly condemn the double-handed attitude of the BBC in so disgracefully releasing a false prospectus about his performance tonight?

Mr. Hurd: I have commented on the BBC. The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook has to bestir himself; we understand that. The immediate threat may have passed but he has to keep agile and on his pins. I do not blame him for that. I just think that it would be sensible if he were to establish all the facts and looked at the transcript before preparing his adjectives on the matter.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Is there not a strange inconsistency in the Government's position in that they can ban a programme, "My Country, Right or Wrong", which contains contributions from a number of hon. Members, including myself — *[Interruption.]* Yes, our contributions were banned — while, on the other hand, the Home Secretary can take part in this programme, and all this information, which is probably very little different from the areas that I was discussing, can be included and transmitted?

Furthermore, can we have an assurance that when the Minister finally publishes his proposals for reform of the law it will enable us to find out whether it is true that Britain's security services worked with the American security services to undermine the position of Gough Whitlam in Australia?

Mr. Hurd: I have no intention of answering the second point.

On the first point, I do not want to humiliate the hon. Member, but I do not think that it was because of his contribution that action was taken against the programme that he mentioned.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his spirited public interest defence of the leaks in tonight's programme, but will he not understand that there is at least an appearance of illogicality between the position that he took up at the Dispatch Box in the debate of 15 January, which resembled that of a Trappist monk unable to say a single word about the Government's plans on official secrets law reform, and the apparent revelations in tonight's broadcast? If my right hon. Friend goes on like this, he may be up on a charge under section 2.

Mr. Hurd: No. My hon. Friend has laboured that a little, as he did on the wireless this morning. I will simply ask him, when he has the time, to look at the transcript in the Library and to compare it with my speech at columns 585-86 of *Hansard* on 15 January. He will see similar thoughts there, a description of the area that must be defined and the terrain which must be covered.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must have regard to the fact that we have business questions, a statement, a ballot for notices of motions and other business before the Merchant Shipping Bill.

Business of the House

3.42 pm

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): May I ask the Leader of the House to state the business for next week?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): Yes, Sir. The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 1 FEBRUARY — Timetable motion on the Education Reform Bill.

Second Reading of the Farm Land and Rural Development Bill *[Lords]*.

Remaining stages of the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency Bill.

TUESDAY 2 FEBRUARY — Remaining stages of the Public Utility Transfers and Water Charges Bill.

Motion on the Industrial Training Levy (Engineering Board) Order.

WEDNESDAY 3 FEBRUARY — Remaining stages of the Licensing Bill.

Remaining stages of the Welsh Development Agency Bill.

Motion on the International Development Association (Eighth Replenishment) Order.

THURSDAY 4 FEBRUARY—Debate on the White Paper on "Human Fertilisation and Embryology: a Framework for Legislation" (Cm. 259) on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

FRIDAY 5 FEBRUARY—Private Members' Bills.

MONDAY 8 FEBRUARY—Progress on remaining stages of the Employment Bill.

Mr. Kinnock: The Education Reform Bill has been in Committee for only 80 hours, during which time members of the Committee have dealt with 40 clauses and two schedules of the Bill's 146 clauses and 11 schedules. There has clearly been no filibuster. The Government are now guillotining the debate on the Bill, so I want to tell the right hon. Gentleman that there has never been a less justifiable act of gagging of any education legislation that has come before the House. We shall oppose it completely.

Following the Government's decision to cover up the Stalker/Sampson report, when will there be a debate in Government time to provide the Attorney-General and the Secretary of State with the opportunity to try to justify their decision not to take proceedings on the basis of evidence that the course of justice was being perverted?

In view of the public anxiety about the crisis of underfunding in the Health Service, will the Leader of the House inform us of when we will have an opportunity to debate the public expenditure White Paper?

As the Minister of State, Home Office appeared, in the debate last night, to contradict an earlier undertaking, may we have an assurance from the right hon. Gentleman that, in addition to the debates on Report and Third Reading of the Immigration Bill, we will, in the near future, also have a general debate on the immigration rules?

Can the Leader of the House confirm that the Government are conducting an internal review of child benefit? Will he arrange for an immediate statement on the nature of any review and its terms of reference, and on whether the Government are considering the taxation of child benefit?

As this oil-producing and exporting country now has the worst balance of payments and balance of trade deficit since the oil crisis year of 1974, will the Leader of the House provide time in the near future for a debate on the economic and trading position of Britain, given that our loss of domestic and international markets continues unabated?

Finally, will the right hon. Gentleman tell us when, at last, we shall have a debate on televising the proceedings in this place?

Mr. Wakeham: The right hon. Gentleman asked me seven questions, and I shall do my best to answer them.

First, the right hon. Gentleman raised the issue of the Education Reform Bill timetable motion. I recognise that there is a certain ritual about these things, but perhaps the right hon. Gentleman could look back at his own words on 20 July 1976, on a similar occasion. The position is that, up to lunch time today, the Committee has sat for about 84·5 hours and considered about 40 clauses of a Bill containing 147 clauses and 11 schedules. As I said, I shall table the timetable motion later today and it will be seen, from the generous amount of time allocated for the remainder of the Bill, that it is the Government's intention not to curb debate but to ensure that all parts of the Bill are fully discussed.

The right hon. Gentleman asked about the position in Northern Ireland and the Attorney-General's statement last week. I have nothing to add, except to say that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland will make a statement to the House on the matter. I think that we should have that first and then see how best to proceed.

The right hon. Gentleman asked about the public expenditure White Paper. I believe that the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee will wish to report on it, and it will be for the convenience of the House for the debate to take place when its report is available.

With regard to the immigration rules, I confirm what I said during business questions last week. There will be a debate on the rules separate from the other debates, before they come into effect, so that we can hear the views of the House.

I have nothing to say about child benefit and taxation. It is getting towards the season of the year when these matters are not discussed by me or by anyone else in the Chamber, but I shall refer the right hon. Gentleman's point to the Secretary of State.

I cannot promise an early debate on the economic situation, but the right hon. Gentleman will realise that trade figures are not the only economic indicator at which we should look. I draw his attention to the falling levels of unemployment and inflation and to the record growth that the country is experiencing——

Mr. Kinnock: Falling savings, falling investment levels, falling production levels.

Mr. Wakeham: The right hon. Gentleman will be able to make his own points in his own way. I am trying to answer his seven questions, and I shall continue to do that.

Lastly, the right hon. Gentleman asked about the television debate. I told him last week that it would be held on Tuesday of the week after next, and that is still my intention.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): When my right hon. Friend introduces the timetable motion, will he consider whether he can follow the guidance of the Procedure Committee

[Sir Peter Emery]

and try to ensure that every clause of the Education Reform Bill is debated before it leaves Committee? If he could do that he would go a long way towards meeting some of the requirements that the Procedure Committee has asked of this House.

Mr. Wakeham: I take on board what my hon. Friend has said. I pay tribute to his work and that of the Procedure Committee. I intend to see that every clause of the Bill is debated in Standing Committee.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Will the Leader of the House make a statement to the House next Thursday on the instructions given by the House to the Committee of Selection for setting up the Scottish Select Committee?

Will there be a debate in the House on the prayer tabled by my right hon. and hon. Friends about school closures in Scotland, on which there is to be a statement after business questions?

The Leader of the House said that there was always some ritual about guillotine motions. Will he accept that this case is different because I am informed that it is not Opposition Members who have been using delaying tactics, but rather that a great deal of time has been clocked up by Conservative Members in an effort to allow a guillotine motion to be imposed rather than make progress and discuss the substantive issues?

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman asked me, first, about the Scottish Select Committee. Discussions are being carried out through the usual channels, and I hope that we can make progress when they are concluded. The debate for which he asked is a matter best discussed through the usual channels.

I have not accused anyone of filibustering during the proceedings in Committee on the Education Reform Bill. I intend to see that the whole Bill is properly debated, and that is why there will be a generous amount of time for the remaining part of the Committee stage.

Mr. Cranley Onslow (Woking): When does my right hon. Friend expect to bring in a motion for the re-establishment of the Select Committee on Procedure so that that Committee can consider the difficult question of hon. Members who seek to get themselves suspended?

Mr. Wakeham: Discussions are taking place through the usual channels to discover when it would be convenient to set up the Select Committee on Procedure. There are a number of outstanding issues from the previous Procedure Committee. I am looking for an opportunity for a debate on procedure in the relatively near future.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): Will the Leader of the House ask his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport to make a statement in the House next week on the proposed sale of Crosville Motor Services, in view of the wide concern expressed by those employed in the company?

Mr. Wakeham: I shall certainly refer the matter to my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Has my right hon. Friend seen this morning's trade figures, which show a further deterioration in Britain's trade with the EEC in comparison with an improvement elsewhere? As that deficit in manufacturing trade is now £11 billion—more than double the total deficit on current account—would it not be helpful for the Minister of Trade and Industry to make a statement about the implications of our chronic trade with the Common Market for the future of the Government's splendid economic policies?

Mr. Wakeham: As I said to the Leader of the Opposition, the trade figures are only one economic indicator. Although the figures may be disappointing, many other figures are showing excellent progress. I shall refer the matter to my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister of Trade and Industry.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Given the continued widespread concern on both sides of the House and in Scotland about the future of Britoil, is it not time that the Government allowed the House to debate the position pertaining to that organisation, rather than hon. Members having to seek information through questions or letters? Is it not time that the whole subject was aired in the House?

There will be a short debate on agriculture next week, but is it possible for the House to debate the importance of agriculture to our communities, particularly in light of the problems facing so many producers—particularly, at the moment, pig producers—as a result of the need for the devaluation of the green pound?

Mr. Wakeham: I take on board the hon. Lady's request for a debate on Britoil, but I cannot promise one in the near future. I agree with the hon. Lady that there is a case for a general debate on agriculture, and I hope to arrange one in the not too distant future.

Sir Trevor Skeet (Bedfordshire, North): Has my right hon. Friend had an opportunity to read the House of Lords Select Committee report on space policy? Has he noted that it recommends an expenditure up to £200 million on space matters? Will he arrange an early debate so that that may be discussed in this place?

Mr. Wakeham: I have not read that report as well as my hon. Friend has read it. I listened to what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said a few minutes ago about our position on space policy. I cannot add to what she said. I regret that I cannot see any chance of a debate on the subject in the immediate future, but I shall bear it in mind.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): Will the Leader of the House arrange for the Secretary of State for Education and Science to make a statement, before Monday's debate on the guillotine motion, on the future of ILEA and on whether he intends to introduce amendments to abolish it? Will the right hon. Gentleman also arrange for time for the Secretary of State for Education to make a statement on the bizarre position of Mr. William Stubbs, ILEA's education officer, who, having been bitterly opposed to the Bill, has just resigned to work for the Secretary of State in implementing its provisions — although they may seriously damage the future of education in the capital?

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot promise a statement in the House on ILEA, but I shall refer the matter to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. Of course, the issue will be extensively discussed in Standing Committee. My right hon. Friend offered Mr. Stubbs his appointment on merit. Mr. Stubbs served ILEA for 11 years, and said himself that it was time for a career move.

Sir Ian Lloyd (Havant): I listened carefully to my right hon. Friend's reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet), the Chairman of the Parliamentary and Scientific Committee, and to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's reply to the question about space. In that reply she suggested that space policy was to some extent a function of the problem of allocating resources across the whole spectrum of science. Does this not reinforce my plea for a debate on this major and central national question, and may we have that debate soon?

Mr. Wakeham: I should like to be more forthcoming to my hon. Friend, because I know that he considers this to be an important issue. It is difficult at this time of year to find a day for such a debate, but I promise him that I shall find one as soon as I can.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Will the Leader of the House confirm that his guillotine on the Education Reform Bill has nothing to do with the proceedings in Committee? Is it not really an attempt to gag debate when the Bill returns to the Floor of the House on Report?

The right hon. Gentleman said that he would provide a generous amount of time for that Bill. Can he tell us how much time he has provided for debate on the argument between the right hon. Members for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit), for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) and the Secretary of State about the future of ILEA? Will he confirm that that is a major issue and that there ought to be time to debate it? Or is it true, as rumour has it, that the Secretary of State is now running away from the confrontation?

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot comment on rumours. The timetable motion that I am proposing will be tabled later today, and the hon. Gentleman will see from it that the time allocated is generous.

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): Does my right hon. Friend accept that our participation in the space race is vital for the future of our nation, and that, if we are to compete with the Soviet Union, the United States and Japan, we must work effectively with our European partners in that race? Important financial decisions are being made in the European Space Agency on 10 February this year, only a few weeks from now. May I reinforce the pleas of my hon. Friends for an urgent debate on the subject, when our national space policy can be made clear?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise my hon. Friend's strength of feeling. However, I can add nothing more except that resources devoted to space must, of course, be considered along with those devoted to other research matters.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): Will the Leader of the House be good enough to consult his right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Social Services and for Education and Science to see whether we could have a statement from one of them on the great shortage of resources for special schools?

I shall be visiting Weston Park special school in my constituency tomorrow. The staff of that school will be deeply anxious to know whether action is to be taken to help the school, and other schools like it, which are suffering from shortages of physiotherapists and other resources that they badly need.

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise the hon. and learned Gentleman's concern. In my experience, resources are not the only question involved, but I shall refer the matter to my right hon. Friend.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): Is my right hon. Friend aware that Thursday's business, the debate on Warnock, was known to doctors in my constituency as early as Monday or Tuesday? Surely hon. Members and Parliament are entitled to know the business at least at the same time as outside bodies. As I understand that this is probably the result of a leak from the DHSS, will my right hon. Friend cause an inquiry to be made into the leak and thus ensure that the rights of Members of Parliament are safeguarded?

Mr. Wakeham: I deprecate any such leak. It is right that the House should be told first about business. However, the business of the House was not finally settled until the Cabinet meeting this morning, so any rumours that might have been about were just that—rumours.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Will the Leader of the House arrange for the Secretary of State for Social Services to come to the House next Wednesday when Health Service workers will be taking part in a day of action, which is a major indictment of the Government's handling of the National Health Service and shows how unsafe the NHS is in Tory hands? Will he arrange for an early debate on the National Health Service so that the cuts that are threatened in virtually every part of the country can be debated fully and the Government called to account?

Finally, as the right hon. Gentleman has now acquired Lord Whitelaw's mantle of the Prime Minister's candid friend, will he tell her that the vast majority of the British people will never forgive her if, instead of providing the necessary funds to rebuild and improve the National Health Service, she plots and conspires to divide those who dedicate their lives to patient care?

Mr. Wakeham: The Government are continually providing more resources for the National Health Service. The question is not the amount of money that is put in, but the output that we get from it, and that is where we are looking for improvements.

Sir Philip Goodhart (Beckenham): When my right hon. Friend draws up the motion for the debate on Tuesday week on televising the House, will he remember that some of us want to keep the cameras out of this debating Chamber, but would welcome them in Select Committees? Will he tell us whether we can have a separate vote on televising Select Committees?

Mr. Wakeham: That matter is not entirely for me, because the debate will take place on a Back-Bench motion. However, I shall consult to see whether I can get a motion that is as generally acceptable to the House as possible.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): Will the Leader of the House discuss with his colleague the Secretary of State for Social Services the request from Wakefield district health authority for an inquiry into the proposal to introduce the cook-chill food system into hospitals in my constituency? Will the right hon. Gentleman take it from me that tensions are running high and that there are problems? Will he ensure that there is a debate in the House on the introduction of the cook-chill meal system

[Mr. William O'Brien]

into those hospitals, where only a few years ago an outbreak of food poisoning resulted in 29 deaths? This matter is important, so will the Leader of the House take note of the problems of hospitals in my constituency?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise what the hon. Gentleman says, but I cannot promise a debate next week. The issue that he has raised seems more a matter for the local management to sort out. However, I shall certainly refer it to my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): Is my right hon. Friend aware of the gratitude of Conservative Members, and parents throughout the country, for the fact that he has put down a timetable motion on the Education Reform Bill to stop the aimless meanderings of the Labour party in Committee upstairs? Is he further aware that hon. Members representing London constituencies wish to discuss the future of education for children in inner London?

In passing, will the Government tell Mr. William Stubbs, the recently resigned chief education officer of the Inner London education authority, that they do not consider him to blame for the shambles in the ILEA, but, rather, the Labour politicians on the other side of the river?

Mr. Wakeham: I regret that I have not heard much of the debate in the Standing Committee. I am not accusing anybody of filibustering but just hoping that during the rest of the Committee stage we can make sure that all parts of the Bill are discussed and that the important matters that my hon. Friend has raised are properly debated.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Will the Leader of the House tell us how long we will have for the debate on the private Member's motion on the televising of Parliament next Tuesday? Will there be a three-line Whip for the Government Benches? Will the motion be phrased in such a way that it will command the support of all hon. Members? I suggest to the Leader of the House that the best way of achieving that would be to have a dedicated television channel, paid for by Parliament, because that would get us round the problem of editing. Will we have the sort of motion that will allow us to amend it in that fashion, or will it come in such a way as to give us an opportunity to vote?

Mr. Wakeham: I can answer one part of the hon. Gentleman's question. It will be a full day's debate. The question of Whipping is not discussed from this Dispatch Box. The form of the motion and whether it is amendable is not entirely a matter for me, but I take on board what the hon. Gentleman has said.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): Will my right hon. Friend have urgent talks with the Home Secretary about another money resolution for the Firearms (Amendment) Bill? Is he aware that we are unable to table any amendments on compensation unless the money resolution is altered? There will be great difficulty in starting the Committee stage unless we have some assurance on that point.

Mr. Wakeham: I promise my hon. Friend that I shall look into that matter.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): May we have a statement next week from the Treasury on the way in which it is squeezing the Department of Transport over the Settle-Carlisle railway? The Department of Transport is trying to blame local authorities for not providing sufficient financial contributions for the line. That magnificent railway, which has been running well and showing a massive improvement in passenger revenue, and which is an important artery, is being set up for the chop by the vicious attitude of the Treasury, which is trying to put the blame on local authorities which themselves are hard pressed for money. The truth is that the Government are to blame for not providing enough resources to keep this magnificent and beautiful railway in existence.

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise the hon. Gentleman's interest in, concern for and knowledge of that railway. I do not believe that the position is capable of the analysis that he has put on it, but I shall refer the matter to my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): My right hon. Friend may recall receiving a copy of a letter that I addressed to the Secretary of State for Transport asking for a debate in Government time on the state of our civil aviation industry. The matter is important, but one item on the national agenda needs the House's urgent attention — the issue of night flights out of Gatwick and Heathrow. As the Secretary of State's consultative document is out for discussion and my right hon. Friend will make a decision on his proposals within the next few weeks, ideally we should like those proposals to be debated in the Chamber and to be voted upon. Although that may not be possible, surely the House should be given the chance of debating what the Secretary of State has in mind before he reaches a decision.

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot promise my hon. Friend an early debate, but I shall certainly refer the matter to my right hon. Friend. It has just occurred to me that my hon. Friend might try his luck in an Adjournment debate on the subject.

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): Given that the Leader of the House accepts that there has not been a filibuster on the Education Reform Bill, and given the widespread feeling in the House and elsewhere about the Bill's implications, what possible justification can the right hon. Gentleman have for seeking to apply the guillotine?

Mr. Wakeham: As I have already said, the main purpose of the guillotine is to ensure that there is an orderly debate on all parts of the Bill.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Will my right hon. Friend arrange for an early debate on efficiency in local government to enable me to raise the problems of hundreds of my constituents who this week received a summons from Ealing council to appear in court next month for non-payment of rates, even though they have paid their rates and received a receipt from Ealing council for that payment, including for the unwanted 65 per cent. element, in addition to which they are asked to pay £14·95 for the service of the rate summons? That has caused immense distress as well as anger to many people.

My constituents are also concerned about the sum of £15,000 that Ealing council is currently spending on a gay and lesbian rights officer to promote positive images of homosexuality. Will the debate be broad enough to enable

me to express my constituents' wish to see clause 28 of the Local Government Bill placed firmly on the statute book to stop all that?

Mr. Wakeham: I am sure that we will find an opportunity for my hon. Friend to make his points in various ways. However, I am afraid that I cannot promise him an early debate next week on those specific issues.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Has the Leader of the House seen early-day motion 521, which deals with the escalating costs of No. 10 Downing street, as opposed to the amount spent on the National Health Service?

[That this House condemns the Government's treatment of the National Health Service; draws attention to the fact that, if the increase in National Health Service expenditure since 1979 had been at the same rate as the increase in the cost of maintaining No. 10 Downing Street, the National Health Service would this year receive funds in excess of £28 billion, as compared to the £21 billion actual expenditure; and believes that this proves that the Government has looked after itself rather better than it has the National Health Service workers.]

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the cost of maintaining No. 10 Downing street has quadrupled since the Prime Minister went there in 1979, that if the same rate of expansion had been applied to the National Health Service it would this year have received £28 billion, and that if a comparison was made with the amount of money that has been spent on entertaining—a euphemism for boozing—at No. 10 Downing street the amount would have escalated even higher? Fancy paying that amount of money for gin and tonic while writing his *Private Eye* column.

Mr. Wakeham: One thing that I can say in answer to the hon. Gentleman is that any money spent at No. 10 Downing street is money well spent and that the country gets value for it. I am not so sure that that applies to all parts of the Health Service.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): A fortnight ago a complete unknown managed to secure a place on the front pages of our national newspapers and on our television screens by getting himself booted out of the House. This week he had a more notorious imitator. What does my hon. Friend plan to do about the accelerating tendency for third-rate operators on the Opposition Benches to try to curry favour with their local management committees by disrupting our proceedings? Will he bear in mind that in the Division earlier this week the Leader of the Opposition, who had the guts and decency to support Mr. Speaker, had his vote cancelled out by one of his Front-Bench spokesmen, the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts)? That is one of the difficulties with which the House is faced.

Mr. Wakeham: I am sure that both sides of the House deprecate bad order and behaviour. I do not believe that it is my task to give additional publicity to such antics, but I shall bear in mind what my hon. Friend said, because we want to keep them to a minimum.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): May I ask a question about the administration of government? Do the Cabinet Office, the Cabinet Secretary and the Prime Minister ever issue guidelines to Ministers, not so much on the content of parliamentary answers, as on the way in which they are answered?

Mr. Wakeham: I do not believe that that question arises out of business questions. However, if the hon. Gentleman cares to put down a substantive question I shall do my best to give him a considered answer.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): Who will propose the motion on the televising of the House? Will my right hon. Friend have a word with whoever it is about the televising of Select Committees, which was referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart)? Although it seems that, unfortunately, there may not be a majority in favour of televising the Chamber, there may be sufficient common ground to get an experiment going in Select Committees.

Mr. Wakeham: I take my hon. Friend's point and I am sure that the debate will be wide enough to cover Select Committees as well as the Chamber. The question of who will propose the motion will emerge in a way that I do not think I could properly explain.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): Does the Leader of the House recall that last week, in response to my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), he undertook to have a word with the Secretary of State for Social Services about the present crisis in social services departments, arising mainly from the problems of the NHS and calculations for the social fund? Is the Leader of the House aware that since then the all-party panel on personal social services, chaired by the hon. Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe), has asked for a meeting with the Secretary of State because it feels so strongly about the matter? Will the right hon. Gentleman tell the House whether he had any success, and whether we will have a debate on these very important matters?

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot promise a debate in the near future. If an all-party delegation is to see my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, it would be best to leave matters there at this stage.

School Closures (Scotland)

4.13 pm

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I will make a statement about school closures in Scotland.

Regulations were laid yesterday which had the effect that, where an education authority proposed to close, change the site of, or vary the catchment area of, any school where the number of pupils at the school is greater than 80 per cent. of its capacity, that proposal shall be referred to the Secretary of State for his consent.

The House will be interested to know that since 1885 the Secretary of State for Scotland has had the power to review all school closures. Until 1981 any proposal to close any school in Scotland had to come to the Secretary of State for his consent. At that time, the House approved a change in the regulations, which left two categories of school for which the consent of the Secretary of State was required if a closure proposal was made — denominational schools and rural schools where the alternative was more than a certain distance from the school to be closed.

We all recognise that a number of education authorities are currently faced with substantial overcapacity in their schools. Understandably, some authorities are contemplating proposals that will involve the closure of a considerable number of schools. This will allow them to use their resources more effectively.

However, that task must be carried out in a balanced and sensitive manner. It is a clear priority of the Government—I would hope of both sides of the House —that education should reflect the interests of children and the wishes of their parents. The Education (Scotland) Act 1981 already places a duty on the Secretary of State and education authorities to ensure that pupils are educated in accordance with parental wishes.

It is therefore reasonable to expect education authorities to take into account parent demand in considering proposals for school closures. Clearly, no one can be surprised when an authority proposes to close half-empty schools. But where a school is full, or nearly full, and by that fact demonstrates that it is good value for money to its community, I believe that it is only right that there should be scope for further review of a proposal to close such a school.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): In his statement, the Secretary of State referred to the need for a balanced and sensitive approach. Would he like to comment on the fact that Strathclyde education authority had no intimation of the regulations and that there was no consultation of any kind? The education authority had to gather what it could from press sources. When it finally sent a car to Edinburgh to obtain a copy this morning, it was told that it could have only a photocopy because the Department itself had only one copy.

As a matter of etiquette in the House, is it not deplorable that my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, North (Mr. Adams), whose constituency will be closely affected by the decision, has not even been done the courtesy of being sent a copy of the Prime Minister's letter to the headmaster of Paisley grammer school? Surely that would normally be the order of the day. Is this a balanced and sensitive way in which to deal with the matter?

This is an extraordinary initiative, with serious implications for the way in which we conduct our business —implications that go far beyond decisions on any one school. The matter has been presented in the press, and, I suspect, by the Scottish Office machine, as a dramatic personal intervention by the Prime Minister. More fairly, it can be seen as high-handed and arbitrary and designed simply to court popularity. Is a genuine review about to take place, or does the Prime Minister's letter to the headmaster of Paisley grammer school prejudge the issue? It is very important to know that. If it does prejudge the issue, what does the Prime Minister know about the schools in Paisley? What does she know of Merksworth, Stanely Green, St. Aeldred's, St. Mirin's and St. Margaret's? What does she know about their catchment areas and the likely knock-on effect of the apparently arbitrary decision that she has made about Paisley grammar school? Will she at least ensure that there is a ministerial visit before decisions are made about the future of those schools? I do not mean a ministerial visit to Paisley grammar school alone but to the other schools, too. If an education authority had made a decision on such an arbitrary basis, without any proper consultation, it would almost certainly be in the courts—and rightly so.

Is it not a very dangerous precedent that a school should be singled out at a distance of almost 500 miles on the basis of the number of letters received by Ministers? Why should the balance of responsibility, as carefully adjusted by the Government in 1981, now be altered without consultation or rational debate apparently on impulse and on the narrow calculation of political advantage?

This is not an argument about one school, and I note that the Secretary of State did not mention a particular school. The fate of Paisley grammar is a legitimate matter of concern for the community itself, but the decision should be made in the proper context. Even if we took the Government's view on the merits of the matter, we would remember the old and relevant adage that hard cases make bad law. It is outrageous that we should be legislating apparently on the whimsical basis that one particular school has caught the attention of the Prime Minister. How many schools are likely to be referred to the Secretary of State as an immediate result of the passage of the regulations, and are they all in Strathclyde?

What criteria will be applied by the Secretary of State? In the regulations he refers to the percentage capacity of the school, but there must be other wider-based considerations — social considerations, educational priorities and the interests of the communities involved.

Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman guarantee that there will be consultation with all interests before he makes his final decision, and that, at least, he will meet the criteria set down for consultation that is imposed on local authorities by the 1981 regulations?

What will the right hon. and learned Gentleman say to the parents of children whose schools may be threatened by the impact of his decisions, and which may face closure as a result of any reprieve on which he decides? Will they be consulted in the process?

The reference to the maximum number attending in any one of the previous 10 years appears to be linked to the calculation of capacity. It has been put to me by a number of senior people in the Education Department that it is possible that a school which in any one of the previous 10 years had met that criterion would be automatically referred to the Secretary of State under the regulations. I

do not think that is the position, but for the avoidance of doubt—it would bring many schools immediately within his authority—we must have an answer.

This is a sad way to conduct government. It will maximise confusion and bitterness when some schools survive and others do not; arbitrary dividing lines are always cruel. It is government by impulse and by whim, and I am sad to say that that is normally the mark of an authoritarian regime.

Is the Minister concerned—the Under-Secretary with responsibility for education may laugh—by what today's *The Scotsman* said:

"If, as Mr. Forsyth said, closing Paisley Grammar would be an act of vandalism, then the regulations devised to prevent it are a greater abuse of local democracy."

The *Glasgow Herald* described it as:

" A dismal day for what remains of local democracy . . . unacceptable arbitrary assumption of power . . . "

The *Evening Times* refers to,

"The *Alice in Wonderland* world of the Scottish Office."

It further spoke of

"The naked demonstration of the Prime Minister's hatred of local government."

I shall give the Minister one last quote from the debate on primary education in Scotland and ask him to comment. It says:

"If education authorities are properly to fulfil their accountability to the public, they must take whatever steps they consider necessary to rationalise the provision of school education. Therefore, schools closures, which occur in urban as well as rural areas, should be considered as part of a larger canvas and should not be seen as a discriminating or random measure.

We are committed to the principle of reducing direction from the centre".—[*Official Report*, 4 April 1985; Vol. 76, c. 1367.]

That was a quotation from the then Minister responsible for education, the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), who, I suspect, is here to support something that is discriminating and random in its scope. What he said on that occasion is as it should be, but as it no longer will be. The conscience of the right hon. and learned Gentleman should be in tatters. I suspect that he may have been told and not consulted.

Mr. Rifkind: I am astonished by the synthetic indignation of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar). He has tried to suggest to the House that this is an attack on local democracy, when the powers represented by the regulations tabled yesterday give the Secretary of State less power in respect of school closures than my predecessors had for 100 years, and, indeed, less than was held during the period of office of the Labour Government.

If that minor extension referred to in the regulations tabled yesterday is an attack on local democracy, we should remember the powers that the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) had to require his consent for the closure of any school in Scotland—powers that had existed since 1885. The hon. Member for Garscadden tried to identify the mark of a dictatorial Government. I suggest to him that the mark of a dictatorial Government is a preference for bureaucratic tidiness over the wishes of parents with regard to schools.

The hon. Gentleman asked why the Prime Minister did not send a letter to the hon. Member for Paisley, North (Mr. Adams). The hon. Member for Paisley, North made no representations on the matter, unlike the rector of Paisley grammar school and 2,550 members of the public.

The hon. Gentleman suggested that the regulations are concerned only with one school. He had the grace to admit subsequently that nothing in the regulations or the treatment identifies a specific school. Indeed, there are almost certain to be other schools that will come within this category.

Mr. Dewar: Is it a genuine review? Has the decision, in effect, been taken?

Mr. Rifkind: I shall come to that in a moment.

Neither I nor anyone else can tell the hon. Gentleman how many schools will be affected. It will be for education authorities to decide in the first instance whether they propose to close a school that is full as a result of the wishes of parents. I hope that it will be relatively rare that an education authority, against the wishes of parents, will even wish to contemplate closing a school that is entirely full. That is a fact that the hon. Gentleman should appreciate.

The hon. Gentleman asked whether any decision had been reached. No decision has been reached because there is a requirement that the education authority, as with other categories of school that fall within this category, must come to its own view. If it is a school of the kind referred to in the regulations, it is submitted to the Secretary of State, as it was for 100 years, including during every period of Labour government.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): Will my right hon. and learned Friend accept that, as one who has had the support of Secretaries of State to retain country schools, both denominational and non-denominational, in my constituency against the wishes of the education authority, I believe that it is right that he has taken back these important powers? Will he elicit from the Opposition whether they want Paisley grammar school kept open? I suspect that, from the manner in which they are talking, they do not.

Mr. Rifkind: I agree with my hon. Friend; there is some confusion as to exactly what the Opposition's position is on this matter. If there is no confusion, no doubt we shall soon discover the answer.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): It seems entirely crazy to consider listing a school such as Paisley grammar school for closure. I hold no brief for the way in which that decision was arrived at by Strathclyde education authority. The Secretary of State must surely accept that it is far better to leave these consultation processes to the local level to enable democratic decisions to be taken. It cannot be right for Government to come wading in with heavy tackety boots, as they did yesterday, to impose the change in regulations. He must accept that that high-handed behaviour raises all sorts of suspicion in people's minds. For example, if he does not know how many schools are to be caught by these regulations and are now listed for potential closure, how did he know to set the capacity level at 80 per cent? How did he know that it was necessary at all if he does not know the detailed figure, apart from one or two highly publicised cases? How does he know that these regulations are required for the vast majority of other schools that will be covered by them?

Mr. Rifkind: I am puzzled by the hon. Gentleman's question. He prayed against these regulations, I understand, but he now tells us that school closures should

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be left to the education authorities as the final arbiters. I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman takes the same view of the current controls that the Secretary of State has for proposals to close schools in rural areas.

Mr. Allen Adams (Paisley, North): As the local Member involved, I extend my thanks to the Scottish press for giving me the letter that the Prime Minister sent to the rector of Paisley grammar school. The Prime Minister did not extend me the same courtesy.

Is the Secretary of State aware of the debate that took place in the House in which, in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson), who was asking about decision-making in local authorities, the then Minister, the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), said:

"I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's anxiety, but I believe that the decision must be made by the local authority. It must take account of all the factors involved, and it is responsible to all the electorate of the area."—[*Official Report*, 4 April 1985; Vol. 76, c. 1365.]

Does the Minister still hold by that or has he changed his mind? Is it simply the case that any local authority that does not agree with his diktat or takes any kind of decision that he does not approve of on any subject at any time will either be abolished, as we have seen in England, or simply have its powers taken away?

Lastly, at any time, did Mr. Andrew Neill, a former pupil of Paisley grammar school and now the editor of *The Sunday Times*, make any representations to you——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question is to the Minister, not to me.

Mr. Rifkind: As the hon. Gentleman started his question by telling us that he has such good relations with the press, he might like to put that question to Mr. Neill himself, and no doubt he will find out.

With regard to the substantive part of the question, as the hon. Gentleman knows, until 1981, in the case of all schools, the consent of the Secretary of State was required before closure could be contemplated. Since 1981, two categories have still required the consent of the Secretary of State — certain denominational schools and certain rural schools. We have added one other narrow category. Therefore, the number of schools that have to come to the Secretary of State before closure is a tiny proportion of the number of schools that had to go to my predecessors in the last Labour Government.

Mr. Allan Stewart (Eastwood): May I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on an excellent decision and his speedy response to the representations that he received from my constituents and myself about that particular school, although, of course, his regulations raise a more general point.

Does he agree that the difference between now and 1985 is that in 1985 nobody thought that an education authority would try to close a very popular school as a deliberate political challenge to the parents' charter, which is precisely what has happened? Does he further agree that the longer these questions go on the clearer it becomes that the proposal to close Paisley grammar school is being made on non-educational grounds and basically for political reasons? Is it not the height of absurdity for the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) to demand ministerial visits to schools when at the last Scottish Question Time he denounced the visit of my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) to that school as a disgrace and an outrage?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is certainly entitled to make that final remark, which I think is entirely valid.

Without commenting on any individual school, I can understand and indeed totally support education authorities which, faced with half-empty schools, are coming to the difficult and painful decisions that are required, which will lead to the closure of a significant number of them. Obviously, if schools are half empty and if, despite the parents' charter, parents do not wish their children to attend those schools, closure may often be a sad inevitability. But it must be sensible, when dealing with schools that are packed to the roof and when parents have expressed an overwhelming desire that their children should attend those schools, that there should be an opportunity to review a decision or proposal put forward by a local authority before a conclusion is reached.

I cannot believe that privately, whatever they may say publicly, hon. Gentlemen can seriously believe in their heart of hearts that it is unacceptable and unreasonable — when the Secretary of State has power to review denominational schools and certain rural schools—that a school which is full and which parents are passionately anxious to have their children attend should be subject to review. That seems to me to be something that should not flow from the ideology or policy of the Labour party. If it does, this is indeed a sad day.

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): The Secretary of State really must pay a little attention to the truth from time to time. His description of Paisley grammar is totally wrong. He knows perfectly well why there is a high poll in that school. He knows perfectly well why they are fighting against moving to a new school in Merksworth. It is because they would be sharing with kids from working-class housing estates. The Secretary of State knows it very well.

Secondly, he might come to terms—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask that the hon. Gentleman be allowed to ask his question without gesticulations across the Chamber.

Mr. Buchan: Secondly, the right hon. and learned Gentleman might reflect upon the truth when he says he does not know the figures. Every one of us who has looked at the material — and since he has brought in these regulations he had better have looked at the material— knows the figures and knows that 80 per cent. was chosen in order to save Paisley grammar, and nothing else.

Thirdly, he might reflect that there is more than one school in Paisley. There are six non-denominational secondary schools in Paisley. His support for Paisley grammar and the Prime Minister's intervention are condemning the other five. That is the truth of the situation.

Finally, if the Secretary of State wants educational grounds, let him think what effect this disruptive policy has on the whole of comprehensive education in Paisley. The person who raised the question was the Minister himself, who rejected the concept of intervention only in 1985. This has been a squalid and arbitrary intervention by the Prime Minister and her little "Wooden-Top"

benchman on the Front Bench. Her interference has been increasing, is increasing and ought to be diminished throughout our social, political and educational affairs.

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman has yet to explain why a power that was available under all Governments for 100 years is unacceptable when it is reintroduced under the present Government.

Mr. Buchan: I will explain it.

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman says that he will explain it. The fact is that he has failed to explain it despite his intervention with my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and his current intervention. The fact is that the hon. Gentleman may have certain doctrinal objectives when it comes to education, but the Government believe that, when we are dealing with the schools that children attend, the wishes of their parents are a major consideration.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I distinctly heard the hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan), from a sedentry position, call my right hon. and learned Friend a liar. I suggest that he should withdraw that.

Mr. Speaker: I did not hear it, but did the hon. Gentleman say that?

Mr. Buchan: I may have said "a numerological inexactitude" when referring to the figures, I know not. The Secretary of State for Scotland was not——

Mr. Speaker: Did the hon. Gentleman use that word?

Mr. Buchan: I will apologise for saying what I believe to be the truth.

Mr. Speaker: Not only apologise, but withdraw it.

Mr. Buchan: I withdraw.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We have two Second Reading debates this afternoon. This issue, as I understand it, is subject to a statutory instrument, which will be debatable. I shall allow questions to go on for a further five minutes, and then we really must move on.

Mr. Bruce Millan (Glasgow, Govan): The Secretary of State has behaved in a despicable way. It was his Government who removed the need for school closures to be referred to the Secretary of State and they did so on the hypocritical pretence, as we said at the time, of giving powers back to local authorities. In reality it was to avoid being associated with unpopular and difficult decisions. Over the last few years Ministers have been urging education authorities to go ahead more quickly with school closures. Now we have the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister, who has probably never been in Paisley in her life, intervening in this arbitrary, authoritarian but also highly selective way, leaving all the unpopular decisions still to the local education authority. These regulations are, like the Secretary of State himself —unprincipled and dishonest.

Mr. Rifkind: As they are the regulations which the right hon. Gentleman was happy to administer when he was Secretary of State, what does that make him?

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): I am sure that my right hon. and learned Friend will recollect that at one time the then leader of the Labour party regarded a week as a long time in politics. Apparently now the time scale has narrowed to 24 hours. Does he not remember that yesterday the Opposition were complaining about the closure of Newbattle, despite the fact that it is practically unattended? It must not be closed because it is unionised. Now they are complaining about keeping open Paisley grammar school — which they probably would not complain about if it were called a comprehensive school — which is full. Does that not demonstrate their ideological hypocrisy and the fact that they are interested not in education but only in a minor ideology in which the people of this country, and certainly the parents of this country, have no interest?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. and learned Friend is correct. The Opposition find it acceptable that the Secretary of State should have power to require his consent for the closure of schools in all circumstances, but find it an assault on local democracy that he should have power only in limited cases.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Will the Secretary of State reflect a little upon what the Prime Minister said the other day at Question Time when she was asked to meet some nurses? She said that she had an excellent team of Ministers who would meet the nurses initially. In this instance, why has she usurped what has been the normal convention of the House? I hope that all hon. Members will have regard to the Prime Minister's method and approach of writing direct to the headmaster of a school, bypassing the Secretary of State's Office and having no consultation with the local authority. Will the Secretary of State reflect upon his position among this so-called excellent team of Ministers?

Mr. Rifkind: Not in the slightest. I and my colleagues at the Scottish Office decided to introduce these regulations. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister wrote to the rector of Paisley grammar school, because he had written to the Prime Minister. That seems to be a matter of elementary courtesy.

Mr. Forth: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that what is causing the irritation and synthetic anger on the Labour Benches is the fact that the Prime Minister and my right hon. and learned Friend have proved that they are closer to parents' wishes than the local authority in question? Does he further agree that this is a good example of how Conservative Members are prepared to listen to parents and take into account children's interests far more than the doctrinaire Socialists on the Opposition Benches who will sweep aside parents' wishes to fulfil their ideological requirements? Is that not relevant to the future role of our education policy?

Mr. Rifkind: Absolutely. We shall never apologise for, or be embarrassed by, giving the greatest attention to the expressed demands of parents, shown by the way in which they exercise their rights under the parents' charter.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): If we turn the Secretary's of State's words back on himself, has he not created a bureaucratic tidiness and a bureaucratic straitjacket which is a recipe for conflict and has little to do with education? What is his Office prepared to do if a school, meeting all the other criteria, has only 79·5 per cent. capacity? Will he close those schools? What consideration will he give to education?

Mr. Speaker: Order. Briefly.

Mrs. Ewing: Secondly, and very briefly, what reason can the Secretary of State offer to this House for not having consulted the local authorities before bringing in this decree?

Mr. Rifkind: The power under these regulations does not mean that the Secretary of State will always refuse his consent for the closure of a school. It gives the Secretary of State the right to review a proposal to close a school, just as he has such a right in respect of denominational schools and some rural schools. When I am asked, "Why 80 per cent?", I hope that Opposition Members will accept that there must be a difference when dealing with a school that is full, or virtually full, compared with a school that is half empty. Whatever figure had been given, no doubt the hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan) would have asked exactly the same question because, basically, he is against people's wishes being taken into account on these matters.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall bear in mind the three hon. Members who have not been called when the statutory instrument comes to be debated.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I cannot say any more than I have said. I hope that the hon. Gentleman's point of order does not concern this matter.

Mr. Clarke: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wish to seek your guidance on the statutory instrument. Four schools are scheduled for closure in my constituency. No Minister has visited any of them.

Mr. Speaker: Order. We are talking about one school today. I shall bear the hon. Gentleman's claims in mind when the statutory instrument comes to be debated.

BALLOT FOR NOTICES OF MOTIONS FOR MONDAY 15 FEBRUARY

Members successful in the ballot were:

Mr. Robert B. Jones.
Miss Ann Widdecombe.
Mr. Hugh Rossi.

WELSH AFFAIRS

Ordered,

That the matter of the National Health Service in Wales, being a matter relating exclusively to Wales, be referred to the Welsh Grand Committee for its consideration. — *[Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.]*

Orders of the Day

Merchant Shipping Bill [*Lords*]

Order for Second Reading read.

4.44 pm

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Paul Channon): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

This Bill, introduced in another place at the end of October, deals, as the House will know, with a wide range of subjects, all of them important to the shipping industry and to the country at large. I am sure that the keenest interest of the House will be in the impact of the Bill upon marine safety, and that is where I wish to begin my remarks.

The whole House remembers only too well the appalling disaster at Zeebrugge last year. The House will agree with me that the public has a right to travel in safety. Transport and travel play an increasingly pervasive part in modern life in both commerce and leisure. All those engaged in the transport industry owe it to others to work uncompromisingly for greater safety. But I recognise that it is for the Government to establish the framework.

The loss of the Herald of Free Enterprise provided lessons in abundance for ship operators, for seafarers and for Governments alike. The Sheen report, which we received a few months ago, has formed in large measure the agenda for the Government's programme of follow-up action. More recently, the coroner's inquest has provided further valuable insights, particularly into the rescue arrangements and emergency procedures on board ships. I was determined to press ahead and implement as quickly as possible the main and most urgent recommendations of the formal investigation.

The law rightly requires consultation, and that has either taken place or is going on. We have now issued consultative documents on eight major packages of proposals. The first, covering the installation of vehicle deck door indicator lights, closed-circuit television monitoring of the doors and vehicle decks and self-contained emergency lighting, has now passed into law. Indeed, the installation of door indicator lights and closed-circuit television is already a legal requirement.

Two proposals—the introduction of boarding cards for the control of passenger numbers and the mandatory closing of vehicle deck doors before any roll-on/roll-off ferry leaves its berth, or as soon as it is physically possible to do so—will be dealt with in orders which I shall lay in about two weeks' time.

Mr. Eric Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): Will the Secretary of State explain what he means by "physically possible to do so"? Surely it is important that the doors should be closed before the ferry leaves its berth. It could be out at sea before it is "physically possible" to close the doors.

Mr. Channon: The hon. Gentleman is quite right. Perhaps I did not phrase that as accurately as I could. It is mandatory to close the doors as a ship leaves a berth. There is a small number of berths from which it is not possible for some sorts of roll-on/roll-off ferries to leave with their doors in that position. This is a technical matter, and the regulations will make it much clearer. The hon.

Gentleman and the public can be reassured. He is right to draw attention to this, and, if he is still worried about it he can contact me about it when he has seen the order.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): The Secretary of State mentioned boarding cards. When can we expect that order to be in force, as distinct from being introduced into the House?

Mr. Channon: I hope that that will not take long. I shall ask my hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport to give the hon. Gentleman an exact answer, but we are pressing ahead with the issue of boarding cards for the control of passenger numbers and I hope to lay orders in a few weeks' time.

Other orders are close behind, covering such matters as the provision of draught gauges, loading computers and emergency escape windows; the provision by managements of comprehensive operating manuals and arrangements for their inspection by my Department; the designation of a person ashore responsible for operational safety; the weighing of heavy lorries before loading; the provision of special emergency equipment; regular checks on lightweight and centre of gravity; the reporting of potentially dangerous incidents; and the checking and recording of draughts and centre of gravity before sailing.

There are also measures that can be taken as a result of administrative action. One such decision that my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General and I have taken is, in future, to ensure that formal investigations into marine accidents are not only impartial, but seen to be so. The responsibility for appointing and instructing counsel assisting the court will rest not with the Secretary of State, but with the Attorney-General. More substantially, I have decided to make important changes in the duties of marine surveyors. They are to devote more of their time to work on passenger ships and carry out many more spot and incognito checks than before. The control of passenger ferry operations——

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South) *rose*——

Mr. Channon: Perhaps I may just finish this point. The control of passenger ferry operations by the Marine Survey Service will also be improved by some of the measures I have already mentioned, such as the requirement for comprehensive operating manuals. I have a lot to get through, but I will give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Bermingham: The Secretary of State will recall that, when he made his statement to the House in respect of the Zeebrugge ferry disaster and the Sheen report that followed, I asked about marine surveyors and the numbers employed. He was kind enough to write to me on that matter. Will he now confirm that, bearing in mind the administrative steps that he proposes to take, he will ensure that there is an adequate number of marine surveyors so that adequate and comprehensive surveys can be carried out both officially and incognito? That is the only way in which we shall maintain safety standards.

Mr. Channon: Of course, there will have to be an adequate number of marine surveyors. The fact that I intend to have a marine investigation branch means that more resources will be devoted to this matter.

A moment ago my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) raised the important matter of boarding cards. It is my intention that the order to make boarding cards mandatory should come into force on 29 February. I am sure that my hon. Friend recognises that that date is before the summer season.

I come now to the international implications of the programme. I made it clear in July that certain crucial measures would need to be applied to all passenger ferries sailing from United Kingdom ports, regardless of flag. As our programme has developed, we have concluded that the majority of our measures ought to be applied in this way. But I do not wish to leave it at that.

Marine safety worldwide is dealt with by the International Maritime Organisation. Members will be aware that that organisation is extremely successful. It has had a series of safety conventions and, over the past few years, it has provided a great many benefits to seafarers and travellers all over the world. In November, I personally took an initiative at the IMO's assembly with the aim of obtaining early worldwide agreement—under the IMO's accelerated procedures — to many of the measures we have proposed, without, of course, prejudicing our right to require foreign vessels to conform, when in our ports, to requirements under our own laws pending international agreement. We obtained the assembly's endorsement of a resolution that we proposed and I am hopeful of real progress in the not too distant future. So we are pressing ahead domestically and internationally.

We have also convened a meeting of shipping administrations of the European countries — the main ferry operators exist in this part of the world — to consider the possibility of their taking action through their own laws. My main aim is to get the safety measures that we are imposing on United Kingdom ships and in United Kingdom ports extended to cover foreign ships in foreign ports as such ships, if bound for the United Kingdom, frequently contain large numbers of British passengers. But my further aim is to get international co-operation in enforcement. We have proposed, and received support for, the negotiation of a European ferry code as a vehicle for such an agreement. There is a lot going on.

Next, let us consider research. Last July I announced that I would be contributing a further £1 million to research on the safety of ro-ro ferries. A representative steering committee was announced in October and contracts are now being let. One of the first contracts, for completion before Easter, is to assess proposals for new ship stability standards now before the IMO for early adoption. Other contracts will cover the development of lifejackets that are easier to put on, and escape from a partially capsized vessel. But perhaps of greatest interest will be a programme that looks specifically at the basic design of ro-ro ferries. The Government are satisfied that ro-ro ferries are not inherently unsafe as some have alleged: a ro-ro ferry that is properly closed to the sea and intact is as unlikely to capsize as any other vessel. But improvements in the basic design to give a greater margin of safety may well be possible, and it is the Government's intention to complete the first phase of this work by the end of the year.

Mr. Cormack: Will improvements take into account that such vessels, if they sink, sink extremely quickly?

Mr. Channon: That is an important point. However, if they are properly closed to the sea they are completely safe. It is extremely important to bear in mind that if there is

[Mr. Channon]

a disaster of this kind—fortunately, exceedingly rare—such ferries sink quickly. My hon. Friend's concern is much in our minds.

Mr. Heffer *rose*——

Mr. Channon: I will give way, but this must be for the last time.

Mr. Heffer: The Secretary of State will agree that this is the most important matter to consider because, as the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) has said, if such ferries are holed and their design is as it is, they sink within minutes——

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): Seconds.

Mr. Heffer: Yes indeed. That is why this matter is so important. The right hon. Gentleman said that the first phase of the work would be completed by the end of the year. What does that mean? Is that the first stage? How quickly will he move on from that first stage? That is the most important question to consider.

Mr. Channon: The first stage of the research will be completed by the end of the year, but we are doing other things as well. We are checking the stability factors of those ships and how they measure up to the most modern standards that we have in force at present. Therefore, a great deal of work is being undertaken regarding the stability of ro-ro ferries as well as a great deal of research on their basic design. However, the evidence around the world suggests that if a ro-ro ferry is properly closed to the sea and intact, it is safe. The House will be aware that, in many parts of the world, ro-ro ferries have been sailing for years and years. The important point is that those ferries must be properly closed to the sea.

Mr. Heffer *rose*——

Mr. Channon: I must press on because other areas relating to safety are also dealt with in the Bill.

The responsibilities of ship owners, managers, masters and crews are terribly important to ensure that a ship is maintained and operated safely. Clause 30 creates a completely new duty on ship owners to ensure the safe operation of their ships..

Clause 31 tightens up on the duties of masters and crew, requiring them to exercise due diligence in the carrying out of their duties and explicitly stating that a master's duties include responsibility for the good management and safe running of his ship. It also includes new defences that are not in existing legislation.

Clause 29 deals with a ship that is unfit to go to sea whether because of its physical condition, overloading or any other reason, and affects the owner and master equally. Amendments have been made or will be brought forward to extend clauses 29 and 30 so that they equally cover ship managers and charterers.

Clause 32, to which I briefly referred a moment ago, also arises from the Herald disaster and provides for the establishment of a new statutory marine accident investigation branch. The new branch will be separate from my Department's marine directorate and will report directly to me. It will therefore be free to take an entirely independent view should an accident raise questions about the regulatory policy of the Department. We also intend that all the branch's reports on the more important or significant accidents should be published.

The House will have many opportunities in the coming months to debate this programme. After tonight, there will be the Committee stage; and a number of the orders that we plan will be subject to affirmative procedure debate.

We all know that there is one group of people to whom this programme is of deep personal significance: the survivors of the accident and the relatives of the victims. They, above all, will wish to know that everything possible is being done to avoid a repetition of the Zeebrugge tragedy. I made arrangements to meet the Herald Families Association next week to discuss its concerns and suggestions as I wish to hear what it has to say to me.

I should refer briefly at this point to the proposal that has been made by the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) to refer the Bill to a Special Standing Committee. Of course, I have considered that suggestion extremely carefully, but I believe that the problems have already been fully exposed. There has been the Sheen formal investigation and the coroner's inquest, and I doubt that much could be done to add to our knowledge by a further round of hearings. This is not the time to go back to square one. I believe that our priority now must be a more specific, but no less demanding or responsible, task.

Our duty, which only Parliament can carry out, is painstakingly to consider specific proposals, make clear judgments, and decide what changes should be made to the law. I am sure that the Standing Committee will want to consider the safety proposals carefully. I can assure the House that the Government are willing to listen to constructive arguments on these important matters and to be responsive to them, from whatever quarter they come. But I have no doubt that the right course now is to get down to the task in Committee without further delay. For those reasons, I cannot support the proposal that we should have a Special Standing Committee as well.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): I apologise for not hearing the beginning of the Secretary of State's speech. I am sure that the whole House welcomed his statement that in the near future he will be meeting families connected with the disaster. What contact did he have with the families before drafting the Bill? He said that in a sense the Bill is a result of that terrible tragedy. The two points that the families put to hon. Members at a meeting the other night were that they were unhappy about the penalties for companies when such a disaster occurred and were concerned about the safety of the ferries still in service. If there is the prior consultation to which the right hon. Gentleman referred, will he give an assurance that if those two points have not already been taken on board he will welcome amendments on them in Committee?

Mr. Channon: I do not think that there was formal consultation with the families before the drafting of the Bill, but I think that the points that the hon. Gentleman raises are covered by the Bill or by other measures. For example, he will see that clause 30 deals with his point about owners. It says that if an owner fails to discharge the duty imposed on him—the duty that makes him liable for unsafe operation of a ship—

"he shall be guilty of an offence and liable—

(a) on summary conviction, to a fine not exceeding £50,000;

(b) on conviction on indictment, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years or a fine, or both."

We may be able to discuss whether that is exactly right, but those are not negligible penalties; they are certainly a great deal more than has been suggested in the past.

As for safety, there is, as I have said, the research programme going on into the inherent qualities of ro-ro ferries. Following the Sheen investigation, the question of the stability of the existing ferries is being looked at. I dealt with that matter in answer to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer). If the Herald Families Association has further detailed ponts on it I shall wish to consider them when I see the association next week.

I do not want to take too long, because other hon. Members wish to speak, but there are a number of other important matters that I should like to deal with briefly: measures of assistance with the shipping industry; the registration of merchant ships; and the establishment of a new fishing vessel register.

All of us recognise the strategic importance of the Merchant Navy. The experience of other developed countries has been very similar to our own, and a complex reality lies behind the crude tonnage figures. Fundamental changes in our trading patterns have taken place. Much of our oil now comes from the North sea rather than spending weeks at sea being transported through the Suez canal or round the Cape. The European Community has replaced the Commonwealth as our major trading partner. We face fierce competition from Third world countries. There is a massive world over-capacity in bulk and tanker shipping.

But some sectors of the British shipping industry have coped remarkably well with a uniquely rough period in world shipping markets. Our container fleet is about the same tonnage as it was in the mid-1970s. Over half the United Kingdom's international freight earnings come from our liner and container fleets, which account for only one quarter of our gross tonnage. Passenger ships account for only 8 per cent. of our gross tonnage, yet the United Kingdom earns over £800 million from the passenger ship business. So it is a complex matter. The shipping industry's contribution to the balance of payments invisible account grew by £221 million in 1986, the best for some years—and a reminder that tonnage on the United Kingdom register and the industry's value as a source of foreign earnings do not always go hand in hand.

There is also the development of the Isle of Man and dependent territory registers, which has enabled much tonnage to remain under British registration, with British crews, while taking advantage of the savings obtainable offshore to improve the industry's competitive position.

Many adverse factors — over-capacity, Third-world competition, new trading patterns—are not within our control, and it is folly to believe we could somehow escape them by erecting elaborate and expensive frameworks of subsidy. What we do must be carefully targeted. There are specific measures provided for in clauses 25 to 28, designed to ensure that we continue to have sufficient trained seamen to meet the defence needs of the United Kingdom in time of emergency.

On training, we are particularly concerned at the small number of officer cadets at present being trained. The training scheme which we intend to bring into effect this autumn will build on the successful use already being made by the industry of the youth training scheme, and will provide help to ship owners and management companies with the cost of employing Merchant Navy cadets while they are being trained. Details of the scheme will be announced as soon as possible. As has already been announced, £2·5 million has been earmarked for this scheme in the next financial year, rising to £3·5 million in the first full year, 1989-90.

Under the crew relief scheme, assistance will be available to pay a proportion of the cost of air travel for crew changes on ships registered in the United Kingdom, the Isle of Man, or the Channel Islands, which take place in distant waters. The objective here is to give companies an incentive to continue to employ officers and ratings resident in the British Isles in those ships which operate in the deep-sea trades. We have earmarked £3·5 million in 1988-89, rising to £5 million in the full year 1989-90, for this programme.

The third initiative, announced by my predecessor in December 1986, was the establishment of a Merchant Navy Reserve. The reserve will constitute a pool of experienced seafarers who can be drawn upon to supplement crews serving on Merchant Navy ships supporting the defence forces or engaged in supply. Membership of the reserve will be open to former seafarers holding valid certificates. Members will be paid a bounty in exchange for accepting an obligation to serve if called upon to do so.

Part II deals with the very serious problem of foreign-owned fishing vessels registering in the United Kingdom in order to fish against our EC quotas. This is, I know, a matter of concern to hon. Members who represent fishing constituencies. We are introducing stringent new eligibility requirements for the registration of fishing vessels in the United Kingdom. A fishing vessel would need to be beneficially owned as to at least 75 per cent. by British citizens resident and domiciled in the United Kingdom, or wholly owned by a qualified company. There will be powers to specify additional eligibility requirements.

These are stringent requirements, but we believe they are essential if British fishing quotas are to be preserved for British fishermen. They have been carefully drawn up in consultation with the fishermen's organisations and widely welcomed by them.

Part I updates the law on the registration of merchant ships. Hon. Members who are interested in this difficult and complicated matter will find the White Paper, published with the Bill, a helpful guide to this fairly technical area. The main objective of the changes, which I will not deal with in detail, is to ensure that there is more effective jurisdiction in future over United Kingdom-registered ships.

Importantly, the Bill gives new powers to the Secretary of State to define categories of register for the Crown dependencies and dependent territories. Under the present arrangements it has been possible for substandard shipping to obtain registration as British shipping in a dependent territory and thus to escape rigorous survey and inspection requirements applied to vessels on the United Kingdom register. The new arrangements in the Bill, combined with the substantial efforts which a number of dependent territories are making to improve their maritime administrations, will help to ensure that all ships sailing under the British flag meet the same high standards. In this way we are able to meet the recommendation of the Transport Committee of the last Parliament that early legislation should be brought forward.

There are a number of other clauses dealing with significant matters. Some of them — liability and compensation for oil pollution damage, lighthouses and

[Mr. Channon]

unfair competition in international shipping services—are very important, but I do not want to weary the House with a detailed exposition of them today. They can be gone into in Committee.

I have tried to cover the main issues. If hon. Members have any questions, my hon. Friend the Minister of State will be pleased to answer them in his winding-up speech.

Mr. Conal Gregory (York): My right hon. Friend referred briefly to light dues. Will he confirm to the House that the Government are still paying half the light dues for southern Ireland, which is a scandal? I hope that the matter will be dealt with in the Bill. The amount charged last year was well above the level required by the authorities.

Mr. Channon: My hon. Friend is right. We are indeed paying Irish light dues; I would have to check the exact proportion. However, I shall give my hon. Friend a trailer. My hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport may have good news on light dues when he replies to the debate. I hope my hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Gregory) will be here to welcome it.

There is a wide-ranging series of proposals in the Bill. They underline our commitment to maritime safety, help to safeguard our strategic requirements, protect United Kingdom fishing quotas for United Kingdom fishermen and overhaul the legislative framework. The proposed measures have been welcomed by the industry, and they have received general support in another place. I hope that the House will agree that the Bill should be given a Second Reading.

5.10 pm

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): I agree with much of what the Secretary of State said. By and large, the Bill is non-contentious, although it contains some contentious issues. Having been upset earlier by the Secretary of State for Scotland, I must try not to carry my anger forward and vent my spleen on the right hon. Gentleman. There are many points on which there is agreement, but other issues will have to be scrutinised carefully in Committee. There is still much tidying up to be done in the legislation. I hope, as the right hon. Gentleman said to me in a letter, that he will be prepared to consider amendments on their merits.

I accept that much research is going on; and I welcome the fact that £1 million is to go into research, particularly on the safety of ro-ro ferries. I concede that there is no such thing as an unsinkable ship. The last ship that had that epithet was the Titanic. The right hon. Gentleman said that through ro-ro ferries are perfectly safe so long as they are watertight. That is much the same as saying that the Titanic was safe so long as it did not hit an iceberg.

I am still concerned about the safety of existing ro-ro ferries. We must consider urgently whether portable bulkheads should be fitted to protect ships. We hope that never again will there be another sinking like that of the Herald of Free Enterprise, which sank because the doors were left open, but we are concerned about a ship being holed. We do not suggest that the fitting of portable bulkheads would make a ferry unsinkable, but it would lengthen the time that the vessel would remain afloat. The time before the Herald capsized was so short that no one had an opportunity to save life. If we can buy time for lifeboats and rescue vessels, that may be the best that we can achieve. Certainly we should seek to achieve as much time as possible.

Mr. Heffer: My question is not so much for my hon. Friend as for the Government. My hon. Friend may agree with my suggestion that all British ships should be brought in, one at a time, to have portable bulkheads fitted. Obviously, in the long-term new ships will be redesigned. In the meantime, ro-ro ferries could have departmentalised doors fitted to ensure greater safety.

Mr. Hughes: That suggestion is worth pursuing. I cannot remember how many ships of a design similar to the Herald of Free Enterprise are at sea. The majority of ro-ro ferries have a different door-closing mechanism. Most have a bow visor, which is up while the ship is loading, and no one can go to sea with that visor up. I am not running down my hon. Friend's suggestion. Indeed, the number of vessels affected by his proposal might not be large, so the proposal should be considered seriously.

I am in danger of losing the thread of my speech. Before I come to issues which we will contest vigorously, perhaps I should deal with the Herald of Free Enterprise and with the motion that the Bill should be committed to a Special Standing Committee. When discussing merchant shipping and safety at sea, we all have engraved on our minds the events of Friday 6 March, when we first heard that the Herald of Free Enterprise was in difficulty. As events unfolded, we discovered that it was a tragedy of immense proportions.

The tragedy could have been far worse. Had the sinking taken place a quarter of a mile, or half a mile, further out, I doubt whether anyone would have survived. I am not minimising the loss of life, nor being complacent by taking refuge in the comfort that things might have been worse. It merely makes us more vigilant in ensuring that we scrutinise safety properly.

The procedure for referring a Bill to a Special Standing Committee was designed for non-controversial Bills. It has rarely been used. I think that this Bill almost exactly fits the category for which the procedure was tailored. I am sorry that the Secretary of State has turned his face against the proposal. During business questions last week we were encouraged by the Leader of the House to believe that the matter might be resolved through the usual channels. I am grateful to the Minister for meeting my hon. Friend the Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) and myself to discuss reference to a Special Standing Committee. I wrote to him subsequently, and perhaps I should give the House our reasons for proposing that the Bill be committed to a Special Standing Committee to consider safety at sea.

We welcome what is being done by regulation and administration. We welcome what is proposed in the Bill. The point I wish to emphasise is that this is likely to be the only major shipping legislation in this Parliament. I cannot see that there will be time for another major merchant shipping Bill. Therefore, it is important that we do not overlook any aspect of safety and that we get the Bill right.

The Secretary of State is correct. We have had the Sheen report and the coroner's report. We are still waiting to see whether there will be prosecutions that might bring out further evidence. But there may not be prosecutions. There is still a body of opinion that we should not ignore any approach that might shed further light on how to improve safety at sea.

It is significant that the proposal to send the Bill to a Special Standing Committee came from the Herald Families Association. The association wrote to my hon. Friend the Member for Stretford on 21 December about its concern for the safety of existing ro-ro ferries. It drew my hon. Friend's attention to the special procedure and asked whether the Bill could be dealt with in that way. We have no intention of intruding on the grief of the families, or of prolonging or exploiting that grief, but as the initiative came from the families it should be considered seriously. We should bring in experts to answer our questions. Often non-experts or people directly concerned with an incident ask a blindingly obvious question which has not occurred to other people who have been studying the matter.

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): As the Bill includes useful provisions to increase safety, does the hon. Gentleman not accept that a Special Standing Committee would delay its implementation?

Mr. Hughes: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman raised that point, because it allows me to emphasise what I was going to say. I should be glad to be corrected, but I can see nothing in the Bill that has to be passed by a fixed date to get things moving. We have made it perfectly clear that our proposal to send the Bill to a Special Standing Committee is not intended to delay progress. I accept that if the Bill went to such a Committee, reasonable time would have to be allowed so that people could prepare their questions and their evidence. I recollect that the procedure allows for only three sessions to take evidence.

I have offered the co-operation of the Opposition in getting the Bill through as rapidly as possible, and I believe that we could proceed along those lines without any great delay. I cannot say that there would be no delay, but there would be no great delay, and I hope that, even now, the Secretary of State will relent and allow us to put the matter to a Special Standing Committee. Today's debate will decide whether we will divide the House on that matter.

I shall deal with an issue that is not controversial before coming to the controversial matters. I accept what the Secretary of State said about the need for registration for fishing vessels to prevent the abuse of registration and access to the United Kingdom quota of fish under EEC rules. I hope that such regulations will be speedily implemented, but one or two issues need to be clarified.

The Scottish Fishermen's Federation believes that there should be registration of all vessels, irrespective of length or size, but the line must be drawn somewhere, or rowing boats or small vessels with outboard motors might have to be registered. As far as possible, the maximum number of boats should be registered. There is also the matter of the old register being closed and the period of transition, and whether the title of vessels should always be registered. The Scottish Fishermen's Federation has a point that should be considered in some detail in Committee.

I join the federation in welcoming the fact that under part III some money is to be provided to assist the training of officers and ratings in the Merchant Navy. That is a good idea, but why are the Secretary of State and the Government steadfastly refusing financial assistance for the training of fishermen? It is expected that the Secretary of State will make regulations under the Safety at Sea Act 1986 requiring fishermen to be trained in survival at sea, fire fighting and first-aid, but he will not give them any financial assistance. Why are the two parts of our maritime industry being treated differently? In previous wars fishermen served the Royal Navy extremely well. It was not only the deep-sea fishermen who had valuable experience to give to the nation. I hope that the Secretary of State will consider that point and perhaps take some action.

I now turn to an issue that is quite contentious and on which there is a great deal of disagreement. I have made representations to the Minister, who will know that I do not believe that the Bill should have started in the House of Lords. I accept that we have a bicameral Parliament and that the other place is perfectly entitled to start legislation, but it is generally accepted that such legislation will not be contentious, and that the House of Lords is at its best when reviewing legislation. I assert that it is not at its best when starting fresh legislation.

I resent the fact that the Government accepted an amendment on Report by Lord Mottistone, supported by the Earl of Inchcape, to remove section 42(2) of the Merchant Shipping Act 1970. Subsection (2) affects the position of seafarers involved in industrial disputes. It is a further restriction of the rights of seamen and it further tilts the balance towards employers.

The amendment was accepted in the other place after the most cursory examination. Indeed, no evidence was presented that such a change was needed, except for anecdotal evidence. Two of their Lordships thought that the subsection was redundant and that it was not necessary, but no facts were brought forward to support the removal of subsection (2). Lord Brabazon previously resisted an almost identical amendment in Committee. Having said, on Thursday 26 November, that he had no evidence that the change was necessary, 14 days later he accepted the amendment, saying that he had now been persuaded.

There was no reason for such a rush. It was the first time that the Bill had been aired. Lord Brabazon could have held his fire and asked for the evidence. He could have asked for consultation. He did not consult the trades unions involved or the employers' organisations, and he does not appear to have consulted his own Department. He had to admit that he had not had the time to prepare an amendment of his own.

That is no way to approach people's rights in industrial relations. It is likely to be extremely provocative. I do not take comfort from the Government's view, put about in the other place, and which no doubt they will put about in the House, that that change only puts seafarers square with other industrial employees in terms of industrial relations. That is no big deal. We know that throughout their terms of office the Government have been redressing the balance, as they would put it, between the unions and the employers. However, in the Merchant Shipping Bill they have gone too far.

I doubt whether the Government are aware of the ramifications of that amendment. Seamen do not work in a fixed environment. Their environment constantly changes. Perhaps in Committee the Government will be prepared to examine the legislation and change it. The amendment was made without proper consideration, and the Government will see the folly of their ways. We shall certainly pursue the matter vigorously in Committee.

I now turn to what is not in the Bill. The most glaring deficiency is that it fails totally to address the problem of the decline in Britain's merchant fleet. The Opposition

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have stated that view more than once, and it is shared by the National Union of Seamen and by the National Union of Marine, Aviation and Shipping Transport Officers. The General Council of British Shipping stated, quite categorically:

"First, welcome though the proposals for financial aid for training and reparation are, they will not arrest the decline of the UK-owned merchant fleet. If Government and Parliament decide that it is in the national interest — for defence, balance of payments, trade, or employment reasons — for there to be a UK-controlled fleet, manned at least in part with British nationals and available on at least a British Dependent Territory register, much more needs to be done. In particular, action is needed to help shipowners re-invest in shipping when the current aging fleet reached the end of its economic life."

That could almost be a synopsis of the Labour party policy put forward in the transport document, "Fresh Directions". It is clearly spelt out on page 21 of the document. The Secretary of State often asks what our policy is, and we clearly spell it out that we want to

"improve coastal shipping facilities along the lines of Section 8 and Section 36 grants (which provide grants for rail sidings and inland waterway freight facilities."

We want to:

"Provide tax incentives for scrapping older vessels and building new ships in UK shipyards and for use with UK crews."

In that, we differ from the GCBS. It says that the ships should be partly manned by British crews. We say that they should be wholly manned by British crews.

We go on to say that we would

"Create a discretionary scrap only tax incentive, to reduce the surplus of old laid up shipping tonnage."

We add that we would

"Ensure that our shipping policies are co-ordinated with policies to maintain an effective shipbuilding and ship-repair industry."

The Government have gone wrong in the past because they have looked at shipping in isolation. It is not as though the merchant marine has suddenly declined. It is not as though the decline has sneaked up on the Government so that they were unaware of it. The decline has gone on for far too long.

The last time that we debated merchant shipping was on 11 March 1986, and the writing was on the wall then. At that time we debated various EEC regulations. I am glad that the loss of tonnage has not been as severe as we forecast at that time, but we cannot take much comfort from that. Indeed, it is rather sad to see that the best headline that the press could produce about the merchant shipping fleet was:

"Decline in shipping fleet slows down".

Decline has not been arrested or reversed; it has only slowed down.

Mr. Gregory: The hon. Gentleman seems to be very much a prophet of doom and gloom today. If we were to follow the Labour party's policy set out on page 21 that he quoted, what level of subsidy would be necessary to arrive at that artificial and protective state?

Mr. Hughes: If we were in government we would be in a position to decide exactly how far to go.

An interesting convergence of views is developing. Two years ago the General Council of British Shipping was thought to be relatively satisfied with the answers given by the then Secretary of State, the right hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley). He told us that he could not give us any details, but he did give us a little trailer, as, indeed, the Secretary of State did this afternoon. He did not say that we should wait until the end of the debate, but that we should wait a couple of weeks until the Budget. However, the Chancellor did virtually nothing. The fact that the changes made in the 1986 Budget did virtually nothing for the merchant marine is demonstrated by the fact that, certainly up until September last year, for two years not one British shipowner placed an order for a British ship in the United Kingdom. The Budget did nothing. The General Council of British Shipping now accepts that there must be investment, and investment supported by the Government, in the British shipping industry, and we agree on that.

The second convergence of views is on cabotage. In March 1986 we argued for cabotage to be applied to the British coasts for the reservation of coastal trade to British ships. We include in that offshore vessels plying the North sea oil trade. The then Secretary of State said that that was not necessary, and the General Council of British Shipping said that the best way to go about things was to liberalise on cabotage, and if the European countries who already have it would let us have access to their trade, everything in the garden would be lovely. The General Council of British Shipping is now saying in its document that the time has come when we must seriously think of cabotage.

I was interested to read in the debates in the other place that Lord Gray of Contin, and another noble Lord, whose name I have forgotten, were arguing about the need for cabotage. The General Council of British Shipping clearly said:

"more needs to be done to help British coastal shipping. It is unacceptable that so many of our fellow European Community countries — France, Spain, Portugal, Italy and Greece — should reserve their coastal trades to their own ships, which at the same time are able to trade freely in British coastal trades. GCBS would like to see all the Community coastal trades thrown open for competition, but it is clear that other member states will not negotiate away their restrictions whilst they can enjoy the best of both worlds. We believe that the Government should take powers to curb the free-for-all on the British coast as a spur to encourage the negotiation away of all EC countries' restrictions".

We shall not achieve that objective. The countries that have cabotage know exactly how valuable that is, but I am glad to have that endorsement of the Labour party's policy, for which we have argued for some years, that cabotage is necessary. I hope that the Secretary of State will now agree that something should be done.

We have been given another little trailer. There are rumours, hints, suggestions in the press that the Chancellor of the Exchequer might agree to some rollover relief on capital investment in British shipping. But that is only a hint. We do not know what it will be. If he lives up to his previous record, it will not be any good to us.

Lord Brabazon said that something needed to be done on a number of matters and that he was concerned about the decline in the shipping fleet. He said that cabotage was a reserve power which remains to be used should the time be ripe. It is no use putting a substitute on with one minute to go, and the Secretary of State should now agree to apply cabotage. We should protect what we have in order to try to move forward, because the situation is perilous.

The hon. Member for York (Mr. Gregory) said that I was a prophet of doom. I wish that there was no need to be gloomy, but I doubt whether any Conservative Member will say what a marvellous buoyant state shipping is in and what a great future it has. No one will say that there is no need to worry because everything is going well and that the

Opposition, the National Union of Seamen and the General Council of British Shipping are wrong; that all is going swimmingly. That is not what was said in the other place, and it is not what the Secretary of State said. We must take action soon and swiftly if we are to save the merchant shipping fleet.

I hope that the Secretary of State and you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will have gathered from my remarks that there is much in the Bill that we welcome, but we believe that it should be probed. We shall not vote against its Second Reading this evening—that would be foolish—but we reserve our position on the Special Standing Committee.

I promise the Secretary of State that he will have to work hard to justify some of the changes that he has made, and he will have to work hard to review some of the changes that we want made. However, I hope that, in the spirit of co-operation, we can make some real progress in Committee, and I hope that we will have a useful debate.

5.37 pm

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): There is no one in this country, maritime nation that it is, who is not deeply concerned about many of the matters in the Bill. Some of my colleagues may wonder why I, a Member for Staffordshire, am taking part in this debate. I would just point out that I speak as the son of a master mariner and as somebody who has spent more than half his life by the sea and who has sailed with the fishing fleet out of Grimsby. Therefore, I have a little practical experience.

But it is not for those reasons that I seek to intervene briefly today. I wished to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because some time before Christmas I received a letter from Mr. Maurice de Rohan, the chairman of the Herald Families Association. I had not at that stage had the pleasure of meeting Mr. de Rohan but I have subsequently met him and his colleague, Mr. Spooner, and other members of the association.

I was anxious that any help given in Parliament should be on an entirely non-partisan cross-party basis. I immediately enlisted the support of the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) and we have tried to work together. On Tuesday this week we received, together with a few of our colleagues, members of the Herald Families Association and listened to what they had to tell us.

No one who met those people who went through one of the most searing experiences, not only losing loved ones but losing them in circumstances almost too appalling to contemplate, could fail to be moved, not just by the stories of tragedy or the terrible accounts of families rent asunder, but by the quiet controlled passion which they have displayed. This is no group of people bent on vengeance or making destructive criticism.

It would perhaps be appropriate to quote to the House the aims of their association. They say, in the short document that they issued, that the association was established after the capsize of the vessel:

> "It was formed by the bereaved of many of the victims to give mutual help and comfort . . . It is natural that those who share the same grief should want to help each other. It is as natural that they should seek to ensure that such a disaster as befell their loved ones should not recur. The Association seeks in all its activities to be motivated not by vindictiveness but by the wish to see the lessons of the disaster learned."

That is an extremely balanced, moderate statement, and anyone who has met members of the association cannot fail to have been moved by their attitude and approach.

I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the association, to thank my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport for what he said this afternoon, for his promise to meet the association's members next week, for his promise to listen carefully to what they have to say and also for the speedy action that he has taken on a number of matters that have given them and us concern. I was particularly grateful for his assurance that the boarding pass will become a legal requirement by the end of February. That is speedy action and we should all be grateful for it.

I would, however, like to concentrate my remarks on one of the principal concerns of the Herald Families Association. In its major document, the association points out that one of its immediate objectives is to have the responsibility of the ferry company—P and O European Ferries, previously Townsend car ferries—determined. The members of the association make out a good case for that but you would rule me out of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I developed that particular theme this afternoon.

The second of the association's major objectives is entirely pertinent and relevant — it is to press for immediate action on the safety and stability of roll-on/roll-off ferries, to ensure that they will sink slowly, enabling normal life-saving practices to be followed. They list a number of those ro-ro ferries which have gone down in minutes or even seconds in recent years. Their document has on its cover a picture of a ferry. One immediately assumes that it is the Herald of Free Enterprise. Not at all, it is the Gateway which went down with, thank God, minimal loss of life in 1982.

My right hon. Friend said that he was devoting money to research. That is splendid. He said that he was most anxious to see that these vessels were the seaworthy vessels that everyone who sailed in them had a right to expect. But there is one point that has already come out in the debate and on which I would welcome further remarks from my hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport when he replies to the debate. It may be perfectly possible to ensure that never again will a vessel go to sea with its doors open, but if a vessel is holed, as the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) so rightly said, if there is a collision in the Channel—which is the busiest waterway in the world—and a vessel goes down as fast as the Gateway and the Herald of Free Enterprise went down, there could be further disasters.

As we are entering the era of the giant ferry carrying 2,000 passengers or more, one does not like to contemplate the enormity of the tragedy that could ensue if that were to happen. I hope, therefore, that real attention will be paid to what can be done to make these vessels more seaworthy in all normal circumstances.

Of course, the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North was right to refer to the Titanic. He was also right—in what I thought was an extremely moderate passage of his speech, although I did not agree with all his concluding remarks — to say that there is no such thing as an unsinkable vessel. Nor would the members of the Herald Families Association suggest that there was. But these vessels could be made more seaworthy, perhaps by adopting the suggestions made by the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer); and, if they could not be made more seaworthy, no more should be constructed. This point has not been sufficiently grasped.

[Mr. Patrick Cormack]

On corporate responsibility, my right hon. Friend rightly drew attention to the fact that on indictment a company and those responsible for it can be liable to two years' imprisonment and an unlimited fine. That is all well and good, but there ought to be provision in this Bill for a company's licence to be revoked if it behaves in such an irresponsible way in future. Such a provision cannot be made retrospective, and I stress that neither the Herald Families Association nor I seek to be vindictive. But if we are trying to frame shipping legislation for the 21st century there ought to be real penalties, and they ought to include the ability to revoke a licence.

Mr. Frank Field: Will the hon. Gentleman remind the House about our meeting with the Herald families at which they stressed — and I was surprised by the comment—that safety at sea was not regularly discussed at board level? In this Bill and with its penalties, we must somehow raise that issue to board level so that it is considered regularly, not just perhaps once or twice, on occasions when a disaster like this puts it on the board's agenda.

Mr. Cormack: The hon. Gentleman is quite right. The families association is right in making this point. I was glad to hear what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State had to say about the policing of the regulations and about random checks to ensure that they were enforced. That was a most welcome part of his speech, as was his reference to the supervision of ships sailing under other flags.

I have two final points. Looking forward, as the members of the association do, and seeking to envisage what could happen in the event of some terrible disaster in the future — and not just a maritime disaster — the Herald Families Association believes that its members' agony and torment would have been less had there been a national disaster unit, able to respond to this sort of calamity and able to ensure that information was more quickly and accurately supplied. It also believes that if a national disaster fund existed, able to cater immediately for the financial needs of those bereaved, it would be a help. While it is not appropriate for me to expand on those points this evening, I would be most grateful if my right hon. Friend would bear them in mind when he meets the association and if he would pass them on to his ministerial colleagues.

This is a constructive and welcome Bill. The families who have suffered so badly welcome it. Let us ensure that when it leaves this House—and it cannot go back to the other place when it leaves — it is as good a Bill, as unsinkable a Bill, as we can produce.

5.47 pm

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stephney): I can well understand why the Secretary of State began his speech this afternoon by referring to the topic of marine safety and to the appalling background of the Bill, the Zeebrugge disaster. A number of the things that he said in the course of his speech will be very welcome news to the House. I do, however, join both my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) and the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) in stressing that there is a serious subject for further investigation in the design of ferries. We shall not really be wholly at ease with ourselves and feel that we have achieved that degree of seaworthiness which I am sure the industry is capable of attaining unless we tackle the question of ship design and satisfy ourselves that we have the safest form of ferry available.

Another very important factor in this debate is that we are speaking against the background of a continuing and unprecedented decline in the United Kingdom merchant fleet. The extent of that decline is not, I fear, fully appreciated.

From more than 50 million tonnes on the United Kingdom register in 1975—I remember the figure well, and some of the special circumstances, because I was Secretary of State for Trade at the time—the fleet had shrunk to 25 million tonnes in 1982 to 16 million tonnes in 1985 and to under 6 million tonnes in 1987. At least some part of the fleet has been flagged out to the Isle of Man and Channel Island registers and to those of British dependent territories, and a small number of ships have been foreign registered, too. Taking account of all those categories of ships that are still British-owned, however, we have still shrunk from 28·8 million tonnes in 1982 to just under 17 million tonnes in 1987. Thus, in only five years, the number of United Kingdom-owned ships has fallen from 1,063 to 635. No other nation — with the possible exception of Norway — has suffered so catastrophic a decline. While most European fleets contracted in the period 1982-87 — the United States actually increased its tonnage — so the scale of the decline of those nations' fleets is not comparable with our own.

Uniquely, we are an island nation, the vast bulk of whose trade is carried by ships. Of course, major adverse factors have been at work—the sharp fall in the volume of oil trade and the major changes in the pattern of oil trade to which the Secretary of State referred, for instance. He might have added the slump of 1974-75 in world trade, and the further slump that followed another hijack of the oil price in 1979-80. So there were major factors beyond our control, as he rightly said.

However, some of our wounds are self-inflicted. In particular, the abolition in 1984 of free depreciation against capital costs in the form of a 100 per cent. first-year allowance, carried back, as it then was, against profits for the three preceding years, has had a major adverse effect. No other country has abandoned Government aid toward the capital cost of its ships. As up to 50 per cent. of the running costs of a ship relate to the cost of its finance, the effect on our competitiveness has been catastrophic. Any British shipowner now acquiring a ship for United Kingdom registering puts himself at a significant disadvantage. According to the General Council of British Shipping — I have not seen its figures challenged — the United Kingdom now stands 39th in the world order-book league. We have five ships on order with a deadweight tonnage of 51,000. The General Council of British Shipping is aware of no new ships on order for United Kingdom owners for registering outside the United Kingdom. No ships were ordered from August 1986 to September 1987, when one ship was ordered. That compares with orders in the United Kingdom registry of 363 deadweight tonnes in 1983, the last complete year before the 1984 Budget withdrew the 100 per cent. depreciation allowance.

There are, of course, costs other than capital costs—especially crew costs—which determine the competitiveness of United Kingdom ships. Nevertheless, United

Kingdom ships are broadly competitive with those of western Europe and operate at substantially lower costs than those of the United States and Japan. Of course, we are massively undercut by flag of convenience operators.

It is against this background that the House should examine the provisions of the Merchant Shipping Bill. While there is much that is useful in the Bill on matters such as registration, safety and the fishing fleet, only a few clauses in part III address the issue of United Kingdom competitiveness and the decline in the British maritime fleet. According to Lord Brabazon, who introduced the Bill in the other place on 10 November last year,

"Their objective"

—that of the clauses, that is—

"is to ensure that the shipping industry remains capable of meeting the nation's essential shipping needs in times of emergency or war."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 10 November 1987; Vol. 489, c. 1293.]

He then referred, as did the Secretary of State this afternoon, to the three initiatives on assistance with training costs, the costs of crew changes on ships operating in distant waters and the setting up of a Merchant Navy reserve.

These provisions are contained in clause 25, 26, 27 and 28. I welcome them, as, I am sure, does the House—as far as they go. Just how far is explained in the explanatory and financial memorandum of the Bill. The public expenditure provision for the Merchant Navy training and crew relief costs rises to £3·5 million and £5 million respectively in the full year 1989-90. Costs incurred in relation to the Merchant Navy reserve are thought to be in the region of £1 million a year. In relation to the needs of the United Kingdom Merchant Navy, those sums are peanuts.

I do not see how the Bill can be easily amended to make more adequate provision to assist our merchant fleet, but at least it would be good to learn from the Secretary of State — or the Minister — that he had forcefully represented to the Chancellor the need to resume assistance towards the capital costs of British shipping. I do not believe that the Government or Back Benchers on either side can be, or are, indifferent to the continued decline of the British Merchant Navy.

The cost in terms of our balance of payments is already high. We have moved from a national positive balance in the 1970s to a deficit of no less than £1·1 billion in 1985. I do not know what fleet size and composition the Ministry of Defence believes to be necessary in a period of tension or war, but there must be an irreducible minimum. On present trends, there is no reason why our shrunken fleet of 400 ships should not shrink still further to 200 or fewer in the 1990s. At the very least, I hope the Government will take an early opportunity to present to the House a comprehensive policy to prevent the further decline, and preferably to assist in the revival, of the British Merchant Navy.

5.57 pm

Mr. Neville Trotter (Tynemouth): May I say how much I agree with the speech made by the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore). He was absolutely right to remind us of the continuing decline of the Merchant Navy, which forms the background against which we are reviewing the Bill. I support all that he said about the need for fiscal measures to help the industry. It is relevant that our competitors in the western world are giving assistance of that nature to their merchant navies while we are not.

The picture is one of a fleet that is increasingly flagged out, manned by foreigners and to an underlying extent composed of aging ships. A difficult decision about replacement lies ahead in the near future for the owners of many of the ships remaining on the British register. Coming as I do from a shipbuilding area, I need hardly remind the House how important it is to obtain more orders for that industry. However, that is not the specific issue before us — we are debating the future of the Merchant Navy tonight. I emphasise the need for my right hon. friend the Secretary of State to take to our right hon. Friend the Chancellor the message that he must not delay the introduction of more fiscal measures to help the Merchant Navy, if we want the necessary fleet renewals, without which an aging fleet will in the near future become uneconomic and unable to maintain even its present size in the near future.

It is surely not necessary to remind the House why so many of us think it necessary for Britain to have a Merchant Navy. Apart from the economic argument, it is clear that the defence needs of NATO and of our own country necessitate the existence of an adequate Merchant Navy, as part of the deterrent that we must maintain. It is essential that a potential foe appreciates that we have the maritime capacity to sustain ourselves at a time of crisis. If he believed that that was not so, there would be more temptation to start the trouble that we are seeking to avoid.

I might mention for the benefit of my right hon. Friend that his predecessor in December 1986 referred to inquiries that were being made into the problems of being able—or unable at a time of crisis — to obtain United Kingdom-owned vessels that were flagged out and operating under foreign flags. Would they be available to us in a crisis? My right hon. Friend's predecessor explained it was both a legal matter for this country and also a matter for the other states concerned. I hope that before too long we shall hear what conclusions have been reached as a result of those inquiries. It is a very important issue for the continuing defence and security of this country.

Another important factor is that our merchant fleet should be able to compete fairly with its competitors. In recent years some ships flying the Red Ensign that have been registered in the dependent territories have not complied with our safety standards. That is wrong, and I welcome the proposals in the Bill designed to prevent that happening in future.

I want to refer briefly to the Isle of Man. The Select Committee on Transport, on which I have the pleasure to serve, visited the Isle of Man a few months ago. We were delighted to be told that the Isle of Man authorities are determined to impose on the ships registered in Douglas the same high standards that are to be found on ships registered in Newcastle, London or Cardiff. It is one of the few encouraging signs for our Merchant Navy that the Isle of Man register has taken off successfully as in effect a Red Ensign flag of convenience.

Coming from North Shields, I very much welcome anything to do with fair competition in the fishing industry. While North Shields vessels have not been the main sufferers as a result of the activity by the Spanish in the southern Channel area, it is right that we should prevent the abuse of the registry system that has occurred

[Mr. Neville Trotter]

there. Foreign-owned vessels must not be allowed simply to transfer to the Red Ensign so as to obtain part of the United Kindgom quota of scarce fish. I congratulate my right hon. Friend on taking measures to correct that abuse.

I want to ask my right hon. Friend some questions about the new registry of fishing vessels. I believe that it is proposed that there should be a central registry for fishing vessels instead of the 90 or more port registries that exist at present. I hope that my right hon. Friend will appreciate that fishermen in North Shields and elsewhere do not want to go to Cardiff or deal with officials in Cardiff in order to obtain registration in future. I hope that there will still be officials in the local ports with whom the fishermen can deal and I hope that boats will continue to display the registration letters and numbers of the local ports around the coast as there is a great deal of pride in this local identity.

One of the greatest problems facing the Merchant Navy is caused by the low wages paid on so many of our competitors' vessels. Those vessels are manned by people who are, on the whole, satisfied with their wages because they are being paid the going rate in their own country. Undoubtedly, this is one of the main problems facing our operators at a time when world freight rates are actually less than they were seven or eight years ago. There is no margin to carry unnecessary costs.

The Bill contains welcome proposals, but I fear that they are rather modest when compared with the overall scale of the problem.

The new scheme for assistance for training will be helpful. It is a fact of life that so many of our competitors in the western world do not have to find the high cost of training as do owners in this country. For many years there has been an excellent marine college in South Shields on Tyneside. It has been very disturbing to see the constant fall in the number of young men entering the college for both deck and engine cadetships. There is now a shortage of cadets and I hope that this welcome measure will end that problem. I hope that more can be also done using existing schemes such as YTS or the Manpower Services Commission to assist in tackling the problem.

With regard to the repatriation of United Kingdom crews, I was interested to be told recently by the owners of a United Kingdom registered cruise ship that when she went on a round-the-world voyage the cost of the air fares for changing the crew en route amounted to £1 million. That is the level of burden that such ships carry to provide a British crew. However, such ships of course also have the great advantage of the highest reputation for the standard of service on board. The measure will be helpful in matching the competition with their lower costs of manning.

The Bill contains a welcome proposal to establish a Merchant Navy reserve. There is considerable debate whether in an emergency we would be able to obtain the ships that we would need. It can be argued that unless the crisis was worldwide, there would be ships available for purchase if we paid enough for them. I would, however, have been happier to see an additional proposal before the House to establish a reserve not just of men but of ships anchored in our waters. The United States has adopted that policy. It is taking advantage of the low price of modern secondhand vessels and has bought nearly 100 ships which are kept at anchor and which could be put into service in a day or two should a crisis occur. We should do that in Britain.

The number of sailors on the Merchant Navy register has fallen from 50,000 to only 25,000 over the past five years. There are probably also almost 7,000 British sailors serving on foreign-flagged ships. Unless we take steps now, United Kingdom sailors to man our ships in a crisis will simply not be available and the new reserve of men is timely.

Has my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State any idea yet as to how long it will take to establish the reserve? What kind of training will be available? As I understand it, the reserve will consist of former seamen who will state that they are willing to be recalled to the colours in an emergency. As time passes, they will tend to become rusty and there must surely be a system to provide regular refresher training.

I want to refer to unfair restrictions on the market. We have always believed in free trade at sea, and quite rightly so. That was the whole basis for the birth of the Merchant Navy, which involved the carrying of other people's cargoes around the world. Many British companies are still satisfactorily and effectively doing that today. However, 79 per cent. of the weight of cargo coming in and out of the United Kingdom is now carried on foreign-flagged ships and by value the figure is 64 per cent. We can see the temptation of suggesting that we should think of protectionism. However, that is not the answer and it is not what the General Council of British Shipping is asking for. It is right that we should have free trade on the seas and we can benefit from that. However, it is essential that the rules are fair and that our people are not discriminated against as they increasingly have been. I therefore welcome the new powers sought in the Bill to counter unfair competition.

Finally, I want to refer to the problem of cabotage and to coastal trading around this country and neighbouring coasts of Europe. Different rules seem to apply. Our coasts are open to all, yet a number of our important neighbours' coasts are not open to our ships. That is very unfair and I am sure that my right hon. Friend has that point very much on board.

6.7 pm

Mrs. Ray Michie (Argyll and Bute): I also welcome this necessary Bill. I appreciate the fact that the Secretary of State, like other hon. Members, started by referring to the safety aspects, and we would not expect anything else. We all appreciate that they are so important following the Zeebrugge disaster and tragedy.

I want to draw the Secretary of State's attention to several safety aspects to which he referred with regard to ferries which differ from the ferry involved in the Zeebrugge tragedy. I want to refer to the ferries serving the Scottish islands. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will not insist that a six-car ferry should require closed circuit television, when the whole length of the ferry can be seen from the bridge by the master. Perhaps a little money could be saved in that way. I believe that the deadline for installing emergency lighting is July 1988. I am not sure whether approved equipment exists at the moment. Therefore, there could be a problem in meeting that deadline.

Reference has been made to the registration of fishing vessels. I have a particular interest in the part of the Bill

that deals with that registration, as fishing is an integral part of the life of many communities in my constituency. Part II provides for a new system of fishing vessel registration which, I am glad to say, would do away with the ability of non-United Kingdom vessels to flag into the fishing fleet and enjoy British quotas. I am glad that the Government have responded to the need to ensure that those quotas are taken up only by United Kingdom fishermen, as they have been fought for long and hard over the years.

The Scottish Fishermen's Federation, which includes the Clyde Fishermen's Association — of which I am proud to be honorary president—holds the view that, if the exploitation of quotas by non-United Kingdom interests is to be eliminated, all loopholes must be closed. The registration of fishing vessels for title may be a matter of concern. Possibly it is peculiar to Scotland, and it is probably an issue for the Committee to consider. I believe that at present there is an option on whether a boat is registered for title, but in Scotland such registration is recognised custom and practice.

Another point of concern is the lack of definition on when the old fishing vessel register will close once the new one has been opened. While it is accepted that both registers will run concurrently for a time, it is important that a limit should be imposed, perhaps of four or six months. The federation stresses that that will be necessary if the new register is to be a success.

The administrative arrangements for the register have already been mentioned. Although I believe that they are being centralised in Cardiff, I nevertheless welcome the Government's recognition of the need for business to continue to be conducted personally at local offices, because local knowledge and expertise must not be allowed to disappear. I was reassured by the answer given by Lord Brabazon in another place that officers will be retained in many ports, including two in my area, in Oban and Campbeltown.

The Bill provides for financial assistance with the costs of training Merchant Navy officers and rating. However, as has been mentioned, there is no word about assistance for training in the fishing industry. We should give that some consideration. The Sea Fish Industry Authority has provided only limited support, and that is not guaranteed beyond March 1988. Many fishermen are already undertaking training for survival courses, and it is surely reasonable that that branch of the maritime industry should receive some support.

I was interested in the Bill's definition of a fishing vessel as a vessel

"used . . . for or in connection with fishing for sea fish."

According to the Bill,

"'sea fish' includes shellfish, salmon and migratory trout (As defined by . . . the Fisheries Act 1981)".

I am sorry that eels in inland waters in Scotland are classified as freshwater fish, because they are at the mercy of foreign companies that come over and fish out all the eels, leaving our own eel fishermen with the thought of the dole. That is a tragedy, and I really do not know why eels should be so classified. Perhaps someone will consider the eel fishermen's plight.

I see no provision in the Bill that makes a serious attempt to arrest the decline of our once large, and always proud, Merchant Navy. Although the financial assistance for training and repatriation is welcome, it will not halt the decline of the fleet. I believe that what is required is a package of measures that will put us on more of an equal footing with our competitors.

The deep concern of many of my constituents about the decline came to light during the last election, when attitudes ranged from astonishment to downright disbelief that this island country could have allowed such a rundown in our fleet. While a Merchant Navy reserve sounds very laudable, I believe that a greater determination to have a viable merciant fleet crewed by United Kingdom seafarers would obviate the need for such a reserve. The continual "flagging-out" has meant that fewer and fewer people have come forward to be trained, and the danger is that we shall soon find ourselves without enough pilots or harbour masters, or enough crews for cross-channel ferries, Caledonian MacBrayne and the large ships criss-crossing the world's oceans.

I was delighted to learn that a company in Glasgow, Clyde Marine Training, which has 12,000 British seafarers on its register, set up a training schedule only last March. The company managed to attract 50 youngsters to train this year, and hopes for another 100 next year. The young cadets come in with O-grades, the Scottish equivalent of O-levels in England. With the use of existing finance through the Manpower Services Commission, the cost to the shipowner is very much less — about £6,000 over four years—whereas previously it was £25,000 per cadet over four years.

I referred to the interest of my constituents. That interest extends to the whole of the highlands and islands area, for it was a tradition stretching back to the first world war that crofters and fishermen left the land to join the Merchant Navy in far greater numbers than ever joined the Royal Navy.

During the depression of the 1930s, when unemployment was so high, highlanders used to come to Glasgow and join the long queue in Jamaica street, where stood the men on the dole hoping to join the Merchant Navy. But, because of their fishing and seafaring experience and tradition, those highlanders were often taken out of the queue and given jobs straight away. There is a wealth of knowledge, expertise and dedication among our people. It would be a tragedy if this country were to suffer any more loss, or see any further decline in our fleet and in the crews who man it. I give the Bill a general welcome.

6.18 pm

Sir David Price (Eastleigh): I detect a desire to make progress, so I shall be as brief as I can. In doing so, I declare both a constituency and a personal interest in the fortunes of the British Merchant Navy.

This is a miscellaneous Bill containing all sorts of different clauses. It therefore lends itself particularly well to study and debate in Committee. On the Opposition point on whether a Special Standing Committee should deal with it, I should mention that, as I understand the rule applying to such a Committee, it can have only four sittings.

Let me put forward an alternative suggestion. It might be an education for those of us selected as members of the Standing Committee to go and look at a few ferries, with the safety angle particularly in mind. Perhaps we could pay a visit to the ship tank at the National Physical Laboratory to examine hull designs and other such matters. The alternative would be to set up a Select Committee so that

[Sir David Price]

we could have proper assessors and advisers. However, I think that that is outwith the scope of what is being proposed.

I should certainly be sympathetic to any thought that we might have, as it were, hands—on experience of ferries, rather than just talking about them. In the normal Select Committees on which I have always served, I have found that the visits outside Westminster are often more valuable than the formal evidence that we take here.

I am asking almost the same question as the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) and my hon. Friend the Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter), which is: will the Bill assist in reversing the dramatic decline in the size of the British merchant fleet? We must all ask ourselves that. As the House knows, I have found myself in the unhappy and uncharacteristic position of having to warn the House about the steady decline in the size of the British Merchant Navy. I do not enjoy the role of Jeremiah—to be quite honest, I do not think that it becomes me. However, I fear that the figures quoted by the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney have proved that, unfortunately, one's fears were correct. The right hon. Gentleman quoted chilling figures to the House, which I shall not repeat.

The question that we must ask ourselves is the one to which my hon. Friend the Member for Tynemouth assumed that the answer was generally accepted: do we need a Merchant Navy? I should like to suggest briefly the headings, without developing them, for the reasons why I believe that it is absolutely essential that we have a Merchant Navy of reasonable size. The first, which has been touched on, is national security, not only during war but in situations of emergency that are short of war. All the evidence—again I shall not attempt to detain the House—shows that the total availability of merchant ships to the whole of the NATO Alliance has been steadily declining. That includes those ships that are flagged out to dependent territories and can be reached, and those under Liberian and Panamanian register. It is a matter of serious moment.

The House must remember that in our case the Merchant Navy is asked to fulfil three roles. The first is direct support for the armed forces. The second is the provision of transport to continental Europe which, in the jargon, is called sealift. The third is to ensure civil resupply of our island economy and, indeed, of western Europe from across the Atlantic or anywhere else. That alone gives cause for deep concern to anyone who cares not only about the Merchant Navy but about the defence of our country. There is also the economic question of control over our own trade. Again, the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney quoted some figures so I need not detain the House, although I wish to make the point that we should control our own trade. Furthermore, the balance of payments argument is a little too lightly swept away.

In those circumstances, where do we look for improvements? I suggest that there are two areas: first, measures to help reinvestment and, secondly, measures to assist with running costs. Again, the right hon. Gentleman quoted figures showing the dramatic fall in reinvestment in new vessels since 1984. There are various ways in which the position could be restored. At the moment, the preferred solution is roll-over relief for balancing charges. However, there should be no doubt that unless the Chancellor restores some form of investment incentive to British shipowners, we shall not get the ships. I hope that my right hon. Friend will talk to the Ministry of Defence and especially to the admirals about that.

I do not want to tell stories out of school, but when one meets some of the admirals informally on the various all-party maritime groups, one realises that they are clearly concerned about the decline in the British and the NATO Merchant Navies. However, they are fearful of the Treasury and that if anything were done to assist investment in the Merchant Navy it would somehow have to be paid for on the naval Vote. The admirals are a shrewd lot. I repeat that unless something is done we shall not have the necessary Merchant Navy back-up for the Royal Navy.

Referring to assistance on running costs, we are delighted to have aid for training costs—we shall discuss that more in Committee — and for repatriation. However, there is also the question of income tax for seafarers and the problem of social security changes and the like, all of which, in different ways, get more favourable treatment from other western European Governments, let alone what happens in the Far East.

We should not be too purist. We should look at what happens in the real world and see whether we can adapt it. I understand that the European Commission is giving serious consideration to some such measures of relief which would have general application. I hope that our Ministers who go the Commission will give such proposals their welcome and support.

Clauses 27 and 28 deal with the Merchant Navy reserve, which we welcome. However, it is no good having a reserve of sailors if there are no ships for them because, surprise, surprise, just as ships need sailors, sailors need ships. We do not have sufficient ships that might be available to the reserve. We also need the right mix of ships because it is a question not just of tonnage but of the right tonnage. I suggest that my right hon. Friends consider setting up a Merchant Navy strategic reserve. Time forbids me to go into that in detail but no doubt we can do so in Committee. However, it is a well-known concept and means doing the same for merchant ships as the Royal Navy Reserve does for officers and seamen. We must also consider the alternative of a crew-related allowance for those who take on extra reserve commitments.

I welcome clause 37, but in Committee we shall wish to probe my hon. Friends on precisely what it means. I put in a plea for us to take tougher powers to deal with other European countries over cabotage. I give notice now that I intend to table amendments to strengthen that part of the Bill. In such matters we must play to what I would call "French rules" rather than to the letter of the treaty of Rome. French rules were well illustrated when my right hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr. Walker) was Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Then we were threatened with being flooded with highly subsidised frozen turkeys, which would have upset turkey farmers in this country. Quite rightly, my right hon. Friend's veterinerary surgeons discovered the risk of a rather obscure turkey disease. That worked admirably and was within the law. I call that playing to French rules. The French play to the rule that they never do anything internationally that is not perceived to be in the interests of France. It is a question of all animals being equal, but French animals being more equal than other animals. Of

course, we wish to have free access around the coasts of Europe—that has been our steady position—but it is not happening. Incidentally, the Greeks are every bit as bad as the French, and probably worse——

Mr. Channon: They are worse.

Sir David Price: Yes. My right hon. Friend says, "They are worse"; and that affects the cruise trade. Therefore, I beg my right hon. Friend that in the matter of cabotage we play to French rules.

6.29 pm

Mr. Terry Fields (Liverpool, Broadgreen): When we debated the ministerial statement on the King's Cross fire, I was moved to say that it took tragedies such as that to prompt the introduction of legislation. We have discovered that with other legislation dealing with the fire service, which followed the death of firemen and civilians. I doubt whether we should be discussing amendments to a law introduced in 1894 had it not been for the death of nearly 200 people in the Herald of Free Enterprise disaster a short time ago. As my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) said, the importance of this debate arises from the fact that we are not likely to be in the game of making further changes to merchant shipping legislation or discussing it again this Session.

Two hundred lives have been lost, and in discharging our duties and responsibilities we must take every step to ensure as far as humanly possible that a repetition of the disaster is avoided—albeit in the confines of the concept that it is impossible to ensure 100 per cent. safety in any walk of life.

We are amending the Act, and any positive change is good. However, we must ask ourselves how good it is, and the importance of the task on which we are engaged will be reflected in the legislation, which should secure the safety of life and property and ensure the future of the British merchant fleet.

In the debate in another place last year the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport said of the Pilotage Act, which was a forerunner of this Bill, that it

"provides a framework within which an industry with proud traditions can adjust to modern circumstances and operate more efficiently." — [*Official Report, House of Lords* 10 November 1987; Vol. 489, c. 1292.]

It is important to bear those matters in mind.

I shall centre my remarks on a number of key issues. There is admirable scope, even in this debate, to consider valuable amendments to stiffen up the Bill, which is somewhat suspect in certain aspects. For example, there are anomalies about registration. I shall not wave a racist flag, but, in the interests of the safety of the crew and passengers of ocean-going vessels, we should ensure that vessels sailing under the Red Ensign are covered by legislation that ensures safety, protection and a good standard of shipping. Gibraltar has 150 registered ships. Gibraltar is part of the dependent territories, but last year it had no inspectors to police international regulations. It now has two inspectors—hardly sufficient to cope with the needs of a fleet of 150 ships. Those ships can fly the Red Ensign and thus, in the view of Merchant Navy officers, bring the Red Ensign into disrepute because of the lack of safety measures on those ships. Foreign-owned ships with foreign crews registered in Gibraltar under the so-called protection of the Red Ensign go to the Gulf and elicit the support and protection of the Royal Navy. We need to tighten up the Bill, and I am sure that we can make amendments in Committee to do so.

Last week I met members of the Herald Families Association. One of the deceased was an old friend of mine, and I therefore have close contact with the family and the association, which made a parliamentary sortie last week. I support the families' view. They are not vindictive. In framing legislation, we have a responsibility to ensure that there is no repeat of the tragedy visited on those families. I believe that we could take other measures in that direction.

The Merchant Navy officers have sought to separate the master from the owner-manager so that the master remains responsible for acts of omission over which he has control. However, the Bill deals with the provision of a suitable ship and suitable equipment and crew, over which he has no control. In those circumstances, there must be a divergence of responsibility and we must insert into the Bill that divergence of responsibility, by means of suitable provisions, to ensure that the law is observed by all concerned.

The demise of the merchant fleet in this country has been referred to. Tonnage has dropped by 64 per cent. in 10 years. In the same period the number of seafarers employed has dropped by 62 per cent.—from 80,000 to 30,000. Of the 500 deck and engine officer cadets employed in the industry, only 107 serve on British flag ships. That is a critical situation.

As has been said, if we cannot legislate for safety, there are certain other things that we can do. We can ensure that owners of shipping fleets have responsibilities and discharge those responsibilities, and that discussions on safety take place in company boardrooms, as they have not done hitherto. It is one thing to pass legislation: we must ensure that it is adequately policed. We must ensure that there are inspectors to check that what is laid down by Parliament is practised by the companies.

The Herald of Free Enterprise disaster was predictable, following as it did the Gateway disaster. Companies could have looked at recent history. Seventeen such vessels have sunk — the Gateway in a couple of minutes and the Herald of Free Enterprise in four. Companies should have acted positively, rather than merely responding to circumstances.

We must be very clear about what we are discussing in terms of the stability of vessels. We shall need expert advice if we are to ensure that our vessels have that stability. In the last two episodes, two ro-ro vessels went down in a matter of six minutes, collectively, with a loss of human life. That must mean that there is something wrong with the design of the vessels, and we need to correct that design fault. Hon. Members have talked about the use of the marine fleet in war time. We should remember that the Royal Navy refused to man these vessels in the Falklands extravaganza before they had been modified to make them safe. In Committee we must examine the question of stability.

There is widespread concern about the design of the ships, as the Herald Families Association told us the other day. That concern goes far beyond politics, and far beyond the interests of those who have lost loved ones. The naval architects and experts are all concerned about the matter. We in this House have a duty and responsibility to ensure that in Committee we insert into the Bill safeguards to protect such families.

[Mr. Terry Fields]

Time will not allow me to go into great detail, as I should have liked, on behalf of the families and the merchant shipping officers, although, given the opportunity, I shall raise some of those matters in Committee. Following the death of so many people in the Herald of Free Enterprise and Gateway tragedies, we must remember that the big ferries in operation now carry 2,000 passengers. If 2,000 passengers went down with a ship in a matter of minutes, it would be beyond the wit and ability of the rescue services to extricate them. We must seriously consider methods of evacuation in such circumstances.

Finally, I refer to early-day motion 176, tabled by me and signed by a number of my hon. Friends. It deals with the Herald Families Association and discusses the corporate responsibility of the shipowner. The merchant officers and others issued dire warnings of the faulty practices on that vessel and others operating on the line. Those warnings were never acted on in the boardrooms. They were never acted on by the parent company. Through neglect, human life was lost.

My early-day motion calls for corporate manslaughter charges to be brought against companies. It

"notes the findings of Mr. Justice Sheen, which highlighted the company's refusal of requests for both an additional officer and warning lights to indicate that the bow and stern doors were closed."

We have heard that some of those measures might be introduced.

Some Members may not be calling for the setting up of a Special Standing Committee. I would argue that retrospective legislation could be introduced, given the criminal negligence of those shipowners. I have been told that retrospective legislation cannot be introduced. I do not know whether it is retrospective, or ex post facto, but since 1980 the Government have introduced at least eight pieces of retrospective legislation—the National Health Service (Invalid Direction) Act 1980, the Employment Act 1982, the London Regional Transport (Amendment) Act 1985, the Housing and Planning Act 1986, the Rate Support Grants Act 1986, the Teachers' Pay and Conditions Act 1987, the Local Government Act 1987 and the present Local Government Finance Bill. All those measures contain retrospective provisions, and some were intended to punish what the Government would call profligate local authorities.

If we are sincere about redressing the injustice that families have experienced, we should be considering retrospective legislation to deal with those whose criminal disregard for the safety of crew and passengers allowed these tragedies to happen.

I hope that all hon. Members will be in agreement, so that we can ensure that what has happened does not happen again.

6.41 pm

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): I hope that the hon. Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mr. Fields) will forgive me if I do not follow the points that he has made but concentrate on two other aspects of the Bill.

The first matter has been touched on by various hon. Members — the provision in part III to establish the Merchant Navy reserve. Clause 28(2) provides:

"The Secretary of State may make such payments as he thinks fit in connection with the training and certification of members of the Merchant Navy Reserve".

Most of us have a vague idea of what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has in mind with regard to the training and composition of the reserve. I know that this matter will be raised in Committee, but it deserves a good deal of thought. It is pointless having a reserve if it consists only of former members of the Merchant Navy whose names are on a list somewhere in the Department of Transport. Obviously, there must be training, and we should give thought to the means of providing it, whether on existing vessels or on a special vessel, perhaps chartered by the Department, to provide suitable training.

It will come as no surprise to you, Mr. Speaker, or to other hon. Members, that my purpose in seeking to catch your eye is to speak about what I regard as the scandalous way in which, over many years, we have allowed foreign vessels to gain access not only to our waters but to our precious stocks and quotas. That has been detrimental to the fishermen whom I represent in Cornwall, which is the nearest area in the United Kingdom to Spain.

I almost stumbled across this matter when I was the Member of the European Parliament for Cornwall and Plymouth. The practice of what has become known as flag of convenience fishing was just beginning. I was horrified to learn how completely defenceless we were. I well remember going to a dusty office in Plymouth where foreign boats were registered. A very nice lady told me that she had no powers whatsoever and that if someone came in with a set of papers she had to register his boat.

Under pressure from myself and others, the position was changed and tightened up. In that regard, I pay tribute to Ministers, particularly those in the Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food, and especially the current Minister of State who has been very concerned about this matter.

Various measures were introduced — some were holding measures—but the matter developed to such a stage that at the end of the last year my right hon. Friend the Minister of State told me that there were 50 ex-Spanish vessels — flag of convenience vessels that had been transferred from Spain to Britain—on our register. In addition, a further 70 United Kingdom fishing vessels were beneficially owned in part or to a large extent by Spanish interests. Those vessels—whether transferred or bought by Spanish interests—are Spanish-owned. All the benefit that is derived from them goes back to Spain; they are British vessels only in the formal sense that they manage, by one means or another, to get on our register.

The harm that they have caused to our fishing interests is considerable. At long last we have the legislation for which I and others have been fighting for many years. I hope that it works. It is no good having legislation if it does not.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will say how these new powers will be applied. We know that to be on the new register vessels will have to be at least 75 per cent. owned by British interests.

How will the Minister, or his officials, determine that the provision is applied and obeyed? Speaking from experience, may I point out that the Spaniards are very adept at getting round rules and regulations. I would thoroughly endorse what my hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price) said earlier — that perhaps we need to play by the French rules. It is instructive that, to my knowledge, not one Spanish vessel has been transferred to the French register. The French would not tolerate it for one minute. Their administrators would ensure that it did

not happen. With this law in place, it is up to our administrators to ensure that Spanish vessels do not come on to our register by any device that they may try to use.

I well remember that many years ago I discovered one Spanish company that was supposed to be operating from an office over an antique shop in Kensington high street. All that it had on those premises was a little brass nameplate.

My plea is to ensure that the legislation works. If it does not, the anger of fishermen, particularly in Cornwall, will indeed be great. I hope and believe that it will work. We must ensure that these bogus vessels are completely removed from the register and that they are unable to fish from our quotas.

6.48 pm

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): I appreciate that time is short, so I propose to concentrate on one subsection of the Bill.

The Secretary of State was kind enough to allow me to intervene and raise the subject of surveyors. He is well aware that I have expressed concern over some time about the quality of the work that has been carried out, but that is no reflection on those who have been acting as inspectors and surveyors. However, because of the sheer volume of the work, there was a failure to carry it out. That may seem a tortuous way of putting it, but it is fair.

I am glad that an assurance has been given this afternoon that further surveyors will be recruited and that it is accepted that further costs will be incurred in acquiring the number of surveyors that we need if we are to inspect the ships that are currently registered and, indeed, many other ships that sometimes call at our ports on which conditions are anything but satisfactory. Safety extends not only to ships registered under the British flag or the flags of dependent territories, but to ships, which often carry British officers and seamen to the four corners of the world, registered under the flags of other nations. We are all aware of the scandal of flags of convenience over the years.

The assurance given by the Secretary of State this afternoon is indeed welcome. I can assure him that I shall be watching most carefully in the weeks, months and years ahead and, should I see any delay on his part or any diminution of that undertaking on this subject, I shall be after him. Safety is far too important to be left to political chance.

It is in that context that I want to raise the problem, as I see it, under clause 31(8)*(b)* relating to the duties of a master. While I welcome anything that increases responsibilities and the enforcement of those responsibilities, it really is drafted in a way that leaves a lot to be desired. Under that subsection "duty", in relation to a master, is defined as including

"his duty with respect to the good management of his ship and his duty with respect to the safety of operation of his ship, its machinery and equipment".

If one says it quickly enough, it sounds all right. But what exactly is meant by "good management"? Who is to be the judge of that? Who is to give the master of a ship a fair crack of the whip?

As the Secretary of State is well aware, certain questions have recently been raised about the Surveyor-General's organisation. Indeed, he is probably well aware of the letters from the National Union of Marine, Aviation and Shipping Transport Officers to him and to the Surveyor-General reminding the latter that at one time an undertaking had been given, as I understand it, that one of the Deputy Surveyors-General would be a man with nautical experience. Such a person would bring to the Department the practical everyday knowledge which is gleaned not from books, magazines and articles, but from the practical job.

Somebody in the Merchant Navy once told me that when he left college he certainly knew the rules; when he had sailed for a few years on the high seas he began to learn about the sea. It is that sort of knowledge that should be brought to the Department. In saying that, I am not criticising any of the persons in the Department, for whom I have the highest respect and regard, but Captain Shone, who has retired, has not been replaced by anyone with the necessary nautical experience. Perhaps the Minister, in replying tonight, will give an assurance that somebody with the necessary nautical experience will be appointed.

I do not want to stress the point too much tonight—I think that the Secretary of State and the Department are well aware of it—but if clause 31(8)*(b)* is to have any practical meaning and real bite, it is necessary that the surveyors from the Surveyor-General's department, when discussing what is meant by the management of a ship, should have the sort of day-to-day knowledge that comes from practical experience in defining the terms of duty.

Perhaps a simpler solution would be to teach parliamentary draftsmen—I am sorry that I have to repeat this each time I speak in the House—how to draft so as to convey into words something that is both practical and enforceable.

The Bill has many good parts, some of which have been mentioned by right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House. I wish the Bill a speedy passage to the statute book. It is long overdue in many ways.

I have mentioned one small aspect tonight and I will touch briefly on one other. I have listened to all that has been said about the Zeebrugge affair and, of course, one has nothing but the deepest sympathy for all those involved. If the rules of the sea are obeyed and if ships are surveyed and working practices are looked at carefully, tragedies such as that do not occur. It is necessary to remember that the scars are also borne by those who served on the Herald of Free Enterprise and they will be carried for ever. Perhaps we ought also to have a little sympathy for the members of that crew, many of whom showed such great heroism on that night.

On that note, I wish the Bill a safe passage.

6.55 pm

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): The hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham), having made his point so ably himself, will, I hope, excuse me if I do not directly follow him.

Having studied this Bill, I have come to the conclusion that it must have been drafted by Sir Humphrey Appleby's alter ego. I can imagine its genesis. It would have started with the Minister stating, "Humphrey, I've got a problem. Members are saying that I am to blame for the merchant fleet having declined by nearly two thirds in 10 years and that I am doing nothing about it. "But, Minister", would have come Humphrey's reply, "It's the Opposition's job to oppose." "No, Humphrey", says the Minister, "you don't understand; even my own side is blaming me. I've made a decision: we must do something."

[Mr. Jonathan Sayeed]

Aghast, Humphrey answers, "Do something? Why? Everything is going splendidly; soon there will be no Merchant Navy to trouble you. But we'll still have the staff, we'll still have the budget. Indeed, Minister, we'll need more men and more money to oversee its orderly demise. You, Minister, will have a bigger Department and will be even more important—pictures in the papers, the PM programme, perhaps even Terry Wogan." After a period of silent reflection by the Minister as he sees all these accolades passing him by, he sorrowfully announces, "No, Humphrey. I have to be dynamic. Go away and prepare a Bill."

And so a Bill was born, but Humphrey's hand had lost none of its cunning. A Bill there would be, a grand title it would have. It would contain many useful measures, but it would singularly fail to address the central problem that we, an island nation, appear to be doomed to maritime obscurity.

I have never underestimated the problems that confront us in reversing this trend. My right hon. and learned Friends will know that in previous speeches I have fully acknowledged the over-tonnaging, the predatory pricing, the shift in trade patterns and the impact of containerisation. But action can and must be taken not just to protect our commerce but to secure our defences.

My hon. Friend will have read the Sea Group report. Can he confirm to me today that he is confident that we could mount another major out-of-area offensive? Is he able, even as a paper exercise, to state what ships could be taken up from trade to mount another Falklands-type operation?

Personally I doubt that we are able to provide the numbers or, just as important, the mix of ships necessary unless we are prepared to rely on foreign powers. We have only to remember the reaction, during the Falklands campaign, of the United Nations, of Commonwealth countries and of some EEC countries to recognise how dangerous that would be. To subordinate our strategic imperatives to myopic considerations is folly.

In general, I agree with the Treasury view that financial and tax distortions would be counter-productive and that the market should be able to come to a decision based on commercial considerations, not on tax handouts. Therefore, the general restructuring of capital allowances and the reduction in corporation tax was a bold and sensible step by a very able Chancellor, but, when he included merchant shipping in the capital allowance proposals, he made a mistake. He ignored the fact that, unlike other assets such as plant, machinery and buildings, ships are mobile. They will be removed from a hostile tax regime to one that is more accommodating.

That is what has happened with British shipping, yet, elsewhere in Europe, where crew and capital costs are similar to ours, the evidence is that a more liberal tax regime increases the tax take. More ships paying less produce more revenue than a few ships paying more. The Treasury should not find that concept difficult to understand, because a direct analogy can be drawn between this proposal and that of personal taxation. We have seen that, in English-speaking countries, as the upper bands of personal tax are reduced, tax revenues from the same percentile have increased. This conclusion has become so obvious that the Labour Government of New Zealand are proposing to abolish all higher rate bands of personal taxation.

We look to the Secretary of State for Transport to persuade my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the force of these arguments. The Secretary of State for Transport must defend British shipping from the blinkered, single-year balance sheet approach of the Treasury. He must remind that organisation that the defence of the realm and its strategic interest must be paramount. He must show that these proposals will cost nothing; indeed, for the reasons that I have detailed and by the use of merchantmen as force multipliers, we can expect savings.

I wish to turn from general considerations to make some brief remarks on specific proposals in the Bill. I welcome the establishment of a Merchant Navy reserve, but I am doubtful about its effectiveness. First, I have yet to be persuaded that there will be ships for them to man. Secondly, if the Bill were ever extended to embrace serving officers, it must be recognised that most British officers are employed aboard foreign-owned or flagged ships and there is no guarantee that the owners would release them from their contracts of employment at this country's request. If the Bill is to include only those who have retired, we must remember that they become time-expired.

Although the training provisions are useful, I am not sanguine that they will encourage young men to join the Merchant Navy. I challenge my hon. Friend who will wind up the debate to say whether he would encourage another son of his to enter such a profession, given the uncertain future faced by a Merchant Navy officer.

My next point refers to certificates of competence, particularly those of Commonwealth countries. My hon. Friend the Minister will know that we currently recognise Commonwealth certificates of competence, yet doubts have been raised about whether they are always granted properly. As the United Kingdom had no ability to monitor their award, automatic recognition of Commonwealth certificates of competence should cease. Although, in the main, it is right to make the owner responsible for the safe operation of a ship, I can imagine occasions when such a proposal would be iniquitous, for example, in the case of a bare-boat charter, where the charterer provides the crew and thus the owner of the ship has no control over its safe operation.

As many hon. Members have dealt extensively with the problem of ship construction and safety, I shall not dwell long on his aspect. However, I ask my hon. Friend, when he winds up, to confirm that he will use his best endeavours to ensure that standards imposed on British ships become common standards. If they do not, British shipping will suffer yet further disadvantage. This is particularly important in the case of major structural changes such as longitudinal or transverse bulkheading of vehicle decks of ro-ro ferries.

I am pleased that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State confirmed that he intends to work through the International Maritime Organisation. I wish to pay tribute to that organisation, which exemplifies how United Nations organisations should operate. I wish to record my appreciation of the leadership displayed by its Secretary General.

I wish to turn now to clauses 36 and 37, which strengthen and widen the Secretary of State's power in cases of unfair competition. Time and again, the House has stressed that, although Britain observes the laws

against unfair competition, our Community partners and trading competitors do not; indeed, they flout them. Will my hon. Friend explain what action he proposes to take to combat cargo reservation and restrictions on cabotage? If he thinks that that will take up too much time in his wind-up speech, perhaps he will send a full reply detailing the position of our major competitors and partners and what action, if any, he intends to take.

Clause 29 fails to deal with individual lorry weights. I am surprised about this because they affect loading factors on board ship. I hope that my hon. Friend, either in Committee or by statutory instrument, will make provision for weighing freight vehicles at British ports. We know that about 30 per cent. of all vessels coming from France by ferry are overloaded. As we cannot expect the French to weigh vehicles leaving their ports, particularly when they conform to their laws but not ours, we must weigh them on entry to this country. By the use of a graduated system of fines with severe penalties for major and deliberate overloading, hauliers would not be tempted to take the risk and, consequently, ship safety would be improved and our roads would last longer.

Finally, I welcome the establishment of a marine accident investigation branch, separate from the marine directorate proposed in clause 32. Both will still be under the same Secretary of State and, although I am prepared to accept that "Chinese bulkheads" will probably be effective, I would have preferred to see the degree of separation enjoyed by the aviation industry.

If we judge these measures in terms of maritime safety and by the way they plug some holes in previous legislation, this modest Bill is sensible and welcome. However, if we judge it as we should, by what it will do to halt and reverse the rapid decline of the British merchant shipping industry, it fails. Unless we act, we shall rue the day that we watched idly as our maritime heritage and power disappeared before our very eyes. I hope that the Government will show that same ingenuity and effort of will in righting this mistake as they have elsewhere in the governance of this country.

7.8 pm

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): I congratulate the hon. Member for Bristol, East (Mr. Sayeed) on an elegant speech which contained a good many home truths and pertinent questions for his Front Bench. There is much to welcome in the Bill, although some points need further examination. However, as the hon. Gentleman suggested, the overall picture is that we have a mouse of a Bill to confront what I regard as a national crisis.

When the sins of the Thatcher years are finally tabulated, I believe that the destruction of the British Merchant Navy will be high on the list. It is incredible that this island nation, which still relies overwhelmingly on merchant shipping for its trade, should have witnessed a decline from 1,500 ships in 1979 to 400 ships in 1988. There is every prospect, as confirmed by the General Council of British Shipping, that that decline will continue so that, by the early 1990s, there will be about 100 ships left, almost exclusively coasters and ferries. That represents an extraordinary picture of the maritime strength and weakness of Britain in the late 1980s. I believe that those who have been responsible should be deeply ashamed.

It is a matter of some considerable interest to many hon. Members—if not, it should be—that there is not the slightest chance that a Falklands-type merchant operation could be mounted again, because the ships are not there. Recently, in the south-west of Scotland, a major military exercise was mounted—Purple Warrior. There was such a dearth of British merchant shipping that ships had to be hired from all over the western world to make up the numbers. I hope that we do not have a real conflict as opposed to a military exercise; but, if there is one, it seems unlikely that there will be time to organise the hiring arrangements before it is too late in the day.

Today, Conservative Members would like to create a mood of consensus. They would like to believe that the decline in the Merchant Navy is just one of those things that happened and that there was no political error involved. That is not the case. The destruction of the British Merchant Navy has been a direct consequence of the madness that prevailed in the management of British industry and the British economy from 1979 into the early 1980s.

When the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) had responsibility for merchant shipping, he said:

> "It seems to me that if British owners can switch their ships to a flag of convenience and as a result increase profitability, then it seems eminently sensible to me that they should do just that."

One can feel the sneer coming from those words. In the early 1980s, when Thatcherism was in full flood and everything was to be left to the market and laissez faire, such words were extremely fashionable. However, the paean of praise for flags of convenience, when quoted today, does not bring the same cries of "Hear, hear" from the Conservative Benches as it no doubt did in the early 1980s.

When it suits their purpose, Conservative Members like to cover themselves in the flag. However, in the past nine years they have shown a remarkable contempt for a flag that has served the people of this country well—the Red Ensign. It is not as though the policy advocating flags of convenience has been entirely abandoned. No one on the Conservative Benches has had the courage today to stand up and speak out in favour of flags of convenience, but the policy of the Government, behind the scenes and through international organisations, is one of support and promotion of such flags. In UNCTAD, the British Government have been in the forefront of resistance against phasing out flags of convenience. The British Government have blocked any move attempted within the EEC maritime policy against flags of convenience. British flags are fine so long as they do not conflict with the profit interests of those whom Conservative Members ultimately serve.

Because of time I wish to restrict my remarks to flags of convenience. In the Bill the provisional granting of certificates is reduced from six months to three months. I do not believe that that is good enough. Crown territories, such as Gibraltar, Hong Kong, the Cayman Islands and Bermuda, have been turned into disreputable, flag of convenience boltholes. If a disreputable, unscrupulous or careless shipowner can gain British registration for three months, there is nothing to stop him moving that ship to one bolthole and then to the next. He will still continue to fly the Red Ensign without any of the controls that have always been assumed—prior to this Government—to go hand in hand with the responsibilities of that flag, as he travels round the globe. Surely that is unacceptable. Provisional certificates should be done away with because

[Mr. Brian Wilson]

if shipowners can register for three months there is no way of getting them out again. I cannot understand how any Conservative Member can defend the principle that those territories, which exercise none of the controls that go with genuine British registration, should be allowed to use the Red Ensign to cover up operations that are patently substandard.

My hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mr. Fields) spoke about the number of inspectors in Gibraltar. The flag of that bolthole covered the Syneta that went down off Iceland a year ago. My hon. Friend said that, in the past year, the number of inspectors had risen from zero to two. That is even less of a step forward than might appear because the last place that most of the ships registered in Gibraltar are likely to be, or within 1,000 miles of, is Gibraltar. All the inspectors can do is check up on brass plates of addresses of convenience. We need an inspectorate system that allows inspectors of this country to insist upon boarding any ship that enters British waters, irrespective of the flag it may be flying and irrespective of the country or statelet with which it may be registered.

I believe that it is high time that we repaid some of the debts owed to the people who have served in the Merchant Navy over many years. It is tragic that communities which used to rely largely on employment within the Merchant Navy have seen that great industry disappear. Young seamen used to go on to colleges to learn the skills of the maritime industry and would travel the world as a result. Now, those colleges are closing and the courses are disappearing because there is no point in training to be a merchant seaman if there is no Merchant Navy to join. I hold the Government responsible for totally failing in the past nine years to take action because they were imbued with the market philosophy — philosophy callously represented by the words of the right hon. Member for Chingford and his lackey of those days, a gentleman by the name of Sproat, who is best forgotten.

The formation of a Merchant Navy reserve fills me with no excitement. I would regard it as ineffectual in any crisis. I also believe that that reserve adds insult to injury. In the coastal communities of this country there are thousands of unemployed seamen who would dearly love to be back aboard British ships — Red Ensign ships — working at their chosen career. That option is not open to them because, under the patronage of the Government, the Merchant Navy has come close to being wiped out. To tell those people that they are of no use to the country as seamen in times of peace but that they might get a call to do something in time of war shows additional disregard for them. It adds insult to injury.

The Government should come back to the House with a real Merchant Navy Bill. In the past nine years they have signally failed to present such a Bill to the House. That Bill should create incentives to build ships and keep them under the Red Ensign. It would act against abuses to the Red Ensign from flags of convenience. It would not give a nod and a wink to British shipowners who take their business where they want, employ Third-world labour at the lowest possible cost and disregard safety and other factors. It would introduce sabotage. I plead with the Government to do something for the Merchant Navy, for, my goodness, the Merchant Navy has done a lot for this country.

7.19 pm

Mr. Conal Gregory (York): The Bill is important, containing major new initiatives. However, they will not fully reverse the decline that we have discussed tonight in our merchant fleet, down from approximately 1,500 ships in 1975 to perhaps 400 last year.

We are debating the Bill against a background of enormous oversupply in world shipping capacity. But subsidy is not the right way forward. The Opposition introduced a number of red herrings. They were very short on specifics or constructive ideas, which is rather sad.

We are right to reduce the unnecessary regulation of the maritime industry. Despite red tape, some 60 per cent. of the United Kingdom shipping industry's international freight earnings were made in cross trades in 1986. I believe that Britain needs a capable merchant fleet in times of emergency or war, so I welcome the assistance the Bill proposes, both in greater safety at sea and ensuring stronger powers against unfair competition.

I wish to raise two specific subjects — responsibility for safety and light dues. The Bill imposes new statutory duties on owners, management, master and crew. Masters, who are highly trained, surely accept that responsibility, but one of my constituents, a shipmaster who lives in Chalfonts, York, raises the question whether a penalty of £50,000 and/or two years imprisonment for what will be a criminal offence is excessive. The Committee should consider where negligence lies if the owner or manager ignores a dangerous situation. Clauses 29 and 30 appear inadequate in that respect. The responsibilities of the owner and master need to be clarified, as we should otherwise be leaving a void at the mercy of case law.

The second subject I wish to raise is the imposition of light dues. Under section 634 of the Merchant Shipping Act 1894 the management of lighthouses and other navigational aids in the sea areas around the British Isles is vested in three general lighthouse authorities: Trinity House of Deptford Strond, the Commissioners of Northern Lighthouses and the Commissioners of Irish Lights. Income from light dues is carried to the general lighthouse fund, from which—subject to the consent of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport —the authorities' expenses are met, together with costs relating to certain overseas lights.

The authorities last year proposed an 18 per cent. increase in light dues, which the Government reduced to 14 per cent. Subsequently a £1 milliom levy on fishing vessels over a certain size was proposed. That increase was strongly resisted by ports and other shipping interests, on the ground that it would distort competition and put a further burden on Britain's port users.

However, the United Kingdom is competing with other European ports. Antwerp, Le Havre and Rotterdam—to take just three ports across the channel — impose no dues. The average cost of using Antwerp is £2·50 per tonne. Here the average is £7·50 to £15 per tonne, through light dues, the iniquitous dock labour scheme and European port subsidies. Felixstowe and Tilbury, for example, are put at an enormous disadvantage.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister can report a real reduction in light dues. A cursory glance at the accounts of the general lighthouse authorities suggests a surplus of £19 million in reserve, with an estimated £12 million at the end of 1987-88. In reality, £31 million is

expected. The discrepancy arises because of an underestimate of light due receipts, together with expansionist plans by the bureaucracy of the authorities, rather than efficient budgeting.

Last year's increase was unnecessary. Savings should be passed immediately to Britain's port users to ensure that we are truly competitive. Our food and other industries will benefit as a result. The general formula by which light dues are applied is seriously in need of re-examination.

Finally, it is scandalous that the United Kingdom is still paying 50 per cent. of the light dues for Eire. British taxpayers should not finance port costs in competitor countries.

Subject to those qualifications, I welcome the Bill. It is a major step forward from the Victorian era of 1894, the date of our last Bill on this important subject.

7.24 pm

Mr. Calum A. Macdonald (Western Isles): I have a twofold constituency interest in the Bill. First, there is a strong fishing interest in the constituency. Secondly, like the constituency of the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie), the Western Isles has a long tradition of merchant service. But the Bill is important not only to my constituency, but, obviously, the whole country—north and south of the border. That is why it is regrettable that Scottish National party hon. Members have been absent throughout the debate.

I want to be constructive. I welcome the provisions for registering fishing vessels in order to preserve United Kingdom quotas. That will be welcomed in my constituency as a first step in the right direction. It is not complete, but it is a welcome first step.

My response to the rest of the Bill must be lukewarm. The background against which the Bill must be judged is a steep decline in the Merchant Navy and the merchant service. In my constituency we do not need statistics to prove the decline. We have seen it happen in a very real way. As recently as the 1950s every family in the islands had one member or even two members serving in the merchant service. My father was a merchant seaman. We have today reached the predicament in which we are lucky to find even one seaman from each village still at work in the British Merchant Navy.

The crucial question is whether the Bill will help arrest that decline. Unfortunately, I fear that the answer must be no. Indeed, measures such as the establishment of the reserve are no more than an admission of the Government's defeat on this issue. The setting up of "Dad's Navy", as it has been described by the National Union of Marine, Aviation and Shipping Transport Officers, is an eloquent statement of the Government's despair. It is tragic, not only because of the continuing loss of jobs but the loss of a priceless tradition and history of skills which may prove impossible to replace.

The present decline cannot be laid at the door of another group of British workers pricing themselves out of jobs. Sometimes an attempt is made to blame that, but it is not true. For example, a French seaman is paid double what a British seaman is paid. A Norwegian is paid three times as much. In fact, a British seaman's wage is on a par with that of a Greek seaman, hitherto regarded as coming from a low wage economy. So I hope we can lay that ghost to rest.

My hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) rightly made clear the crucial importance of cabotage in any strategy to arrest the decline. I know that Conservative hon. Members have an ideological objection to any moves towards what they would regard as an artificial and protected state for the merchant service. But, as has already been pointed out, even from the Government Benches, we must live in the real world, and the fact is that France, Germany, Italy, Greece, Spain and Portugal, all within the EEC, all practise cabotage to some degree. Of course in the North sea we have the ridiculous situation of Norwegian supply vessels servicing the British sector, while practically no British ships are able to operate in the Norwegian sector.

I acknowledge the Government's view that protectionism is generally undesirable. But there is no realistic prospect of a genuine open market in this respect. The Government must surely change their attitude, just as the General Council of British Shipping has been forced to do, and change it soon, if the merchant service is to be saved.

Yesterday the Secretary of State for Scotland made it clear that he was considering the privatisation of the Caledonian MacBrayne ferry company which serves the inner and outer Hebrides from mainland Scotland. Opposition Members have many reasons to oppose any move towards privatisation but one reason should appeal to all hon. Members. There is at present nothing to stop any privatised ferry owner from turning himself into an offshore company, setting out with a new name and a new flag, and perhaps even a foreign crew.

We already have the bizarre example of British Channel ferries flying the flags of Bermuda and Finland. What a monument it would be to the Government's peculiar combination of ideological frenzy on privatisation and their hopeless apathy on saving the merchant fleet if one day soon ferries crossing from the Minch to the outer isles of Scotland were flying the flags of Bermuda or Finland. If that bizarre prospect is to be avoided the Government must get to grips with the decline of the fleet. Unfortunately, the Bill will not do that.

7.31 pm

Mr. Michael Irvine (Ipswich): The Secretary of State will have noticed that hon. Member after hon. Member has brought home to him the decline in the British merchant fleet and the need for action to combat it. The provisions in clauses 25 and 26 for financial assistance for training and for crew relief are welcome. So is the provision for the establishment of a Merchant Navy reserve. But those provisions go not nearly far enough. They are all addressed to the issue of manpower. However, the issue is not just one of manpower but of ships.

So long as the British Merchant Navy has to compete against unfair competition, its decline will never be satisfactorily reversed. How can it be fair for the British Merchant Navy to have to compete in a situation where so many foreign states keep their coasts protected, yet here on its own coasts it has to meet full competition from overseas merchant navies? So long as that fundamental unfairness persists, so the decline of the Merchant Navy will continue.

In general I am much in favour of competition but my support for competition is not of the ideological kind mentioned by the hon. Member for the Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald). Often allowing market forces to work their course has a beneficial effect in the long run, but if

[Mr. Michael Irvine]

competition is to be beneficial it has to be fair and free. The competition that our shipping industry faces is far from being fair and free.

It should be remembered that in 1985 United Kingdom registered and owned ships contributed no less than £745 million net to our balance of payments. It does not end there because they contributed a further £637 million in import savings. Those are large figures. They underline the importance to the national economy of the shipping industry in spite of its decline in recent years.

More important still is the contribution that the merchant fleet makes to our national security. In 1983 the then Under-Secretary of State for Trade, the former Member for Aberdeen, South, Mr. Sproat, following a not dissimilar debate when the decline of the British merchant fleet had been raised repeatedly in preceding speeches, said:

"the adequacy of the merchant fleet for defence purposes is kept under continual review by my right hon. and hon. Friends. In the considered opinion of the Ministry of Defence, the merchant fleet remains capable of meeting defence plans. I cannot emphasise that point too strongly." — [*Official Report*, 30 March 1983; Vol. 40, c. 433.]

Since that was said the British shipping industry has lost the advantage of the free depreciation provisions that it previously enjoyed. It lost that advantage in 1984. Since that was said, the United Kingdom merchant fleet has more than halved in strength. Many of us would like to know whether it is still the considered view of the Ministry of Defence that the merchant fleet remains capable of meeting defence plans. Many of us need to be reassured.

7.36 pm

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): I have two main interests in speaking on the Bill. The first, obviously, is that my constituency is Dover, where we handle about 15 per cent. of the nation's trade as it passes through each year; in addition, some 14 million passengers pass through the port each year. I have also taken an interest in shipping because for a short time I worked in the shipping industry.

Much has been said today about car ferries and their safety. It is important to place on the record, so that hon. Members can be fair to the many people who work in the shipping industry and in particular on ferries, that until the disaster of last year the record of ferry safety was one of the highest for any means of transport. The disaster of last year is brought home to me every week as I come to the House because I drive past the wood that has been planted in Dover in memory of those who died. I was pleased to take part in the planting of that wood and to meet many of the families and relatives of those who died. It is a memorable place and I hope that many of the family members will visit it over the years.

The Sheen report on the Herald of Free Enterprise disaster showed that complacency had set in in one operation. The consequences of the complacency were a horrific shock to everyone in my constituency. About half the crew died in the disaster, and half of those lived in my constituency. All of us in Dover have had to live with the aftermath of the disaster. It was a shock to everyone but especially to the 10,000 people whose work is involved directly or indirectly with the port and the ferry companies.

Since the disaster I have been on board the car ferries at Dover and have looked at the safety features that have been installed, including the features on the new ferries that are in operation. Many provisions of the Bill have already been brought into practice. I am pleased to tell hon. Members that a boarding pass system is in operation. There are warning lights and television cameras monitoring the bow doors and the vehicles on the car deck throughout the journey. The new car ferries have special features concerning bulkheads below the water line.

I commend the approach of the crew and officers on those car ferries, which today is of a very high standard and brings credit to the fleet. The administrative systems now in place have been greatly improved since last year and have been operated safely and efficiently. Much has been learnt as a result of that disaster. I am sure that hon. Members will agree that it is terrible that such a disaster had to take place before the lessons could be learnt.

Therefore, I welcome the safety measures in the Bill, because they will reassure the public that the voluntary practices now in operation in our ferry companies will become law. My local ferry companies will want to ensure that that law is obeyed.

I shall raise two matters of concern to our shipping industry. The position of cabotage in clause 37 has been mentioned in the debate. The shipping industry is concerned that the negotiations started by the Secretary of State's predecessor within the EEC were not successful for Britain. I hope that the present Secretary of State will renew the vigorous efforts of his predecessor to get EEC agreement on this point. It is fundamental that we should not keep our markets open for foreign vessels to ply our coastal trade unless our ships can enter overseas markets. We did not join the EEC to be placed at a competitive disadvantage within the Community.

I also ask Ministers to consider with my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer the position of investment in the shipping industry in Britain. The hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) conveniently managed to put together some statements and figures that implied that the Government were trying to do down the shipping industry. Nothing could be further from the truth. The United Kingdom tonnage peaked in 1974 after several successful years under a Conservative Government. The decline of the shipping industry dates from the Labour Government's term of office between 1974 and 1979. Having recognised that decline, it is no good for Conservative Members to say that Opposition Members bear the responsibility for it. We must look at ways in which it can be reversed.

I draw the attention of the Secretary of State to the fact that, as an accountant, I appreciate the effect of tax allowances suddenly being changed at short notice from 100 per cent. to 25 per cent. The effect of capital allowances is more important to shipping companies than to any other companies. The balance sheet of a shipping company will show that a high proportion of its assets are in large, expensive ships. That is in complete contrast to the assets of companies in manufacturing and other areas of the economy. It means that ships that may depreciate over 10, 15 or 20 years cause accounting differences to the taxable profit.

An odd effect is that shipping companies can be assessed as profitable for tax purposes when their accounts may show a break-even or loss position. That could result in a rate of tax that could not be achieved, even by a Labour Government. I am sure that hon. Members can work out that, from an accounts point of view, taxation

can be more than 100 per cent. of the profit. That is the curious effect of 100 per cent. capital allowances being lowered to a rate of 25 per cent. and possibly less in subsequent years.

If the Department of Transport is serious in looking after the interests of the shipping industry in the next few years, it will carefully examine and communicate the findings of such examinations to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. I suggest that this matter needs to be examined.

7.44 pm

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): The debate has been interesting, if only for the reason that there has been a great deal of self-discipline and that has allowed many hon. Members to make significant and worthwhile speeches.

It has been suggested that the Bill is not the greatest Merchant Shipping Bill since 1894. As one of the organisations involved in shipping suggested, it is something of a rag bag of measures. We need not apologise for that. Primary legislation provides the opportunity to tidy up various matters, so Opposition Members accept the general thrust of what the Government seek to achieve.

Two overriding issues have dominated the debate. Safety has been on the minds of all hon. Members because of the disaster to which I shall refer later in my speech. Another important issue is the decline of the merchant shipping fleet. The Bill has no relevance to that problem. Hon. Members on both sides of the House have systematically explained to the Secretary of State why the Bill is irrelevant to the decline of the merchant shipping fleet. Only the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw), with an extraordinary and breathtaking display of mental gymnastics, managed to blame the Labour Government for the rapid decline in the merchant shipping fleet. I will consider that deeply, but I doubt whether I shall draw the same conclusion.

The British fleet has declined dramatically during the past few years since the removal of the initial allowances in the 1983 Budget. The General Council of British Shipping is at one with the parliamentary Labour party and others in regretting that move. It is clear that it did massive damage to the British fleet.

The Government have allowed not only the flagging out of large sectors of the British merchant fleet, but parts of it to be sold off. I particularly refer to BP. The Government can be described fairly and clinically as the Government of flaggers out and floggers off. That has been a great disadvantage to the British economy, almost to the level of neglect. My right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) made clear the importance of the merchant shipping fleet to the British economy. Historically, it was much more important, and it could do much more for the United Kingdom economy if the Government adopted measures that allowed for its development, not its destruction.

Conservative Members were concerned about cabotage. As my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) pointed out, only two years ago Opposition Members argued that the Government should do something about cabotage, through legislation, the European Court or by applying our own cabotage system. At that time, no voice was raised on the Conservative Benches—*[Interruption.]* I defer to the hon. Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price) who has always been a consistent supporter of that view.

Sir David Price: I have always been a consistent supporter of it.

Mr. Lloyd: I shall not argue about the consistency of one hon. Member.

The Government have consistently refused to consider imposing such measures. It is time that the Government got off the fence. Will they take action through the courts to make sure that the British fleet has equal access to other coasts? Shall we make sure that Italy, Greece, Spain and France allow our merchant fleet to compete on equal terms in their waters, or shall we instead make sure that at least we have protection for our fleet against the sort of unregulated competition in our coastal areas that would not be, and is not, allowed by our competitor nations?

Those are the important issues. The decline of the fleet is a fundamental issue. Sadly, the Bill is largely irrelevant to it.

Great play has been made by the Secretary of State and some of his predecessors about the importance of the fleet in time of war. On 10 December 1986 the then Secretary of State, now the Secretary of State for Social Services, in a speech to the General Council of British Shipping, said:

> "We quite deliberately do not take a view of what should be the size or shape of the industry in peace time. Our functions in respect of shipping in war or emergency are altogether different."

For the life of me I cannot understand how it is possible not to have any plans for the industry in peace time, and yet believe, whether naively or honestly, that vessels will become available in time of war. That matter was also mentioned by Conservative Members.

As has been pointed out, as recently as last November, during the military exercise Purple Warrior, it was necessary to bring in ships from outside the United Kingdom because they simply were not available from the British merchant fleet. The Minister for Public Transport shakes his head. I hope that he will explain why. On that very issue Lord Brabazon said that suitable United Kingdom vessels are not always available to meet MOD requirements. That is not because, as he intimated, that the British fleet is so successful throughout the world—we all know that that is not true—but simply because the fleet no longer exists.

Whatever the merits of the Falklands war, the merchant fleet was assembled with some difficulty to supply that military action. All hon. Members know that today it would not be possible to supply the Falklands exercise with the merchant fleet slimmed down to its present level.

The time has come when the Government must put clearly on the record whether in all seriousness they believe that foreign vessels would become available. In the past, Ministers have always ducked the question of what powers would be used to requisition ships flagged out to British dependent territories. I have tried to discover the mechanism whereby they could be requisitioned, but I am told that no clear answer exists. Vessels flagged out to flags of convenience nations are beyond the Government's control. That is a matter of fundamental importance to our nation's future.

The hon. Member for York (Mr. Gregory) said that he was unhappy about clauses 29 to 31, which deal with the balance between masters and owners and the relationship

[Mr. Lloyd]

of the crew. I do not want to go into the arguments in great detail. I simply give notice that we are not wholly satisfied with the balance between the different parties involved. In Committee, we shall want to examine the relationship between the responsibility of the owner, brought into the legal framework for the first time—we welcome that—and of the master and crew.

In general, we are not unhappy with the new registration procedure with its several tiers, but that system must guarantee, in the minimum possible time, that vessels sailing under a British flag, whether directly from Britain or from one of the dependent territories, should maintain the highest possible safety standards. I think that the Minister will agree with me on that. Different standards should be allowed only in the short term, and maximum efforts should be made to achieve the best possible standards.

My hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) discussed the history of the surveyors and whether in the past they have been equipped to do the job with which they have been entrusted. I share his view that in the past that has not been the case. I do not make my comments in any party political sense. Every hon. Member is concerned about safety after the Herald of Free Enterprise tragedy. I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) who spoke on behalf of the families of those involved in the disaster. I am sure that every hon. Member will want to associate himself in general terms with his remarks.

All Members will accept that there can be no compromise on safety matters, particularly when examining what went wrong. Things did go wrong and there was a considerable chain of errors. The company has already been thoroughly indicted, and that is right and proper. The Government's response now is to recognise that liability should apply to the owner. However, we have a responsibility to the families of those who died in the Herald of Free Enterprise to make sure, through general safety measures and structures, that such a tragedy cannot happen again.

It is worth quoting briefly from a letter from J. W. Kime, a United States coast guard, to Mr. de Rohan, chairman of the Herald Families Association. He said:

"I have already instituted a program to verify that the stability of ships taking on passengers in the United States is in accordance with the International Convention on Safety of Life at Sea. In addition, the United States has been pushing very hard at the International Maritime Organisation for damage stability standards for cargo ships, which under present regulations could sink with a hole in their side only as large as a dinner plate."

I mention that because I want to refer to the reason why the Opposition thought the Special Standing Committee structure would be worthwhile introducing. It is important to examine roll-on/roll-off ferries, but it is also important that somebody with the experience and professional knowledge of Rear Admiral Kime should be able to say that the safety record of other categories of ships should be examined. That is why we hope that the Minister will be able to reconsider the Government's position on the Special Standing Committee.

Because safety is of such fundamental importance, we welcome the new independence of the accident investigation department. The hon. Member for Bristol, East (Mr. Sayeed) reminded me of a point that I had intended to make when he talked about the necessity for independence. It is increasingly the view of many in the industry that there is a strong argument for an independent structure for the examination of the safety of shipping.

The Opposition, with others, believe that the time has come for the Health and Safety Executive to be concerned with maritime safety. The Health and Safety Executive is already experienced in safety in many areas of industrial life. Obviously, there are differences, but they are not so fundamental that an already established independent organisation could not learn and benefit from existing expertise in the Department of Transport to do a job independently of the Department in the same way as applies to aviation. The Opposition would like to put on record tonight the fact that we shall look at it when the Bill is in Committee.

The very important areas of safety and the decline of the fleet have been touched on tonight. The Opposition will want to examine the Bill carefully to ensure that on safety we are doing all we can within the legislative framework. We accept that much has already been done by the Government about the ferries, though not directly through the Bill. It is our obligation—the obligation of every hon. Member—to make sure that safety standards are put at the top of the list of priorities. We will, therefore, devote considerable time to them in Committee. We still feel that, when it comes to the decline of the fleet, the Bill is largely irrelevant. That is the view of practically every hon. Member who has spoken tonight. Opposition Members will not tonight vote against the Bill, as structured, but we feel that it does not adequately take care of the interests of the merchant fleet in Britain.

8 pm

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. David Mitchell): Anyone listening to the debate tonight cannot but have been struck by the breadth of personal experience of the merchant fleet which resides on both sides of the House. The debate has inevitably taken place under the shadow of the Zeebrugge disaster, and on all sides of the House our hearts go out to those involved. In opening the debate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State dealt at some length with the wide-ranging actions taken by Government, both in response to, and going further than, the Sheen inquiry.

Hon. Members have raised certain points on safety which I would like to turn to now. My hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) spoke sensitively on behalf of the association of bereaved families and asked me about the date for the introduction of compulsory boarding cards: 29 February is the date by which United Kingdom-flagged ships will have to comply whether sailing from United Kingdom or from foreign ports. For foreign ships the order has to go through the affirmative procedure of this House, and my right hon. Friend has, therefore, considered it prudent to set the date of 1 April for these ships.

I should also make it clear that we have no jurisdiction to require boarding cards for foreign ships sailing from foreign ports and that we must look to our negotiations with other European Governments in this respect. The hon. Members for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) and Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) asked about the possibility of a Special Standing Committee. Mr. Justice Sheen carried out a most thorough investigation of the causes of the tragedy and made many detailed recommendations, which

we are following through. His work was valuably supplemented by the coroner's inquest. We need not go back to square one, therefore, and we shall press on to bring these changes into the law as soon as possible.

Mr. Frank Field *rose*——

Mr. Mitchell: I have a lot of points that hon. Members have raised with me. May I just take them a little further? The hon. Member for Aberdeen, North, the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer), the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South and the hon. Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mr. Fields) all raised the question of the intrinsic safety of the roll-on/roll-off design.

Ro-ro ferries, when intact, are perfectly stable. They become unstable only when large quantities of water reach the vehicle deck, which is well above the level of the sea. In the case of the Herald, the water entered through the open bow doors from the bow wave at full speed. The various measures that we have already taken will do everything possible to prevent a repetition of that.

The Sheen report rightly identified among the proposals that it called "longer term" the need for research into aspects of ferry design. Accordingly, a steering committee set up by my hon. and noble Friend in October has been developing a programme of research to look at all the items on ship stability listed by the Sheen report as longer term items. Portable bulkheads, raised particularly by the hon. Members for Aberdeen, North and Walton, will certainly be one of the possible measures that this research will cover.

The hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) raised the issue of the condition of foreign vessels in United Kingdom ports, seeking that they should be inspected. The system known as port state control carries this out. We have an undertaking to inspect 25 per cent. of vessels coming into our ports, and we inspect more than that. What is perhaps more important—and I can claim some responsibility for this during my earlier activities in that side of the Department—is that it is not done on a random basis. With the aid of the computer based at St. Malo we are operating a system with the western European countries which maintains a comprehensive record of the inspections of ships. If a vessel comes in which has not been checked in some other country for port state control and nothing is known about it, it is highly likely to be checked. A priority system ensures that those which are pretty certain not to be in danger of difficulties are given a lower priority in the system. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will feel that in that way we are doing exactly what he was seeking in his earlier intervention.

Mr. Bermingham: I am delighted to hear what the Minister has to say and I thoroughly welcome the idea of looking at vessels which have not normally been inspected elsewhere. Will he not agree with me, however, that I sought to press the point that unless we have an adequate number of surveyors we cannot carry out that sort of checking, which is more than welcome?

Mr. Mitchell: Yes, of course. I entirely accept what the hon. Gentleman has said. The number of surveyors has gone down but not by as much as the number of ships in the United Kingdom fleet, so pro rata the staffing level is better than it was before. It is a legitimate point to make.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: The surveyors have a responsibility not just for the domestically registered fleet but for those ships which have disappeared from the British register and have gone elsewhere. Could he give comparative figures for surveyors and vessels to take that into account? It is a much more important figure.

Mr. Mitchell: If the hon. Gentleman will allow me, that is a Committee point. I will have armed myself with detailed information by the time we reach that stage.

The hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie) asked about the appropriateness of certain requirements for big vessels in relation to island ferries. I sympathise with the point that she makes and I shall write to her in detail on the matter.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bristol East (Mr. Sayeed), speaking with the wealth of experience of someone who represents one of our traditional ports, raised important matters. I cannot cover all of them because of the time available but I can say that we have taken on board his point about bare-boat charters and we shall amend clauses 29 and 30 to cover ship managers and ship charterers.

Several hon. Members raised matters concerning fishing. In paricular, I can tell my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) that I am keenly aware of the concern felt throughout the fishing industry over foreign, mainly Spanish, vessels registering in the United Kingdom and then using the United Kingdom fishing quota. This quota-hopping is an abuse of the system. It is no light matter. There are now some 130 vessels which are largely foreign-owned on the United Kingdom register. The extent of their activities is demonstrated by the fact that landings in Spain in 1987 amounted to over half the recorded United Kingdom catch of western hake. That confirms what my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives was saying about the harm that is being done. The new arrangements which will require fishing vessels to be at least 75 per cent. United Kingdom-owned will effectively stop this legalised poaching.

Part II of the Bill is complex because the new safeguards for the legitimate United Kingdom industry must be watertight. Already leave has been sought from the High Court to challenge the Government's right to introduce this legislation. At a preliminary hearing, the challenge was withdrawn and costs awarded to the Government. My hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives also asked whether the arrangements would be effective.

I want to pay tribute to the industry for its co-operation and detailed assistance, and in particular to the Scottish Fishermens Federation, to the Clyde Fishermens Association, whose secretary phoned through his support today, and to Daphne Lawry, the doughty fighter for the Cornish fishing interests, who told me this morning that she was delighted with the thorough work that has been done.

Mr. Harris: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for paying tribute to the fishing industry, which started the whole momentum for the campaign. I pay my own tribute to it also.

My hon. Friend mentioned the court proceedings in this country. There is some suggestion that if, as I am sure it will, the Bill becomes law, it will be challenged in the European Court. Has he anything to say about that? Is it a real threat to the effectiveness of the proposals?

Mr. Mitchell: We are confident that what we are doing is wholly within the spirit of the proper way in which the fishing quotas were meant to operate.

My hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives also raised a pertinent point about how the policing would be done. Clause 13(6) gives powers to appoint a person to investigate eligibility to the register. He will have the power as an inspector under section 27 of the Merchant Shipping Act 1979. Those powers include powers to enter premises and require production of documents.

The decision to have a central registry at Cardiff will avoid the possibility of foreigners who are refused at one point going to another to try to register. I hope that we have stopped up the holes in that way.

My hon. Friend the Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter) and the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute asked about more information on the registry of fishing vessels. Most registered business is already conducted by mail, and fees for the new arrangements will be discounted so as to constitute an encouragement for postal business. For transactions that necessitate a personal appearance, however, a local office service will be available from 23 offices of fishery departments around the coast. Those offices will have stocks of various forms, and by means of facsimile links with Cardiff will be able to provide certified transcripts, access to the registry and place markers on where transactions are to be conducted. Vessels will continue to be registered as belonging to one of the 112 traditional ports of registry. I hope the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute will feel somewhat encouraged by that.

The hon. Member for Aberdeen, North raised the issue of section 42(2) which was repealed as a result of an amendment in the House of Lords. The reasons behind it are not as dire as the hon. Gentleman feared they might be. That section has now been overtaken by a more general provision in the Merchant Shipping Act 1974 which allows seafarers to take strike action providing that the ship is not at sea at the time. Section 42(2) allows a seafarer to give 48 hours' notice of his intention to terminate his employment on a ship, provided that, at the time, the ship is securely moored in a safe berth in the United Kingdom. During the period of notice the seafarer cannot be compelled to go to sea. This provision opens up possibilities for abuse, particularly on ferries, since by giving notice but not actually going on strike the crew cannot be compelled to operate the vessel. That is an abuse of what was intended by section 42(2), and I am sure the hon. Gentleman would not want to support or sustain an abuse of that sort. I can give him the clear assurance that the other forms of legislation covering strike action to which I have referred satisfy the point that he would otherwise legitimately have raised in this connection.

As regards the merchant fleet and the national interest, numbers are not the whole story. The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) and my hon. Friend the Member for Tynemouth commented on the defence aspect. The other aspect concerns the health of the merchant fleet as a major United Kingdom asset. The Merchant Navy makes a vital contribution to our national defence needs. We need access to ships and trained crew —hence the Bill's provision on training.

In answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Tynemouth I can say that YTS provides training for 16 to 19-year-olds at officer or rating level. The Bill takes that further with a spend of £3·5 million a year on an additional two-year training scheme to become officers, and four years for those who are not ex-YTS trainees. The scheme will start in 1988-89, and also provides some money towards officers who are training to become masters.

My hon. Friends the Members for St. Ives and for Tynemouth asked for more information about the reserve. As hon. Members know, the Bill sets up the Merchant Navy reserve, which is open to British seamen who are on the Cardiff register, in which their qualifications are recorded. Evidence of health will be sought through the normal seafarers' medical certificate. A bounty of £200 a year will be payable. Members can resign up until an emergency, if they so wish, and the proposed age limit is 55—but we would welcome the advice of hon. Members and of the Committee that will consider the Bill on whether that is the appropriate age.

I say to the hon. Member for Stretford that, in spite of the decline of the fleet, we still have enough ships to support any likely overseas operation.

Mr. Frank Field: In previous years we have had clear statements from the Ministry of Defence that it is happy with the size of the merchant fleet. Has the Minister had any conversations with his colleagues in the Ministry of Defence more recently about that? Are they still satisfied with the fleet's size?

Mr. Mitchell: We are continually having conversations with our friends in the Ministry. If the hon. Gentleman wants to put down a question to my colleagues, I am sure he will receive an answer.

The hon. Member for Stretford said that the problem with exercise Purple Warrior was that it suggested that there were not enough United Kingdom vessels to be able to mount an overseas operation in an emergency. It is quite wrong to suggest that there was a shortage of United Kingdom vessels; we had plenty but they were gainfully employed in commercial operations. Rather than interrupt those operations for a test of emergency, some Danish vessels were chartered because they were less active at that time. Most hon. Members would recognise that that was a sensible way in which to proceed. There would have been uproar in the House if we had proceeded in the alternative way of requisitioning vessels that were otherwise gainfully employed.

Mr. Wilson: If the General Council of British Shipping's forecast of a decline to 100 ships—almost exclusively coasters and ferries—is fulfilled, will that still represent a satisfactory military commitment by the Merchant Navy?

Mr. Mitchell: Of course, we are watching with concern what is happening. We keep a constant eye on that. If something of that sort happened we would take a great deal of interest in it and consider how to react. What matters when mounting overseas operations such as the Falklands war is the type of vessel that is required. Most of the loss of tonnage from the register in recent years has been of giant crude oil and dry bulk carriers, which are not vessels that one would require for the support of the Royal Navy.

Mr. Sayeed: Will my hon. Friend, in his normal courteous fashion, now accede to the request I made earlier, when I asked him to state, as a matter of paper exercise, what vessels he would take up from trade should there be another Falklands-type episode?

Mr. Mitchell: On further consideration, I do not think that my hon. Friend would expect me to make that information public.

There is another aspect to the value of our merchant fleet in addition to defence. The fleet is a great British asset and a huge investment. Some people try to blame the Government for the merchant fleet's decline. The truth is that there are many complex reasons for the decline, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made clear. Those reasons are connected with shifts in the pattern of world trade and our own trade. For example, when oil is brought ashore through a pipeline from the North sea, there is no need for a vast fleet of tankers to bring oil from the middle east.

It is important that the United Kingdom fleet should be viable and profitable. Thanks to outstanding management by our shipping companies and the officers and men of our merchant fleet, much of the industry—not all of it—is profitable, competitive, viable and making an increasing contribution to our balance of payments which have risen by £221 million since 1985-86. The overall deficit on the sea transport account is the lowest since 1982.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, East, my hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw), the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney and others commented on tax aspects. Hon. Members will be aware that those are matters for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. I will draw his attention to the points that have been made in the debate. I hope that hon. Members will believe that that is helpful.

It is very important that we should understand the complex reasons why there are shifts in the strength of our fleet in different types of vessels. To achieve a better understanding, we have carried out some research into the short sea trade and we are publishing an assessment of that trade today. The report covers the pressures within that trade and the way in which it is moving. A copy of the report will be placed in the Library of the House and I believe that hon. Members will find it very helpful.

Of course the Government have an important contribution to make and that is well demonstrated by the Bill. I can tell my hon. Friend the Member for Tynemouth that clause 37 strengthens the Secretary of State's powers and the effectiveness of the EEC in co-ordinating action against unfair and discriminatory activity by third countries. The Bill arms us for the first time with a practical means to combat unfair practices inside and outside the EEC. Some 60 per cent. of our United Kingdom shipping international freight earnings come from cross trades and that demonstrates how vital it is that access to those markets should be maintained for the health of our merchant fleet. I want to pay tribute to the officials in the Department of Transport who visit ceaselessly one place after another trying to find ways in which to keep open those trading opportunities that are so important to the health of our fleet.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, East asked for details about foreign cargo reservations. As he has tabled a question for answer tomorrow, I hope that he will wait 24 hours for his reply.

My hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Gregory) raised the question of light dues and the costs and burdens on the users of our ports. I have some helpful news to announce. Good progress is being made in reducing the costs of the three general lighthouse authorities. The size of their tender vessel fleets is being significantly reduced following a consultants report. Progressive savings are being made through the alteration of lighthouses and by other means. In addition, revenue from light dues is buoyant thanks to the increasing volume of trade passing through our ports. Taking all those factors into account, the Government have decided that a reduction of 10 per cent. in light dues for 1988-89 will be possible. The necessary order will be laid shortly.

Looking further ahead we expect to receive the report of the working party studying the structure of light dues. Hon. Members will be interested to know that I understand that that report will include a recommendation that we should abolish light dues on deck cargo. That will require an amendment to be tabled in Committee.

Many hon. Members referred to cabotage, including my hon. Friends the Members for Dover, for Tynemouth and for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price) and the hon. Member for Stretford. We cannot accept the continuation of the present inequitable situation. Matters are moving forward. The German Government now occupy the presidency of the EEC and they have moved quickly to reopen the negotiations on cabotage regulations. The first round of negotiations took place this week. Whereas under the United Kingdom presidency unanimity was required for shipping regulations, with the Single European Act in place, decisions can be reached on the basis of a qualified majority. That gives us grounds for hoping that the problem can at last be resolved.

The Bill contains 53 clauses and eight schedules. It appears complex, but its purposes are simple and straightforward. They are pre-eminently to improve safety; to close loopholes on ship registration; to deal with fish quota poaching; to provide for a Merchant Navy reserve; to improve training and assistance to ship operators for crew relief; and to assist the merchant fleet with stronger powers to keep open the markets in which it trades. For greater security of our defences, for safety and for the health of our merchant fleet, I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Motion made, and Question put, That the Bill be referred to a Special Standing Committee — *[Mr. Robert Hughes.]*

The House divided: Ayes 52, Noes 140.

Division No. 158] **[8.26 pm**

AYES

Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Battle, John	Kennedy, Charles
Bermingham, Gerald	Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*	Kirkwood, Archy
Corbyn, Jeremy	Lamond, James
Cryer, Bob	Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*	McAllion, John
Fatchett, Derek	Macdonald, Calum
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*	McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*	McNamara, Kevin
Flannery, Martin	Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Flynn, Paul	Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Foot, Rt Hon Michael	Morgan, Rhodri
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*	Morley, Elliott
George, Bruce	Mullin, Chris
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*	Murphy, Paul
Home Robertson, John	Pendry, Tom
Howells, Geraint	Pike, Peter
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*	Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*	Prescott, John
Ingram, Adam	Shore, Rt Hon Peter

Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Spearing, Nigel
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dafydd Elis
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wilson, Brian
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Alun Michael.

NOES

Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bowis, John
Bright, Graham
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Burt, Alistair
Carrington, Matthew
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spa'd'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayward, Robert
Heddle, John
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Timothy
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, John
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
Mans, Keith
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Squire, Robin
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Kenneth Carlisle and
Mr. Alan Howarth.

Question accordingly negatived.

Bill committed to a Standing Committee, pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

MERCHANT SHIPPING BILL *[LORDS]*
[MONEY]

Queen's Recommendation having been signified——

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Merchant Shipping Bill *[Lords]*, it is expedient to authorise—

(a) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—

(i) any expenses incurred by the Secretary of State in consequence of the provisions of the Act; and

(ii) any increase attributable to the Act in the sums so payable under any other Act;

(b) the payment out of the Consolidated Fund of any sums required to fulfil guarantees given by the Treasury in respect of sums borrowed by the Secretary of State for the purpose of defraying expenses payable out of the General Lighthouse Fund;

(c) the payment out of the National Loans Fund of any increase attributable to the Act in the sums so payable under section 3 of the National Loans Act 1968.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

MERCHANT SHIPPING BILL *[LORDS]*

[WAYS AND MEANS]

Resolved,

That for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Merchant Shipping Bill *[Lords]* ("the Act"), it is expedient to authorise—

(a) the imposition by an order under section 14 of the Merchant Shipping Act 1974 (as amended by the Act) of—

(i) charges in respect of ships entering ports in the United Kingdom, or

(ii) any tax or duty in pursuance of a Community obligation;

(b) the charging of fees;

(c) the payment of sums into the Consolidated Fund.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

Welsh Development Agency Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

8.37 pm

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Peter Walker): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The purpose of the Bill, as effected by clause 1, is to increase the statutory financial limit for the Welsh Development Agency from the present level of £450 million to £700 million.

The limit was last raised by the Industry Act 1981, when it was anticipated that another adjustment would not be needed until 1989. Present forecasts suggest, however, that the limit will be reached early in the forthcoming year. It is therefore necessary to raise the limit now so as not to inhibit the agency's contribution to the redevelopment of the Welsh economy.

1987 has been a fabulous year, not just for the Welsh economy, but for the contribution that the Welsh Development Agency has made to it. Every year since 1981 lettings of Welsh Development Agency factories have increased, but I am delighted to say that this financial year they will reach an all-time record of 2·3 million sq ft, an increase of 12 per cent. on the previous year. The number of jobs created as a result of those record lettings will also be a record.

In every place that I have visited in recent months, the leaders of local authorities, local Members of Parliament and those interested in the growth of the Welsh economy have all expressed to me their deep desire to have more factories built as speedily as possible. The demand for agency factory space has been so high that the vacancy rate is down to a very small level—a sign of success, but also a sign that more action was needed.

It was for that reason that I decided to increase substantially the Government contribution to the Welsh Development Agency for the coming year, and I have provided it with an increase of 37 per cent. Together with the increased factory rents and sales that are taking place, it means that the total potential expenditure for the agency for this coming year will increase to £113 million—31 per cent. — more than the budget for the current financial year.

As a result, the Welsh Development Agency has today been able to announce a remarkable factory building programme for the coming year. It has decided to invest in new property developments 40 per cent. more than for the present financial year, a total of £44 million of investments during 1988-89. In 1986-87, £27·6 million was spent on new factory building. When my predecessor sanctioned an increase to between £30 million and £31 million—an increase of between 10 and 12 per cent.—for 1987-88, certain political opponents accused him of doing that as a pre-election exercise. I am delighted that in this post-election exercise there is 40 per cent. more than in the pre-election exercise.

This will create 1·5 million sq ft of working space—75 per cent. more than in the current financial year and 50 per cent. more than was originally planned. Every part of Wales will benefit.

I have also agreed new mechanisms in which the agency can use its finances to attract a considerable volume of private investment into new factory and commercial building. Seeing the document it has published today must bring pleasure to every part of Wales. South Wales, mid-Wales and north Wales will all benefit from the action programme that we are now free to embark upon.

The provision of factories is but one part of the Welsh Development Agency's role. Another vital role is that of attracting inward investment. I am delighted to say that again we have had an outstanding year of success. WINtech, the Welsh Development Agency's operation for attracting inward investment, is likely to secure 90 projects in the current financial year alone, which will bring in £160 million of capital investment and an all-time record of 7,500 jobs. In proportion to its size, Wales is now attracting a larger proportion of overseas projects than any other part of the United Kingdom. Wales is now regularly attracting one fifth of all overseas projects in the United Kingdom. There are many new projects in the pipeline. Throughout the world there is increasing interest in the potential of investing in Wales.

A further vital role is the encouraging of new business activity within Wales itself. Again it is a record of success. There has been a surge of inquiries for business advice and assistance. The business development unit of the Welsh Development Agency handled an incredible 39,000 inquiries during 1987—way up on the previous year. That unit will now have the responsibility of delivering the Government's new scheme for consultancy assistance announced last week. We want inward investment, we want new businesses encouraged, we want factories made available, but we also, of course, need the application of new technology.

It was early in 1984 that the Government arranged for WINvest to be commenced by the Welsh Development Agency with the aim of stimulating innovation and better use of technology in Welsh business. WINtech has done exceedingly well in a short time. In this year alone it has assisted 40 companies to take advantage of technology transfer deals, and 50 to embark on advance manufacturing technology projects. It is working closely with the University of Wales and others to assist in the creation of centres of scientific and technological excellence. As a result of the increased funds going to the Welsh Development Agency, the activities of WINtech will expand in the years that lie ahead.

Venture capital and the clearance of derelict land are the two other great objectives of the agency, and here, too, the success has been outstanding. The venture capital division of the agency has invested £47 million in over 700 companies since 1979, triggering a massive investment of £220 million and creating 11,000 jobs. Demand for risk capital is buoyant and the agency is set to invest in 220 companies in this financial year alone. It will be able to continue that activity at an increasing pace in the years that lie ahead.

Wales has much derelict land to clear. Since 1979 the agency has been provided with £130 million of resources at today's prices to clear derelict land. It is one of the largest and most sustained programmes in the whole of Europe. When the £28 million programme announced in July 1986, the biggest ever in Wales, is completed, 9,000 acres of slag heaps and dereliction will have been cleared and replaced to the benefit of the communities concerned. The dereliction of today frequently becomes the development opportunity of tomorrow. Throughout Wales there has been a recognition of the fine work that has been done. The Confederation of British Industry, the trade unions, the local authorities, the Institute of

[Mr. Peter Walker]

Directors, and the chambers of commerce are all at one in welcoming the leap forward in the activities of the agency that will now take place. Providing more factories, encouraging more new businesses, applying more new technology, removing more derelict land and attracting far more inward investment is the route to transform the economy of Wales and the route to making Wales one of the fastest expanding and successful economies in western Europe.

I urge the House to support the Bill so that the agency can continue its fine work and achieve the objectives that the Government have set it.

8.44 pm

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): As the party that established the Welsh Development Agency, there is no way in which we shall vote against the proposal. Indeed, if anything, the way in which the Secretary of State boasted of the achievements of the WDA is a vindication of the stand that we had to take to force the measure through when the Conservative party, including the associate Ministers in his Department at the moment, voted against the establishment of the agency. I hope that we shall at least get some credit for a degree of foresight, with which we were not credited at the time.

When we talk about the amounts of money and changes in the amounts of money involved, it is important that we do not lose sight of the background. Sums of money in abstract can sound enormous, but it depends on the size of the pit that needs to be filled. Despite the Secretary of State's euphoria, unemployment in December 1987 was still slightly higher than in December 1979 despite all the miracles in that fabulous year. Therefore, I advise the right hon. Gentleman that there is still a little way to go and we shall need a lot more money than he is putting forward today.

To listen to the Secretary of State one would not think that 35 per cent. of our young people under the age of 25 are in the dole queue. Of 12 regions, only three have a higher proportion of young people in the dole queue. However, that is not the image that one would gain from listening to the Secretary of State. The spend that the Secretary of State talked about must be considered against that background. Obviously, we are delighted at any improvement, and any improvement is welcome. However, the improvement must be big enough to make an impact on the basic problems. The trouble is that at the moment, as I shall demonstrate, it is not.

One of the WDA's problems is that it will have to operate against what we would regard as the background of inadequate regional funding. The Government tend to ignore that. Indeed, it is interesting that the Secretary of State was the Secretary of State for the Department of Trade and Industry in the early 1970s when that Department set up a regional development grant which, this week, he is in the process of abolishing. The Secretary of State abolishes his own measures, but finds great credit in the WDA and the Labour party's measures. He seems somewhat changeable in his opinions. That regional development grant has been worth £1,600 million to Wales over the years since it was set up. Last year alone it was worth £88 million, but the Secretary of State is planning to abolish it.

Sir Raymond Gower (Vale of Glamorgan): The right hon. Gentleman has mentioned that the unemployment figures are still marginally above what they were many years ago. Does he agree that the economy is probably more soundly based now than it was then, in the sense that people were then employed in two or three large companies in the engineering industry, for whose products there was little demand in many parts of the world, but now people are employed in a host of new industries, which are forward-looking and have a marvellous chance to expand?

Mr. Williams: It is surprising to note that, at the time when the Government started to impose their miracle on us, that disastrous industry, despite all its shortcomings and warts, was able to earn surpluses of £4,000 million per year in manufacturing trade, whereas now it is making deficits of the same amount in its much more efficient form under this Administration. Those facts answer for themselves.

Turning to the background against which the WDA will be operating, 1987 was the last full year for which we have regional grant figures. I asked the Secretary of State how next year's figures will compare, in constant prices, with those for the last full year that we have. In his reply he told me that the public expenditure White Paper contained planned provision of £111 million for regional aid in Wales for 1988-89. The figure for 1986-87 was £128 million—£17 million more. However, he went on to say that £70·9 million of that covered residual payments for the RDG1 scheme which was ended as a result of the review in 1984. Apparently, we are supposed to ignore the drop of £17 million because there happens to be an element of regional development grant.

The funny thing is that that is in contrast to the view of the Minister of Trade and Industry. When he was challenged on the future of expenditure on regional funds —it was suggested that in future he would be counting figures from a scheme that he was abolishing—he came back with the reply:

> "I trust that he is not seeking to claim that, in talking about the total regional spend . . . we should ignore . . . RDG."
> —[*Official Report*, 25 January 1988; Vol. 126, c. 54.]

So we have the Secretary of State for Wales implying that we should ignore it because it does not suit him and the Minister of Trade and Industry saying that we must count it because it suits him. It might be for the convenience of the House and the public if the two Ministers would get together and at least agree a common line so that we know what we are talking about. Next year, the Welsh Development Agency will be operating against a cut of £17 million of regional assistance compared with last year.

Where, in these depleted figures, is the valleys initiative money to come from? We have heard from the Secretary of State about his intended proposals. We have not seen them yet but I am sure that they will come forward.

Mr. Peter Walker: I know that the right hon. Gentleman has had a copy of the statement and I need not read out the list. An enormous number of new factories will be built in the valleys as a result of the colossal increase.

Mr. Williams: I shall come to the factory building programme in a moment. Surely the valleys initiative comes to more than a couple of advance factories. Is that what it is? Is the Secretary of State seriously saying that,

after all that we have heard, the valleys initiative was buried in an announcement by the Welsh Development Agency on its factory building programme?

Mr. Walker: The right hon. Gentleman has a habit of endeavouring completely to mislead and misquote. The remarkable factory building programme announced today for the valleys will bring delight to the valleys. It is a very important contribution to them. I am sorry that the right hon. Gentleman always sneers at good news.

Mr. Williams: I welcomed the announcement, and I shall welcome the factory announcements later. However, I shall put them in perspective. I shall put my own interpretation on them as the Secretary of State does. I sometimes think that the Welsh Office has recruited Hans Christian Andersen to write its press releases. Will the valleys initiative fall within the figures that have been announced, or will it amount to something extra? Will it be a mere reshuffling of money that is already in Wales, as in the case of the so-called money for the WDA? The WDA money is not extra money for Wales; it is money that is being taken out of other Welsh pockets.

None of us would dissent from the assertion that inward investment in Wales is desirable. We have all supported it. Indeed, in fairness, the Secretary of State — according to the press release from the Japanese embassy—was courteous enough to say while in Japan that not only the Conservative, but also the Labour party had for a long time adopted policies which would encourage such investment, and that there was absolutely no problem arising from any political situation which would obstruct the flow of Japanese investment. We would all agree with that. That is what we have said all along. There is nothing new about getting Japanese investment. In fact, the Labour Government probably attracted more than this Administration. However, I do not want to argue figures; it may balance out, it may not. I do not really care, because that is not the issue. We need inward investment to diversify our industry. We have always recognised that. That is why we gave it such a high priority.

It is interesting to note that, despite the priority for inward investment, the WDA told Labour Members that it spends less than 3 per cent. of its efforts on inward investment. We are only too happy that there is to be a stronger effort. I am glad, too, that the WDA is to build some advance factories in anticipation of inward investment. We welcome the three 50,000 sq ft factories specifically earmarked for inward investment. But does that preclude them from other uses? I assume that it would not if a customer came along. The only other factory of the same size in the programme at Deeside is not referred to as being earmarked for inward investment. Does that mean that Deeside is excluded from inward investment? Those are points of detail which I am sure the Minister will be able to answer.

I congratulate WINvest on the latest three Japanese units—someone else's rabbit pulled out of the hat in Tokyo by the Secretary of State. WINvest has been negotiating for one of those units for 18 months or more, and for another for a full year. It deserves every credit for getting them. However, we need to put matters in perspective. We want more Japanese investment and jobs, but the 17 Japanese factories still provide only 5,000 jobs in manufacturing in Wales. We should be glad to have another 5,000, but let us not run away with the idea that is given in press releases that, because one or two Japanese companies are coming, nirvana lies on the horizon. As I pointed out in the Welsh Grand Committee, we need one a day for a year of the biggest factories that the Secretary of State announced simply to replace the manufacturing jobs that we have lost in Wales.

The abolition of regional development grants will not make the job of WINvest and the Welsh Office in attracting new industry into this country any easier. The Secretary of State knows the procedures very well. He knows what happens when a company first comes to Britain, and his officials, too, are well aware of the facts. That is why they have always accepted in the evidence that they have given that regional development grant is an essential component. They know very well that when a company thinks of coming to Britain, the first thing it does is to discuss the general framework of the programme and the aid that would be available.

WINvest and the WDA are normally the first point of contact; the Welsh Office usually comes in towards the final stage. Until now WINvest has been able to say, "For starters, we can tell you that you will get 15 per cent., and, when we see the final shape of your project, you will get regional selective assistance." Now new companies will be told, "Under the Government's scheme now in operation, we are to give you the smallest amount of money that we can give you to get you to come here." That is not exactly a strong inducement to inward investment.

It was for the same reason that, in a recent speech, the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan), a former Chief Secretary to the Treasury and a former Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, made the same point about the importance of that element of predictabiiity. It is a major loss, in terms of negotiating for inward investment, that that predictability has gone. Another element of predictability has gone with the number of changes that we are experiencing in regional aid.

When I looked at the figures in the White Paper, I was encouraged to see that this year the Welsh Development Agency hopes to clear 438 hectares of derelict land. I think that that is the largest clearance that it has ever achieved. Those who represent the old industrial areas are only too pleased that that will happen.

The problem is that about 13,600 hectares of land need clearing in Wales. We do not know the precise figure—there was no survey in 1982, as there was in England, because for some reason the Welsh Office cancelled it—but it is about that level. Even with that record level of land clearance, it will take until 2020 to clear the existing dereliction in Wales. That overlooks the fact that new dereliction is being added year by year. Every time a pit closes—the Secretary of State knows a lot about that—another derelict site is created that will have to be cleared.

An interesting feature is the disparity in spend on these issues between Wales and England. As one would expect, England has two and a half times more derelict land than Wales. Since 1982, or 1983, England's spend has been five times greater than that of Wales. It is putting much more effort into clearance than we are in Wales. I hope that the Secretary of State will bear that in mind when determining the size—*[Interruption.]* Those are not my figures. The figures for the amount of derelict land that needs to be cleared came from the right hon. Gentleman's predecessor.

[Mr. Williams]

The figures of spend and for the amount of derelict land that is being cleared are available for the right hon. Gentleman to check.

I am only too happy about today's announcement of 1·5 million sq ft of factory space. We must bear in mind that Wales has a company liquidation rate of one a day throughout the year. We need extra factories, and we are delighted that at last that fact has been recognised by the Government.

It is interesting to note that the 1·5 million sq ft that the Secretary of State talked about is still way below the level for 1981-82, when it was 2·6 million sq ft. There is a long way to go before we return to previously attained levels. We welcome today's announcement as a move in the right direction.

The WDA works within the framework set by Government aid for the regions. We have already said that we regret that regional development grants will be abolished. We feel that that will have a serious impact.

I want to repeat what I said about the new scheme in a debate on Monday. I am concerned that the new scheme for regional investment grants will be grossly ineffective compared with the scheme that it is replacing. The strategy of the WDA and of the Government, other than the occasional large mobile unit—I am not criticising the Government because there is not much mobile industry in Wales—is to concentrate on small firms. Some 80 per cent. of regional development grants already go to small firms. Until the end of this financial year, regional development grants are available at 15 per cent. on capital, or £3,000 per job created. Under the new scheme, that generous level will be cut to 15 per cent. up to a ceiling of £15,000 and a maximum of 24 jobs. The £3,000 will become £625, and that £625 will be taxable. That is bound to have a significant impact on the number of jobs created.

I shall remind the right hon. Gentleman, as I reminded the Minister of Trade and Industry in the debate on Monday, of an answer that I received from the Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. I asked about the new scheme and how it would be monitored to ensure that it delivered new jobs. The Secretary of State for Wales said, in essence, that the new scheme will be more efficient in job creation. The Under-Secretary said that the creation of jobs would not be a condition of the new regional investment grant, but the scheme was expected to have a beneficial effect. In other words, it is not anticipated, even by the Government, that it is going to be a major job creator, and it is not going to be closely monitored against the number of jobs, according to the Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

The final point relates to Government funding. The funding that we have heard about today in relation to the WDA is simply money taken from one part of the Welsh budget and transferred to another. The amount of assistance that is going to be given by the Government next year at current prices is £62 million, which the right hon. Gentleman presents as this marvellous achievement as far as the WDA is concerned. But the fact is that in 1978-79, at modern prices, the WDA was receiving £16 million more than that—that is, 25 per cent. more than it is receiving at the moment. In 1979-80 it was receiving £12 million more. In 1980-81 it was receiving £34 million more—50 per cent. more than the figure that he has announced. In 1981-82 it was receiving £40 million more—60 per cent. more than the figure that he has announced.

Mr. Peter Walker: The right hon. Gentleman knows full well that there was specific identified payment for certain steel closures which was totally out of the main-line spending of the WDA. The first small package was announced by the Labour Government as a specific commitment. I am glad to say that the succeeding Tory Government put in far more for that specific purpose. The right hon. Gentleman knows that he is totally misleading the people of Wales. He has his research assistant produce all of these statistics for him to try to create a picture that more is not being done, but he knows that a lot more is being done.

Mr. Williams: The right hon. Gentleman has a rather perverse way of deciding what he is willing to accept as evidence. That was the contribution that the Government were making to the activities of the WDA. The WDA was not there just to deal with steel, although it did deal with steel. I remember that in the Welsh Grand Committee the right hon. Gentleman actually had the cheek to interject and complain about the regional development grant figures that I was using for Labour's period in office. He said that it was unfair to quote those because they included Ford. Ford helped our figures, so we should pretend that it never happened and take it out of the figures. Here, because the money his own Government were spending some years ago was far more than what they are spending today, he now wants us to pretend that it never happened. It did happen, it is on record, and his efforts are rather puny by comparison.

We want to see the WDA properly funded because we set it up. It was opposed by the Tories, who have clearly become very reluctant converts. Even today, despite the claims of the Secretary of State, by the standards of past achievements the WDA remains starved of funds and essentially it is starved of funds to deal with the problems that it faces.

9.7 pm

Sir Raymond Gower (Vale of Glamorgan): I think that the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) is over-simplifying the issue of the funding of the WDA. In its early days, it is true, it put money into a definite project and there was no inflow at all, but the money that is now being deployed is used again and again. It is a different ball game. The WDA is in the nature of being a financial organisation as well as a development organisation, and any big financial organisation deploys its funds and uses them to the best advantage over a period. I think that the right hon. Gentleman should take account of that.

Further the right hon. Gentleman grossly understimates the value of the Welsh Development Agency having acquired an expertise which it did not possess, obviously, when it was initiated. It is now able to prepare a package that is attractive to an investor either from abroad or from another part of the United Kingdom. That should not be underestimated in our assessment of the value of the WDA.

As my right hon. Friend said in his opening remarks, this is a relatively small measure with a limited but valuable purpose. Is the Welsh Development Agency of

value to the Welsh economy? The answer must be in the affirmative. The right hon. Member for Swansea, West understandably took the credit for the fact that his Government initiated the agency. Some of my right hon. and hon. Friends had doubts about it at the time because it was a new venture and no one was sure what would emerge. I do not suppose that those who set up the agency imagined that it would develop as it has done. They could not predict exactly what would happen. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has catalogued its successes and achievements, but the right hon. Member for Swansea, West is trying to play down a surprising achievement.

In spite of the difficulties, this has been a time of great recovery, but the Labour party does not recognise the extent of it. In Wales the recovery has been more surely based than we could have foreseen. It is dangerous for the right hon. Member for Swansea, West to be over-critical, because other parts of the United Kingdom are jealous of what we have in Wales. If he continues in that vein, he will encourage feelings of apprehension in those parts of the country which believe that they are not getting a fair crack of the whip. I assure the right hon. Gentleman that people in the north-east of England feel hard done by because they have no comparable instrument there. We must be careful how we approach our debates on these matters.

The Welsh Development Agency has contributed to the remarkable achievements in Wales. It is difficult to envisage Wales today without the agency. That is a mark of its success. Without the agency, the task of providing new factories would be much more difficult. Without the agency, we should not have had 1,278 advance factories in the nine years up to last March. It is difficult to imagine how that could have been achieved without the agency. It would have been equally difficult to promote inward investment without the agency and its associate WINvest, which was initiated by this Government. It is worth noting that since WINvest was initiated the remarkable number of 223 projects from overseas have been established. Before Christmas my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced a £2·5 million factory building programme, which underlines the WDA's contribution to this work.

We also welcome today's announcement of the agency's new property programme. This provides hope for the valley and rural areas, on which the hon. Members for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) and for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells) have commented. The improvements are not confined to the industrial areas, but are spread, as my right hon. Friend said, over the whole of the Principality.

Factories will be purpose-built for specific clients, and I hope that there are plenty of them, because the order must be placed before the factory is erected. Reference has also been made to the advance factories, and in the years that the WDA has existed providing those factories have been its main job. The building of advance factories has been accepted throughout the Principality by all parties as extremely desirable. Starter units may be regarded as one of the most important developments because they tend to assist smaller ventures, and I believe that such ventures and small firms are of particular value to the Principality today. Indeed, there is one in my constituency — the Lion laboratory at Barry. It started in a modest way, making breathalysers, but it now employs a much larger work force than it did even a short time ago. I believe that an organisation of that size has within it the seeds of growth and could provide valuable employment.

I am slightly worried about the lack of building for high technology projects. I do not believe that we have made so much progress as is desirable in this area. I believe that we could lose if we do not have a fair share of such high technology factories and, indeed, Scotland has pushed ahead in that regard. I hope that the Welsh Office and the WDA will devote extra attention to that matter. I believe that high technology is possibly the most important area of all in the context of the present economy, here and overseas.

The right hon. Member for Swansea, West referred to the clearance programme, and this is vital. I note that the garden programme in Ebbw Vale, which is similiar to the one on Merseyside, has been expanded, and I hope that that will be extremely successful. The right hon. Gentleman knows more about it than I do, but I believe that it is being developed sensibly and steadily.

There is one thing that I believe the WDA should do that it has not had the time nor the resources to do in the past. It should assist in the creation of something that we have always lacked in Wales—a capital market and a financial centre. That has always been a tremendous defect. Some years ago Sir Julian Hodge created an organisation that appeared to be something that might have grown into something large. Unfortunately, it did not realise the hopes that had been expressed for it. I hope that that lack will be considered as an urgent need. It is one of the reasons why it was necessary to have the WDA. We did not need it only for factory buildings. We needed it also because we lacked a financial market and financial centre. The provision of those facilities could round off the marvellous achievements of the agency.

As the right hon. Member for Swansea, West has painfully told us, we should not exaggerate unduly what the agency has achieved. I do not think we should say that all is well. However, I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will agree that the prospects for the agency in the next two years are incredibly brighter than they were even a couple of years ago. We should be encouraged by that. Therefore, when the House passes the Bill—I hope, as the right hon. Gentleman said, without a Division—we will feel that we are giving the WDA a pat on the back and hope for the future.

9.19 pm

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): I agree with the hon. Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Sir R. Gower) about high technology. A worrying feature of the local economy of West Glamorgan is the county's seeming inability to attract true high-technology industry. Cambridge university research has shown West Glamorgan to be sixth from the bottom of the county league in terms of relative concentration of high-technology industry throughout England, Wales and Scotland. Those with a lower ranking were the Scottish islands, Powys, south Yorkshire, Dyfed and Shropshire.

High-technology jobs are distributed across Britain, with a distinct bias in favour of the south. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that unless we are very careful and attract the high-technology firms to Wales we shall have an additional element in the north-south divide, with a notable absence of high-technology firms in Wales. We must guard against that.

[Mr. Gareth Wardell]

I hope that in winding up the Minister of State will explain another vital element in the background against which the Welsh Development Agency is now to operate. It seems that there is an anomaly over the new regional investment grant for small firms. Why should that grant apply only in the development areas, and not in the intermediate areas? In other words, why do not all the assisted areas qualify for the new initiative? There is another point, concerning the importance that the Secretary of State attaches to the WDA relative to the Wales Tourist Board. Whereas the WDA's property development programme is to increase by 42 per cent. between this year and next, the Government's relative contribution to the board is pitifully small. The relative lack of priority that the Government are giving to the industry is a disgrace.

Here I wish to refer to the memorandum by the Midland Bank plc Advisory Council for Wales, starting on page 622, in appendix 82, of the minutes of evidence to the Committee on Welsh Affairs when it considered tourism. The council said:

"the disparity between the level of assistance to the tourist industry and to manufacturing is enormous . . . the Select Committee are invited to consider whether the balance is still not tilted unfairly against tourism, bearing in mind the importance of tourism to the Welsh economy and, more particularly, the contribution it can make in terms of creating jobs."

I do not want to concentrate on the inward investment of people as opposed to the inward investment of capital. But I am sure I speak on behalf of the whole Committee — because we made firm recommendations on this — when I say that the Secretary of State has made matters much more difficult for the board by still insisting that it shall not promote Wales overseas independent of the British Tourist Authority, as Scotland does for itself.

I turn to the main part of my speech, which concerns the relative contribution of regional development grant and regional selective assistance. Before 29 November 1984 90 per cent. of the working population of Wales lived in assisted areas to which the grant was applicable. That then changed to 35 per cent., and it will now be zero—a major change. Its importance for the WDA was summed up in the evidence to the Select Committee when we did our major study of regional industrial policy in 1984.

I wish to quote one of the chief Welsh Office officials. As he comes from Trimsaran I am glad to say that he has been promoted. I am sure that his elevation is in no small part due to his marvellous contribution, in answer to question 141, page 47, in the evidence to the Select Committee on 14 February 1984. It is worth quoting him to show the position of the Welsh Office which I am sure has changed little since. He said:

"Predictability is an important element. All the available research points to the conclusion that at the stage of investment decision-making a company needs to know what automatic assistance it will attract. It may recognise at that stage that over and above that basic level of assistance it may also be entitled or may also be offered a measure of topping up assistance of a discretionary character."

Here we have the major Welsh Office official, Mr. Owen Rees, making clear in 1984 the view of the Welsh Office on regional development grants.

I do not want to leave the WDA out completely. I will quote what the present chief executive said. Of course, he was the chief executive when the Select Committee conducted its inquiry in 1984. In question 266 on page 87 of the evidence to the Select Committee on 29 February 1984 I asked Mr. Waterstone:

"How can you have on the one hand selectivity and on the other certain automatic assistance?"

He gave a brilliant reply; no doubt he still holds the same view despite comments that he has made in a glossy magazine which probably cost far more than the 85p for the Bill. His reply to my question was:

"To put it crudely, you need the automatic element as a groundbait to attract the fish and have the selectivity to hook him at the lower cost to yourself."

That is the crucial point made by the chief executive of the WDA, a senior Welsh Office official and, of course, in a famous document produced for the Department of Trade and Industry in 1984 by Neil Hood and Stephen Young entitled:

"Multinational Investment Strategies in the British Isles".

It seemed to have limited circulation but, hopefully, it is now available from Her Majesty's Stationery Office. It is a seminal document of research evidence. I want to quote one passage to the Minister in case he has not read the document. On page 169 it says:

"In evaluating the influence of regional incentives (RDG and SFA) more deeply, it is necessary to consider entry methods, since companies entering through acquisitions would be unlikely to attribute any influence to financial assistance. Although not shown here, this comes out clearly from the data: of the 57 greenfield entrants in the AAs, 42·1 per cent. viewed RDG as "very important" and 24·6 per cent. "important" — meaning that two thirds of those building from scratch considered regional development grants as of some significance. The same general pattern applied, albeit much less strongly, for selective financial assistance: here 26·3 per cent. of greenfield entrants rated SFA as important or very important."

Will the Minister tell the House what new evidence — different from the seminal document produced by the DTI and different from what was said by the chief Welsh Office adviser and the chief executive of the Welsh Development Agency — he has, with the wealth of knowledge of the DTI and the Welsh Office behind him, to demonstrate clearly that RDG is no longer necessary as a groundbait to hook the fish? Although I am not a fishing man, the message is loud and clear. The Opposition demand evidence to prove that the situation has fundamentally changed and that the incentives that the Government are offering are no different from what they were before. Unless the Minister can do that, we shall feel very concerned and very cheated.

9.30 pm

Mr. Keith Raffan (Delyn): I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on the major increase in resources for regional and industrial assistance that he has obtained — an extra £54 million for the next financial year, representing a massive 39 per cent. increase, together with a promise of further substantial increases in the next two years.

Perhaps the most important component of that package is the increase in the total Government provision for the WDA of one third in 1988-89, allowing, as the *Western Mail* put it,

"a major boost for fartory building."

That was announced in detail earlier today.

Last September I wrote to the chief executive of the WDA, David Waterstone, expressing my concern at the lack of factory space in Clwyd. He replied:

"We are becoming the victims of our own success and the vacancy rate in our estates throughout Wales has now fallen

to below 9 per cent., whereas we have always argued that we cannot fall below 10 per cent. without the efficiency of our investment-attracting activities being impaired."

The WDA is the victim of its own success.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Raffan: No. I shall finish my point and then I shall be delighted to give way to a short intervention from the hon. Gentleman, as I am making a short speech.

In the current financial year the WDA is on course to let up to 2·3 million sq ft of factory floor space. That is well up on the record level achieved in 1986-87.

Mr. Morgan: Has it occurred to the hon. Gentleman that there are two possible explanations for the shortage of factory space this year? One is that two years ago not enough factories were started to be ready now. The hon. Gentleman has given the other explanation.

Mr. Raffan: The hon. Gentleman does not want to face the truth, as excellent news for Wales is bad news for his party.

The economic upturn has created that difficulty for the WDA. The WDA and the Government have successfully faced that difficulty today, and that has thrown Opposition Members into a tremendous pickle. They are playing around with statistics, picking them out at will to try to demonstrate that they spent more than we did, when everyone knows that they did not.

In addition to what I said about factory floor space and the tremendous achievements during the current financial year, there is now to be a massive increase in WDA investment in property development of more than 40 per cent. in the next financial year, making a total of £44 million. That will create 1·5 million sq ft—75 per cent. —more space than in the current financial year, and 50 per cent. more than originally planned.

Before today's announcement, despite the significant extra investment made in the factory building programme recently — it has been significant compared with the Opposition's record—the economic upturn has created capacity constraints in certain localities, not least in north-east Wales. I hope that Opposition Members will agree that the massive increase in resources for the WDA property programme announced today will help to ensure that no investment opportunity will be lost in future because of the non-availability of suitable factory premises.

I wish to make three points about the WDA factory building programme. The first is about where the factories should be provided in north-east Wales. The largest concentration of the agency's factory units in Clwyd is in the districts of Wrexham Maelor and Alyn and Deeside. The WDA property portfolio currently shows in Wrexham Maelor 96 units covering 973,564 sq ft and in Alyn and Deeside 110 units covering 889,545 sq ft.

That is in sharp contrast to Delyn, which has just 47 units, covering 248,000 sq ft, and Rhuddlan, which has only 17 units, covering 182,079 sq ft. The figure for Rhuddlan is actually less than in 1985, when the figure was 198,000 sq ft because of the demolition of temporary accommodation in Kinmel industrial park in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer).

The WDA has conceded that

"to some extent development in north-east Clwyd has centred on Deeside industrial park, which",

it says,

"serves a wide urban catchment."

That concentration in Wrexham Maelor and Alyn and Deeside will continue even with the WDA's revised property development programme which has been published today.

I am grateful for the major inward investment property project at the Delyn enterprise zone, but there is still too much concentration of property development in Wrexham Maelor and, indeed, in Alyn and Deeside. I shall not encourage an intervention from the hon. Member for Clwyd, South-West (Mr. Jones), who I see in his place, but I could have given the figures for Glyndwr. I am sure that he too would like a few more units.

The Deeside industrial park and the Wrexham industrial estate do not provide an answer to the intense highly localised problems of unemployment in my constituency. As I said when we debated the WDA last in the Welsh Grand Committee on 21 May 1986, the journey from Hollywell to Deeside industrial park, in Alyn and Deeside, is a 26-mile round trip, and the journey to Wrexham industrial estate is a 40-mile round trip. Public transport locally is far from satisfactory, and those living and working in Delyn are largely in the low-income bracket, so that transport costs can represent an intolerably heavy burden on their wage packets.

If accessible location is not a sufficient reason for the WDA now to correct the imbalance and provide more factories for Delyn and coastal Clwyd, closer to those out of work, surely credence must be given to the argument that Alyn and Deeside, and to a lesser extent Wrexham Maelor, are, because of their geographical location, more attractive to private investment. In those areas, commercial pressures are more likely to trigger private investment, and that is not so true of the less accessible, less industrially attractive Delyn and coastal Clwyd, where public sector pump-priming is more necessary. I hope that the property development grant announced today will increasingly recognise that.

The WDA emphasis must move away from south-east Clwyd to Delyn and coastal Clwyd. The Clwyd structure plan revealed a shortage of land for industrial development in that area. Although by the time the structure plan was reviewed there had been an improvement, coastal Clwyd still has the lowest proportion of industrial land in the county, and it still needs more.

Unemployment in Prestatyn remains high, less seasonal than it used to be. The round trip to Deeside industrial park from there is at least 45 miles. We need more industrial development on the coast.

The problem is land and, more to the point, getting our hands on land that could be used for industrial development. I know that the Government have encouraged local authorities to release land that is surplus to requirements; but there is a need for similar encouragement, and, if encouragement does not work, pressure, on the public sector or on those who have just left it. I would refer to two examples of protracted—far too protracted — negotiations with Wales Gas and British Rail in Prestatyn to get them to release surplus land.

Secondly, we need to achieve a much better balance between public and private sector investment in factory building, which today's announcement will help to bring

[Mr. Raffan]

about. That is not easy, as the industrial development officer of Clwyd, Derek Griffin, said in a letter to me last September:

"Involving the private sector in building advance factories is not as easy as has been suggested in some quarters . . . the problem lies in the rental levels that can be achieved against the returns required by investment funds."

That point has been acknowledged by the chief executive of the WDA—David Waterstone—who has been quoted so much by the Opposition today. But he took a more positive and determined line in a letter to me when he said:

"You may be glad to know that we are currently working on a number of schemes designed to raise private capital for industrial and commercial building in Wales. I am sure it is necessary, and indeed desirable, for us to find a means of supplementing Government funding."

The WDA's announcement today shows that those schemes have come to fruition, and I am glad that the Delyn enterprise zone has been chosen as one place where they will be tried out. I welcome all aspects of the private development initiative, particularly the property development grant, to fill what is called "a viability gap" that could otherwise prevent an industrial development from happening.

Many will agree with Mr. Waterstone that private sector investment is not only necessary but desirable. I know that Delyn borough council believes that there is a real need for the Welsh Development Agency to play a key role in ensuring private investment in factory units, not only through property development grant, but through a rent guarantee—another way to tip the balance so as to ensure private sector investment, which would not otherwise happen because of a much greater growth in values of industrial property elsewhere.

Thirdly, there is a need for a balance between advance factory units and bespoke, tailor-made units. The pros and cons of this were discussed in the debate on the WDA in the Welsh Grand Committee, to which I referred earlier. Different local authorities put the emphasis differently. Clywd's emphasis is on the urgent need for a range of new advance factories to be built to meet the demand and maintain the momentum of attracting new companies to the county. Delyn borough council, from its experience as a landowner and planning authority for the Delyn enterprise zone, puts the emphasis on the need for bespoke, tailor-made units for particular companies.

We need both types. We need a variety of advance factories of 5,000, 10,000 or 15,000 sq ft, but the dangers of building advance factories in sizes larger than that are that they can remain empty for a long time and they are of a standard type that is unsuitable for certain industries, such as electronics.

The dramatic increase in funding made available today should enable the WDA to move quickly to build tailor-made units, designed to meet the requirements of major inquiries. It is often more cost-effective to build tailor-made units than to undertake costly alterations to existing advance factory units. Such tailor-made units can also be built very quickly, within the relatively short period of three to six months. I am reassured by today's announcement that the WDA will continue to give the highest priority to constructing bespoke units for specific clients. It is an area in which the agency has been conspicuously successful in recent years.

Even before this announcement, the targeted level of new build was approximately 50 per cent. higher than that achieved during the period 1976-77 to 1978-79. Now we have, in the words of the chief executive of the WDA,

"a radical strengthening of the WDA's resources"

and of

the capabilities"

of the Agency in the industrial property sector.

"Excellent news."

he rightly described this.

I only wish that David Waterstone would pass on his ability to recognise excellent news for what it is to the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams). All this good news—today's 40 per cent. increase in the WDA's property programme; the 33 per cent. increase in the overall provision for the WDA; the 39 per cent. overall increase in regional industrial assistance for Wales—has put the Opposition in a right pickle, because excellent news for Wales is bad news for them.

The great mistake of the right hon. Member for Swansea, West was to anticipate, prior to the original statement on regional assistance, an announcement that was never made:

"Planned changes to Government aid packages will hit new business development in Wales,"

claimed the shadow Welsh Secretary in the *Western Mail*.

"Labour MPs are to demand a special Commons statement . . . spelling out the implications for Wales of wholesale changes in the administration of regional aid to industry",

thundered the *Western Mail* again.

We have not heard much of that, not since that *Western Mail* leader headlined "Remarkable Victory for Walker". We have been left instead with the delectable sight of the right hon. Gentleman limping backwards in full retreat, trying to gather together the tattered remnants of his own credibility with a phrase that will long live to haunt his parliamentary annals:

"If there is an increase,"

he spluttered,

"it is in relation to cuts that they were envisaging".

I say to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, that he has won, not on points, but on a knock-out. I say to the Labour party that if the present shadow Secretary of State was its third choice, let us have its fourth.

9.43 pm

Mr. Geraint Howells (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): From my experience in the House—and I have been here a few years—I hold the view that each Secretary of State for Wales in turn deserves credit now and again for what he does for his country. Tonight I take the view that the present Secretary of State deserves to be congratulated on his efforts in fighting for his corner of Wales. It would be very churlish indeed of me and of others if we were to criticise the increase in development money that has been promised to the WDA and the Mid Wales Development Board. I know that the Welsh Development Agency and the Mid Wales Development Board are reasonably happy with what they are receiving. If memory serves me right, they will be getting about £54 million extra of Government money, although the point has already been made that the total falls well short of the value of the regional grant to Wales in 1980.

I welcome today's announcement that there will be a substantial expansion in the Welsh Development Agency's property development and that the agency is now in a position to fulfil all the factory building that it had

planned. If that can be done in the years to come, it will be a wonderful achievement, whichever party is in Government. It is important that the excellent work done by the Welsh Development Agency and the Mid Wales Development Board should receive every encouragement. It is refreshing to see a Secretary of State for Wales in this Government acknowledging the value of public spending at last. I hope that he will, in his wisdom, try to persuade the Secretaries of State for Education and Science and for Social Services that there is need for more money to be spent in the public sector. The Secretary of State for Wales has given a lead tonight and I hope that his ministerial colleagues will take heed of what he has done.

However, I want to sound a warning. Although I appreciate that we need to remedy the shortage of factory space and regenerate urban areas and industrial valleys in Wales, there is a danger that not enough money will find its way to rural Wales, to areas that have suffered equal deprivation and equally high levels of unemployment. Unfortunately, the Teifi valley between Cardiganshire, Pembrokeshire and Carmarthen—I do not blame this Government more than the previous Labour Government for this—has had unemployment for the past 15 or 20 years of between 24 and 26 per cent.—the highest in Wales. Something must be done to try to cure that problem.

I urge the Secretary of State to consider giving more funds to the Mid Wales Development Board, in view of the massive problems facing the area that it covers. It should also be given wider powers, and the area that it covers should be extended to include at least north Pembrokeshire. I have consulted members of the local authorities in north Pembrokeshire, who have problems comparable to those in the mid Wales area. It would be a step in the right direction if one of our ports—Fishguard—were to come under the jurisdiction of the Mid Wales Development Board. That is food for thought, and I hope that everyone concerned in the Welsh Office will give further consideration to it.

Eventually, I want the Mid Wales Development Board to become an organisation that will cover the whole of rural Wales—a body that could ensure that rural Wales received its fair share of help from the Government. It could be a development board that would safeguard the interests of our language, heritage and culture. Something should be done about it and more consideration given to that thought of mine and of others.

The Secretary of State will be aware, I am sure, of one particular problem facing people in my constituency at the moment. I refer to today's announcement of the closure of Felinfach creamery, with the loss of more than 100 jobs. That is a real body blow to the economy of Ceredigion and mid Wales. I urge the Secretary of State tonight to take urgent action on this matter. I suggest that he should convene and attend a meeting between the Welsh Office, the Welsh Development Agency, Dyfed county council, Ceredigion district council, the National Farmers Union and the Farmers Union of Wales to discuss and set plans in motion to create jobs to replace those lost at Felinfach today. Unless that is done immediately, I believe that there will be dire consequences for the area and the community as a whole.

I beg the Secretary of State—or the Minister when he replies—to give that assurance to the people of Cardiganshire and the employees at Felinfach. I want to make a plea on behalf of the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones). We went to see the chief executive of Dairy Crest at the beginning of the week. Unfortunately, neither of us was able to persuade him. The hon. Member for Ynys Môn has a problem at Llangefni in Anglesey similar to the problem that I have in Felinfach. When the Minister replies, I hope that he will give that assurance to both of us.

9.50 pm

Mr. Gwilym Jones (Cardiff, North): I start on a note of welcome especially for the blinding light on the road to Damascus conversion of the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams). I was amazed to hear him say that he was delighted to learn of any improvement. If I wrote his phrase down correctly, he said that he felt that we still have "a little way to go" in the economic regeneration of Wales. At the very least, I would agree with that. Is that the first tangible or only tangible result of the new campaign, "Labour Listens"? What a pity he had to spoil it by carping on about the figures. Again, I made a note of what he said. He said that he would "transpose the figures in his own image." I hope that the right hon. Member for Swansea, West will junk that second-hand word processor that he has been using and that we will see more of his new positive approach at Welsh Question Time or in other Welsh debates.

Mr. Morgan: Perhaps, in assessing the nature of the demands made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams), the hon. Gentleman forgets that, with half our steelworks closed down, we now have to go in for iron mining in Wales.

Mr. Jones: The hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan), who is my constituency neighbour, did not follow my point when I said that I would agree with the right hon. Member for Swansea, West that there was still "a little way to go".

I welcome the Bill. The House will welcome the Bill as it increases the financial limits for the Welsh Development Agency approximately one year earlier than was originally expected. In welcoming it, I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on having approved a 40 per cent. increase in property investment for the Welsh Development Agency. All of us would agree that, at the very least, that was necessary. There is tremendous demand for WDA property, and that is a signal pointer to the progress of the continued economic revival of Wales.

In turn, I want to extend my congratulations to the Welsh Development Agency on achieving a letting record of 2·04 million sq ft in 1986-87. The vacancy rate at the same time was below 10 per cent., and that is equally noteworthy. Is that not a far cry from the position in years past when Labour Secretaries of State for Wales scuttled around Wales announcing and opening new vacant advance factories? The trouble was that all too often that is what those factories remained—new, vacant advance factories.

Much good, interesting and exciting work is being done by and with the Welsh Development Agency. However, that is not always the comment that I hear from others. Perhaps others do not give the WDA the same consideration as we give to it. However, Members of Parliament frequently encounter the impression that, if the applicant for help represents large inward investment, everyone involved—the Welsh Development Agency,

[Mr. Jones]

among others — will do everything possible to try to secure that investment. Naturally, that is what we should do; the trouble is that it seems to be thought that, if the applicant for help is a small indigenous company in Wales, it will not get all the help that it needs.

That is a strange picture, in view of some of the less well-publicised achievements that have been made. Earlier today I noted that professional advice had been given to some 7,700 companies; that a similar number of individuals and companies had received first-time counselling services; that over 1,000 people had received training in business enterprise; and that the small firms centre had responded to 39,000 inquiries from 22,000 individuals and companies. The reality is often different from the perception or the image. We must have regard to that question of image, not solely from the public relations point of view, but so that there are no missed opportunities for those who are contemplating a small expansion or — equally valid — those who need assistance before trouble gets worse.

We need to ensure that everyone is aware of the help that can be offered by the WDA, and that no opportunities of seeking that help are missed. In the last few months, I have received complaints about missed opportunities involving WDA land in south Cardiff, which is part of the proposal for the redevelopment of the docklands. Developers have come to me saying that they have missed opportunities, and that some of them have gone elsewhere because of the present standstill in the Cardiff docklands, which includes WDA land. The WDA is co-operating fully with the Cardiff Bay Development Corporation as the plans are drawn up for the exciting scheme for the redevelopment of south Cardiff. In the meantime, however, there is a standstill and the real possibility of development opportunities being lost.

One complaint that I have received comes from a quarter referred to very positively in the WDA's property development programme, with which all of us, I believe, have been circulated today. Naturally, a question of balance is involved. The proposals for development — which are obviously still tentative, because they never reached the final stage — must be weighed against the need to ensure that the entire plan for the redevelopment of south Cardiff is right.

In all my contacts with the Cardiff Bay Development Corporation, I have been impressed by the corporation's approach. It has a healthy "get up and go" attitude of wanting to take the scheme forward and achieve as much as possible. I have been assured that the planning process will be swift, and I trust that it will be; that we shall have no cause to regret the present standstill; and that, from the earliest stage, every possible assistance will be given to developers, so that we can hear the least possible talk of missed opportunities.

Last week, the Cardiff Bay Development Corporation announced the possibility of the use of compulsory purchase orders to achieve the scheme for docklands redevelopment. That also may affect the WDA's land holdings. Inevitably, any prospect of compulsory purchase orders arouses controversy and concern. In my post this morning, I received a letter from the community support anti-waste scheme, whose members are very worried about the possibility of having to move from their present location at the abattoir in Cardiff. I know of their work in various recycling activities. They say that it would be catastrophic is they were to lose their present site and have no alternative location.

I have been impressed not only by the "get up and go" approach of the development corporation, but by the fact that its planning approach is meant to be flexible. I very much hope that it will be so. However, as it moves forward in redeveloping south Cardiff, I believe that compulsory purchase orders should be used sparingly. Where there is full-hearted co-operation between the landowners, including the Welsh Development Agency, and where it is possible for both parties to go down the road together, I hope that they will do so without unnecessary compulsion so that all will benefit from the south Cardiff development.

Finally, in response to the hon. Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell)——

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Welsh Development Agency Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour. *—[Mr. Durant.]*

Welsh Development Agency Bill

Question again proposed, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Mr. Jones: Finally, I want to respond to the hon. Member for Gower, because he should not be selective in the evidence that he adduces in condemning selective assistance. He asked what evidence there is for the move towards selective assistance — *[Interruption.]* In his dwelling, in the hallowed chamber of Room 18 on the Upper Committee corridor, he referred to various pieces of evidence that have been brought before the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs. I do not have the page number before me from which to quote, but I recall that the whole thrust of the argument that we were given by the Wales Trades Union Congress was exactly the move towards selective assistance that has now come about. Indeed, I seem to recollect that David Jenkins, the general secretary of the Wales TUC, was very dismissive of alternative arguments for maintaining or expanding automatic assistance. Even in the quotation that the hon. Member for Gower used from the chief executive of the Welsh Development Agency — it was a fishing analogy in which he likened automatic assistance to ground bait — it was described as only ground bait. The relationship between the suitors was finally consummated only by the use of selective assistance.

Mr. Alan Williams: We should understand that my hon. Friend the Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell) made no such attack on regional selective assistance. He argued for the combination of selective assistance and grants. However, as the hon. Gentleman is so committed to regional selective assistance, will he explain why, if we consider the national figures, regional selective assistance — so loved by the Conservative party — has fallen by 37 per cent. since that party came to office?

Mr. Jones: I thought that I was responding to the hon. Member for Gower. I was trying to use the evidence that he put forward today, in relation to the quotation from the

chief executive of the Welsh Development Agency and the omission of the evidence that was brought forward by the Welsh TUC.

In conclusion, the Bill will be important for south Cardiff, Cardiff and all of Wales. I see it as continuing the economic regeneration of Wales that has been so well begun and that will now continue further apace.

10.3 pm

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): We welcome the Bill because we welcome the activities of our agency, our Welsh Development Agency. It helps the regeneration and redevelopment of our communities, which we have a right to serve. Although I am sure that over the years my hon. Friends and I have had relationships with the WDA which could sometimes be characterised as creative tension, nevertheless in all my experience the chief executive, Mr. Waterstone, and his team have been utterly committed and dedicated to helping in the development of Wales as best they can, to meet the challenges of regeneration in the communities that we serve. Therefore, we welcome and support the Bill.

Although the Welsh Development Agency is a major instrument for regeneration in our communities, it is in partnership, not only with the Secretary of State for Wales, but with our local authorities. That is a vital additional element in the trinity needed for progress and development. I am glad that it appears so far that at least this Secretary of State has not brought to Welsh affairs the rather bilious prejudice that English Ministers seem to have towards English local authorities. It is the combination of all three that is helping in the regeneration of our community.

I shall touch briefly on the three major functions of the agency and on the impact of its work on communities such as mine. Sadly, the Secretary of State touched only briefly on the first function; perhaps the Minister will expand upon his right hon. Friend's remarks. I refer to the role of the agency as a major venture capital agency for our community. That is desperately important, especially when one considers that the agency and Investment In Industry together account for 80 per cent. of all the venture capital that comes into our community.

Will the Minister tell us what will be the agency's venture capital budget in the coming year? I have tried to go through the figures and have a look at the accounts and I have concluded that that sum will be about £10 million. Admittedly, that £10 million may generate twice as much investment or more from other sources, but we must remember that we are fundamentally dependent on the agency for the promotion and development of venture capital in our society. One of the greatest inhibitions to regional development — not only in Wales but in the north, the north-east, Scotland and elsewhere — is the centralised accumulation of capital in the City. It is dramatically over-centralised: 73 per cent. of all venture capital companies are in the City of London. Some fascinating research done with the support of the agency shows that 80 per cent. of all decisions relating to the investment of venture capital were made by people living within two hours of their office. That means that they are made by people based in the City of London. The concentration and accumulation of our capital — we are talking about our pension funds; it is our savings that go into the Legal and General, the Prudential and the building societies — means that we do not get anything like the share that we need to regenerate and support our communities. Therefore, we are desperately dependent on the WDA as a venture capital agency. Will the Minister give us a categorical assurance that that fundamental role will not be curbed, whittled or clipped by Government Departments and, in particular, by the Treasury? I hope that the Minister will reaffirm that it is an integral part of the agency's role to develop and expand its venture capital function because of the over-centralisation of capital in the City. If I am right that the venture capital budget will be about £10 million, I hope that the Minister will tell us how it will be expanded in 1988-89 and beyond.

My second point concerns the industrial and commercial role of the agency in my community. No one denies that the announcement of the advance factory building programme for my community is welcome. We worked, fought and begged for that. However, we want to go further. I am interested in the future of commercial development. What will be the role of the urban renewal unit created by the WDA? What is the relationship of that unit to urban development grants which, I gather, are still vested in the Welsh Office? Will the urban renewal grant be a lending or a grant-giving body? That is unclear. That unit will have an important function in the broader industrial and commercial development and diversification of our local economies.

Thirdly, I am interested in the programme of development announced today. With reference to my own community, I am particularly interested in this statement:

"The regional office identifies the following opportunities locally for possible private sector development: Goat Mill road Merthyr — small factories."

I live within yards of the Goat Mill road site. Its dereliction is not that of 150 years ago; it is that of factories that have been closed over the past decade as a result of the decline in manufacturing industry in the community. It is a new form of dereliction. I should like to know how the private sector development will take place. What will be the nature of the vehicle by which this development will be made? The area desperately needs redevelopment. The dereliction is a result of the decline in manufacturing jobs in the community over the past decade.

I should like to consider briefly the land reclamation aspect of the WDA. The Secretary of State visited the community that I represent last week and saw some of the largest areas of historic land reclamation to be seen in any community. He drove up the slip road from Pentrebach up to the top of the Heads of the Valleys and saw the land dereliction on either side of the road. It is an amazing story, because we could widen that road, clear the tips, get some of the coal from those tips washed in the nearby washery and broaden and develop the infrastructure surrounding it to make it infinitely more attractive. It is one of the most vital lifelines in communications between the south of the Heads of the Valleys, the midlands, Worcestershire and beyond. That should be of the highest priority. If British Coal gets its way and we have another decade of opencasting along that road, all our hopes and visions of investing in and around the Heads of the Valleys will be dashed. The Secretary of State will have to take those issues into account when he receives the representations that will follow the local inquiry.

Land reclamation is one of the most vital functions of the agency. My right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) spoke not only about our

[Mr. Ted Rowlands]

historic success in trying to clear as much dereliction as we can but the growing pace of new dereliction. A most interesting survey that was carried out by the Welsh Coalfields Communities showed that, despite the tremendous efforts that have been made by everyone to clear dereliction, we are about where we were five or 10 years ago with regard to the amount of dereliction that we have. A budget of £16 million to £20 million, which is what I assume the agency will receive, is not sufficient. A figure of £25 million a year would make inroads into the rate of dereliction in our communities.

We welcome the Bill because we believe that a partnership between the agency, the local authority and the Welsh Office is the way in which communities such as mine can be regenerated and redeveloped. We shall support the Secretary of State, whenever he deserves it, to achieve that purpose. I hope that he in turn will recognise that when Labour Members speak we do so with authentic voices of the needs and wishes of the people whom we serve.

10.12 pm

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-West): I want to respond briefly to the extremely constructive and thoughtful speech of the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands), which, like the speech of the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells), was in startling contrast to what we heard from the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams).

There is a good case to be made by the Labour party with regard to these changes, but it is not helped by distorting the facts. The facts are that we have had an enormous increase for Wales and an enormously expanded programme for the Welsh Development Agency. It spoils the case altogether to try to gloss over that.

None the less, I must express a concern, for two reasons. First, the constant changing of the system of regional aid has gone on under successive Governments. It is not that it changes as each Government is elected. Each Government seems to try two or three different approaches to this matter, and the introduction of uncertainty is damaging to inward investment.

There is a strong case to be made for certainty, and it was made powerfully in the debate on Monday by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) and my hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw). The abolition of regional development grant removes an element of certainty that is of value in attracting investment, but I am quite prepared in the short term to trade that against the tremendous success of my right hon. Friend in attracting so much more help to Wales.

I remember that once when my noble Friend Lord Carrington was being interviewed about the Prime Minister he was asked the usual question about what would happen if a No. 11 bus were to run over her, to which he retorted that it would not dare. My concern is that if that No. 11 bus, swerving to avoid the Prime Minister, were to run over my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales there would be precious little, now that we are doing away with regional development grant, to ensure that the same battles would be fought so heroically in the Cabinet and that under a less automatic system we in Wales would get our fair share.

What was a little worrying at the end of Monday night's debate was the failure of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks to get the assurance that he sought from the Minister that the total of aid under regional selective assistance would be maintained and that what is undoubtedly happening for the coming year would happen for the years ahead. Therefore, I have this faint, nagging worry, but as long as my right hon. Friend is there I know how hard he will fight for Wales, and I take this opportunity of congratulating him on what he has managed to achieve.

10.16 pm

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): Like all my hon. Friends, I certainly welcome without any qualification and with open arms all of the propositions in this Bill for increasing the amount that we are to get under the arrangements of the Welsh Development Agency. Every time since 1979 that I have visited the Welsh Office or the Welsh Minister has come to my constituency I have asked for more money for the WDA because of the kind of work that it is doing and because I think that it is asinine that all the time it should have to choose between, for example, a new, advance factory that is desperately needed and a new development of land reclamation which is equally desperately needed. So of course we want more money and welcome it. It would be ridiculous for us not to do so. And we need more.

We are suffering from an accumulation of what has happened in the past, and people do not take into account the economic burden that rests on the shoulders of the people who work in the valley towns, for example. With persistent mass unemployment, 22 per cent. female and 24 per cent. male, for six, seven or eight years on end, which is what we have had since 1979, soon after which it doubled, the economic burden is enormously increased. If there are cuts in social security such as we are having in the valley towns—and the worst ones are coming into operation in the next few months — that imposes a burden on our people because they have not got as much money to spend as people in other parts of the country.

All these accumulated burdens of the persistent slump that we have had to bear while other parts of the country have talked about fabulous improvements we are still carrying to a large extent. Therefore, we need every penny we can get in the Welsh Development Agency and we need even more than the Government are providing under these new provisions.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) is quite justified and correct in recalling what happened in 1978 and 1979, when we faced the run down. The people in my constituency wanted the support through the WDA to be sustained on the scale that we were getting then. If we had had that, we should have been able to cut our unemployment during that period and achieve very much greater expansion.

I am not trying to qualify the compliment I have paid to the right hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends. We have not had any nonsense today about not being able to solve problems by throwing money at them. We have not had any of that kind of drivel from the right hon. Gentleman. He is able to say that he is going to throw a bit more money in and that is why we should cheer him so much. And we

do so. The point stressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell) regarding the alteration in the regional grant process is a serious matter.

I congratulate the Secretary of State on having visited so many places in the last few weeks and listened to what local authorities have to say on these matters. If the Government had listened in such a way, I cannot believe that the measure changing the provision of regional grant would have been introduced. It is a brainwave from Lord Young and we all know how dangerous that can be. Nobody knows that better than the Secretary of State. I cannot believe that he was ever in favour of this proposition. The questions put by my hon. Friend the Member for Gower are unanswerable. He has all the evidence from people working on the job and the evidence from the Welsh Development Agency. I guarantee that he has evidence from every local authority to which he has put the question. Certainly, he got such evidence when he visited my local authority. It was one of the main subjects that we wanted to discuss with him.

I do not ask the Secretary of State to reply to the question now; indeed, it might be dangerous for him to do so. If he replies and emphasises what was said by Ministers in the debate a few days ago, we would be landed with it. I would like the Minister to work out for Wales a new formula under which we could give industrialists coming to this area special advance assurance so that there would be no question of selective argument about whether they were entitled to the grant. We would be able to say to them, "We are going to give you a better chance over a long period of the kind of assistance and advantage that we have had over some areas in the past."

It makes me furious that, in my area, the provision of such assistance was foreseen in 1978 and 1979. It was foreseen that areas in which there was such a fierce rundown in the steel industry and other industries must have special provision over and above the normal development assistance. My right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West worked out exactly what such special assistance should be.

I do not expect the Secretary of State to deal with this matter at the end of the debate, but it would be advantageous if he could consider the matter before the present provisions expire. It is comical to be told that we shall have a great advantage over the next few months before the system is changed. Many firms will rush in because the future is more assured. There will be a combination of improved grant and a guarantee for the future. I ask the Secretary of State to consider that and to realise that such an advantage for areas which are most seriously hit must be restored.

I represent an area which continues to be hit. It is not just a question of what has happened in the past seven or eight years. That is why it is absurd for the Secretary of State to talk about the fabulous restoration of the economy. In my area, we still have redundancies and closures in the mining industry on a huge scale. Those closures do not affect just a few hundred people here and there. We have had major closures in the past year and we face more in the future. There are areas in Wales and other parts of the country which need special assistance. We shall make every possible use of everything that we can get from the Welsh Development Agency, but we need something in addition to that.

The Welsh Development Agency has done a magnificent job. I would rather that it made mistakes and spent money than not get on with the job. It has shown how public enterprise can co-operate with private enterprise and with local authorities in the best possible way, but it can do much more. It needs more money and a fresh look and this provision, which was so essential in the past, will still be necessary.

10.25 pm

Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): I echo what the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) said about the overall level of regional spending in Wales and the need for an effective regional policy. I take as read what was said from the Opposition Benches in the debate on Monday.

In a debate of this kind it is difficult to do justice to the broad activity of the WDA. What is clear—apparently this view is shared by hon. Members on both sides of the House—is the importance of a public sector agency that ensures partnership between commercial and public finance to ensure development within Wales. That partnership covers the broad basis of existing industry, commercial activity, agriculture and tourism, as well as the more traditional forms of manufacturing investment.

Of course we all echo the welcome that has been given to the external overseas inward investment in Wales. In real terms, that investment represents a small part of the agency's total work, albeit extremely important in terms of new investment. Most of the work of the WDA is involved in stimulating, maintaining and developing growing and existing industries. In Wales, small enterprises represent a success story. The survival rate of such enterprises in Wales is substantially higher than in other parts of Britain.

When considering the activities of the agency we need to look in particular at the essential role of small businesses in building up the economy. We have plenty of evidence from other advanced capitalist countries that the small business sector is a major growth area in a mature economy. Certainly, in the past five years it has been evident that, in Wales, there is opportunity for substantial growth in the medium and small business sectors. The WDA must direct its attention to that growth in addition to the support that will be available from the Government under the new enterprise package.

One thing that is important to destroy is the myth that Welsh people are somehow not enterprising per se. That myth still seems to hang around. My experience is that there is tremendous enterprise. Most people who live and work in my part of the country have at least three jobs—and that does not mean that they are moonlighting. They are actively engaged as contractors, as well as being self-employed in other capacities, or they may take in tourists. It is a diverse economy, and most of us have more than one job.

However, because of the traditional education system and the reliance on employment patterns in some of the heavy industries, there has been a failure in the take-up of the enterprise idea and the possibility of moving on from an idea to actual investment. Much of the responsibility for that failure must lie with the financial system. I endorse what has been said by hon. Members on both sides of the House about the need for venture capital to be a priority in the role of the WDA.

There is an important link between the agency and other agencies of development in Wales. The right hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells) stressed the role of the Mid-Wales Development Board. I referred to that on Monday night, and I do not wish to repeat what I said. However, it is important that anything that happens within the WDA is parallel, albeit on a smaller scale, to regional schemes through the Mid-Wales Development Board. Similarly, some of the social development programmes that the Mid-Wales Development Board has pioneered should also be made available in rural Wales through the work of the WDA. It is regrettable that social packages are available in mid-Wales but not in other parts of rural Wales.

It is important that there should be a link between WDA work, as the senior enterprising agency and the major source of capital, and the work of the Wales tourist board. The tourist board is aware that the WDA has large sums of capital available to it, yet the tourist board, the promotional body for tourism — a major growth industry — does not have access to the same kind of capital. It must be made clear that, with the development of tourism, the WDA should undertake the role of providing capital and the development of that service sector in close partnership with the tourist board.

The Wales tourist board knows the needs within the industry and the capacity for promoting development. I emphasise the need for collaboration between the various public agencies and also, on a smaller scale, between the WDA and other agencies in rural Wales, in particular, the National Parks Authority and its development of small craft centres and so on in the countryside.

The main issue to which I want to refer is the need for the agency to give even higher priority to ensuring the provision of venture capital. Part of the problem of Wales is its need to be a finance centre and therefore self-generating in capital accumulation and economic growth. The agency should be giving the highest possible priority to the provision of risk capital and other business services and the development of a genuine Wales-based entrepreneurship.

Mr. Raffan: That is a very important point, and the hon. Gentleman is making it as constructively as the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) did in an important contribution to the debate. On the whole question of venture capital, we must get across the fact that we need to build up in Cardiff a financial centre, which does not exist there now. Edinburgh has one, and that is the advantage that Scotland has over Wales — a point that the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney did not quite make. It is a very important matter in the controversy over getting more venture capital into the Principality. We must build up a financial centre in Cardiff.

Dr. Thomas: I very much agree with the hon. Gentleman. I have always looked at the Welsh economy in terms of a partnership between the commercial sector and the public sector. The absence of commercial-sector centres of finance capital is the key gap in the regeneration of the Welsh economy.

If we take the WDA venture capital out of the equation of venture capital available to Wales, we find that there is a substantial gap. The figures made available in the recent study of venture capital show that, if the role of the WDA and its associated Welsh venture capital is ignored, Wales received less than 2 per cent. of investments of venture capital in the years covered by the study 1983 to 1986. That illustrates the size of the problem. With the role of the WDA included, Wales receives more than its share each year by numbers, but less by value. There is a problem not only of the number of investment projects taking off in

Wales, but of the value of the investments. We can see from the study a preponderance of small investments by the WDA; 60 per cent. of Welsh investments were under £100,000, while the figure for England is a quarter. That indicates the scale of investment in different projects.

I am not complaining about that. We may well need to have more smaller projects for investment in Wales. It is significant that the role of start-ups and early-stage financing in Wales is substantially greater than it is in England or Scotland. There are various growth tendencies in the Welsh economy. The important thing is to be able to service them, and to see that the WDA has the means to do that.

It is also interesting to look at the sectoral composition of venture capital: nearly 17 per cent. in electronics; a substantial proportion, 15 per cent., still in energy and mining; and up to 11 per cent. in consumer-related investment.

As outside commercial investment has increased, so the value of WDA investments has been reduced, but the WDA's role as the major lead agency in the formation of venture capital in Wales, which is recognised by the agency, must also be recognised more fully by other commercial sources of finance in Wales.

Perhaps the one matter on which I found myself in complete agreement with the Secretary of State's predecessor was his famous lecture to the City of London. He got into trouble for doing it, but it was one of his better speeches, and it is important that such speeches should still be made with regard to the effect, or lack of effect, of capital markets on development in Wales.

I wish to stress particularly that the agency cannot over-emphasise its role with regard to venture capital, and the effect that that can have on the necessary growth and diversification of the Welsh economy.

The hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North referred to agriculture and the position of Dyfed and Gwynedd with a declining agriculture. The agency has shown enterprise here, with the rural initiative, which has taken off in Dyfed. I have been very impressed by what it has done in marketing the incredibly varied cheeses produced in the hon. Gentleman's constituency. Here the agency has tackled a sector of development that has been neglected, in terms of refinancing, and set up advice and marketing services to improve the products.

What we see is a diverse agency touching all aspects of enterprise within the life of Wales. We pay tribute to the work that the agency has done. We welcome very much the additional funding that is being made available to it. But we are also well aware that the work of such an agency can be effective only if it is seen as a partnership. The capitalist sector has not served Wales well in the past. It is high time we got a response from that sector to the public sector finance that is being put in now.

10.35 pm

Mr. Martyn Jones (Clywd, South-West): May I preface my remarks by telling the hon. Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones) that there are still many empty advance factories in certain areas. Conservative Members can start crowing when they exceed the all-time record of jobs in Wales that we had in 1979.

We see in today's report on the Welsh Development Agency and its boost for the development of property that there is a record demand for industrial and commercial property. Is this why only a few further units of rural workshops are planned for the Denbigh area? I wonder. Presumably there is no demand for industrial property in the vale of Clywd or the southern areas of my constituency.

Of course, the Secretary of State may not be aware of the problems of that area. This would seem likely from the reply I received to a question that I put to him last November. Of the five WDA factories which it was claimed would help replace the jobs lost in the vale of Clywd if the North Wales hospital closed, four were in Corwen, which is not in the vale of Clywd. I suspect that they are still empty, along with the other one that became empty after my question was put.

Why is the record demand not apparent in south-west Clywd, or indeed in the constituency of the hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan)?

Mr. Raffan: I find the hon. Gentleman's contribution extraordinary, in view of the statement by the chief executive of the Welsh Development Agency today, when he made it clear that the vacancy rate on a total property portfolio of more than 18 million sq ft is currently 8·6 per cent. He said that anything under 10 per cent. inhibits the ability of the agency to attract companies from other parts of the United Kingdom or from abroad into Wales. The hon. Gentleman is inadvertently making the point that some of his predecessors made. Unfortunately, they have left the House and their wisdom is no longer on those Benches. I am thinking of Roger Thomas, the former Member for Carmarthen. He made the point that advance factories were not as good as bespoke units. What the hon. Gentleman is saying is nonsense.

Mr. Jones: It can hardly be nonsense, as there are empty factories in my constituency.

For the edification of the hon. Member for Delyn, I was told in answer to another question that assisted areas have an 8·5 per cent. vacancy rate, but unassisted areas have a 15 per cent. vacancy rate; that is, nearly double. I suspect that we have problems in south-west Clywd because 90 per cent. of the area does not have assisted area status, and now no regional development grants.

The demand will fall further in regions such as mine without assisted status. As I have said, the vacancy rate in unassisted areas is roughly double the rate in assisted areas. In the north of Wales as a whole we have only one property development initiative, at Deeside. Why not have them where jobs are obviously going to be lost, such as in the vale of Clwyd? When will the WDA launch its dedicated programme of advance factory building in areas requiring urban renewal—for instance in parts of my constituency such as south Clwyd, Rhos, Cefn and Ruabon, which desperately need such investment? There is no indication of when it will happen.

The aims of the WDA's programme, financed by a switch of resources, are, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) pointed out, first, to increase the supply of traditional property in regions where demand is now outstripping available stock; and, secondly, to undertake a range of new and innovatory projects. An innovatory project in the vale of Clywd, at Denbigh, is being ignored. The Pilkington special glass project has no access to grants and is struggling in a very high-tech area. The third aim of the new programme is to help regenerate the more disadvantaged urban and rural

[Mr. Jones]

areas. I submit that this cannot be achieved in my area or any other area in a vacuum without RDG or assisted area status.

10.39 pm

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): I was wondering when we started the debate two hours ago why the Secretary of State was performing this all-singing, all-dancing, barnstorming routine, saying that everything in Wales was wonderful; and why he was putting so much hyperbole into his performance.

The explanation came to me in the unexpected presence of the hon. Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood). He made three visits here. I think that the explanation is that Rothschilds is to make a bid for the WDA next week. It is the Secretary of State's job to talk up the Welsh economy. It may even make a bid for Wales. He wants to raise the price-earnings ratio of Wales and the WDA as much as he can before next week.

Mr. Peter Walker: The hon. Gentleman is always talking Wales down.

Mr. Morgan: I do not talk anything down.

What the Secretary of State was engaged in, and may engage in again when he replies—I hope he does not—is the phenomenon familiar to psychiatrists of over-compensation. Since he comes from Gloucester and represents Worcester, but is now the Secretary of State for Wales, he has to try to prove to all of us and to the Welsh population that he is a better Welshman than the rest of us, although he does not come from Wales. Do we really have to go so far as back to his home town of Gloucester and his constituency of Worcester and spray green paint all over the roadsides and write in the old Romano-British names of Caerloyw and Caerwrangm at the entry to those towns? I think that would be going a bit far. He is now known as "Caerloyw boyo" in the coal mines of Wales. Unfortunately, there are not too many coal mines left in which that soubriquet can gain currency.

If we analyse the figures, without the hype, for which the Secretary of State is becoming well known in Wales, and see what he has announced on behalf of the WDA, and what the building programme that the WDA itself has announced in Cardiff today, and compare that with what has been done in the past 10 years, we get some idea of whether it is a big programme, an about average programme or a small programme. That is what we really want to know.

Let us look at the average for the last 10 years of the WDA's advance factory building programme. I calculate that to be a shade under the convenient round figure of 750,000 sq ft per year. I hope that the team of officials will now be able to provide that now familiar phenomenon of the slick fingertip-passing from apparatchik to Parliamentary Private Secretary to Chief Whip, sometimes on the mis-move to the Secretary of State, sometimes to the Minister of State for him to run in the tries. I hope that the Welsh three-quarters manage to perform with the same facility a week Saturday. The Secretary of State can show what a good private sector optician he benefits from when he gives us the answer. If the Secretary of State does not like the figure that I have given, I am sure that his officials will correct it.

What figure has the Secretary of State announced today relative to that average? Is that average a reasonable figure to take? I am sure that when the right hon. Gentleman replies he will say that that average is false because it includes the special steel closure programme which ran from 1978 to 1982. Is it fair to exclude the steel closure area? He obviously wants to exclude it, because that will bring the average down for the past 10 years and make today's announcement and the future programme for which he is now responsible more impressive. But is it really reasonable to exclude the steel closure area special building programme of the years 1978 to 1982?

There were 30,000 jobs lost in the Welsh steel industry in that period. In the last two years, since the end of the miners' strike, between 11,000 and 12,000 jobs have been lost in the mining industry. Therefore, 30,000 over four years compared to 11,000 over two years is not that different. It is not unreasonable for us to include the average of the whole of the last 10 years when the average figure for advance factory building programmes was 750,000.

Today's announcement is not on an entirely comparable basis, but in so far as it can be deciphered —I am sure that I will be corrected if I am wrong, as I could easily be — it looks as though next year's completion programme will be 550,000 sq ft. The following year's figure depends on when the 900,000 sq ft that was announced today in Cardiff for the advance factory building programme will be completed. I want to take a charitable view. I do not talk anything down; the Secretary of State is wrong about that. Someone who has been an industrial development officer for six and a half years does not do that.

If we assume, charitably, that all the factories announced today in Cardiff will be completed by the year after next—I do not think it will happen, but let us assume that that will be the case—we would have a completion rate in the next financial year of 550,000 sq ft and, in the year after, of 900,000 sq ft. If we divide those two, we come out somewhere near the average of the past 10 years of just below the average — 700,000 sq ft. instead of 750,000 sq ft.

I see the Secretary of State shaking his head, but I am not sure what he is shaking his head about, because the laws of mathematics are the same on both sides of the Chamber.

Let us look too at the actual performance of the Welsh Development Agency this year. One of the problems—it is in the public expenditure White Paper—is that it was supposed to complete 650,000 sq ft this year but it looks as though it will actually complete less than 500,000 sq ft. So it is 150,000 sq ft down, a 22 per cent. shortfall in the great year of opportunity mentioned by the hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) earlier.

That is why I am inclined to think that this year will go down in the annals of the Welsh Development Agency as the year of the great missed opportunity. It appears to have been the only body, governed as it was by the very strict Treasury rules of two or three years ago, that failed to foresee that in election year there would be an election year boom and that there was likely to be a sharp increase. It did not foresee it or, more likely, was not allowed to foresee it and so to have a balance in hand sufficient for the election year upturn which was visible to almost everyone else.

Mr. Peter Walker: Why is it that, when my predecessor announced a 12 per cent. increase in spending for election year, he was accused of electioneering by hon. Members on the Opposition Benches?

Mr. Morgan: I know that the Secretary of State's experience of Welsh affairs is relatively short, but one should not necessarily answer on the basis of one year's change. Over a three-year period of change, we go from about 200,000 sq ft of construction in 1984-85 to 300,000 sq ft in 1985-86, and an attempt is being made to crank the machine back up to 600,000 or 700,000 sq ft.

It cannot be done. Planned this year is 650,000 sq ft and the actual outturn is 498,000 sq ft, as we saw in the public expenditure White Paper last week. That is 22 per cent. behind planned output, because one cannot crank up a machine just like that. In the old days, five years ago, 2 million and 1 million sq ft of advance factory space was being produced per year; that was dropped right down to 200,000 sq ft, one tenth of the original—and it is being boasted about.

On page 15 of the Welsh Development Agency's annual report and accounts for 1984-85 — I will read the passage to hon. Members just in case the Secretary of State thinks that I am talking down the efforts of the Welsh Development Agency—it boasted about the fact that advance factories were no longer needed. In fact, it has been a very expensive lesson for the Secretary of State and his predecessor. The report says:

"The amount of new space created in advance factories was just 7 per cent. of the amount built in the peak year of 1981-82. Advance factories providing low-cost factory space at short notice still fulfil an important function but they are now built to fill identified gaps in the market".

The problem was that the machinery available to the Welsh Office, the Treasury, the Secretary of State and the Welsh Development Agency, did not spot the market coming; it did not see that in an election year there would be a rise in demand. The machinery was run down in 1985 and it was impossible to build it back up again. The result is that they have all been caught with their pants down. It is very sad. We shall miss a large number of opportunities.

We hope that, once and for all, those responsible will learn the lesson, that the right thing is to provide the WDA with a steady amount of money for factory building every year, rather than suddenly producing big building programmes, such as that announced in Cardiff today, of advance factory construction of about 1·4 million sq ft over the next couple of years—we do not know when the completion will be at the moment. That will probably catch the next downturn in the market.

It sounds good to announce it today, but there is no way that it will be on stream for a long time, because the WDA has run down. It no longer has the army of surveyors, architects and so on, and the construction companies no longer have the expertise that they had in 1981 and 1982. Otherwise, we would find that they would have produced the 650,000 sq ft that they were supposed to produce this year. Instead, they have produced 22 per cent. less than that, on the figures given in the Government's White paper section on the WDA, published two weeks ago. That is a sad state of affairs. It is an expensive educational lesson, and I hope that the Secretary of State and his team will learn from it.

10.50 pm

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): I shall briefly refer to the relevance of the Bill and today's announcement to the needs of Cardiff, and, more specifically, to those of my constituency.

I ask the Secretary of State to ponder three things. First, I ask him to have regard for the tradition of local initiatives. The WDA has been at its best when working in local partnerships. There have been local successes, and I appeal to the Secretary of State, when considering ways of putting in money in the future, not to put all the eggs in one basket, which could become too large and bureaucratic. I ask him to consider that small is beautiful and successful, provided that it is adequately resourced at local level.

Secondly, I refer to the tradition of partnership that we have developed over recent years in the Cardiff area. The Secretary of State will be aware of the sort of work that has been done in partnership between the city council and private developers in redeveloping the city centre, and of the work done by the city and county jointly on helping local and incoming firms. He will also know of the work done jointly by the city, the county and the Welsh Office on a number of economic projects, and by the city, the county and local firms on the establishment of the Cardiff and Vale Enterprise.

As one of the people involved in founding that partnership I was pleased to hear the Secretary of State's praise for what we have achieved when he opened our new premises last Monday. If I may make one party political point in passing, the establishment of the organisation was opposed by the local Conservatives, although since then we have welcomed their conversion and support. So this is no longer a matter of controversy between the parties locally.

Hearing the hon. Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Sir R. Gower) describing the Conservative party's reluctance to embrace imaginative initiatives, it is tempting to remind hon. Members that, wherever the Department of enterprise may be, the party of enterprise is on the Opposition side of the House.

Thirdly, I refer to the challenge of the future of Cardiff bay, and here again I emphasise the need for partnership. Indeed, I have emphasised that on a number of occasions, as has the Secretary of State. So far, so good, for the rhetoric used and the way in which things have started off; but vigilance will be needed because it is human nature to prefer to run things in one's own way. It is a human failing to try to dominate; it is a human error to assume that single domination, as long as it is one's own, is more effective — an error committed by every dictator throughout the ages. However, it is a simple fact that co-operation is the approach that produces effective and lasting results.

I welcome the references in today's announcement to the Cardiff bay development, and agree with the point made about the worries of local people by the hon. Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones) whose interest in my constituency I welcome. Perhaps I shall be able to return the compliment some time. What he said was helpful because it underlined the fact that this is not a party political point giving rise to criticism. It concerns, rather, the best way of going about making the most of the developments in south Cardiff.

[Mr. Alun Michael]

The hon. Gentleman referred to a real fear in the area —that the standstill in development of land for industry and factories has led to the loss of jobs. That may be an inevitable penalty while the planning process is under way, but it is no less a cause for concern because of that. The problem is that the only readily available sites for industrial development in the Cardiff area are those in the bay development area that are in the process—if it is not already complete—of being passed over from the WDA to the bay development corporation.

I have reservations about the withdrawal of the WDA from the Cardiff bay area. There is much concern at the combination of the lack of land for industrial development in Cardiff and the removal of the WDA's specific involvement in the south Cardiff area. I must add that the land that is available is in the bay area.

The WDA's publication today refers to the Treforest area which covers some extremely important areas represented by my right hon. and hon. Friends. It includes areas with tremendous job creation problems — for example, the Rhonnda valley, the Rhymney valley, the eastern side of the Taff Ely—Treforest and Pontypridd —and, as an afterthought, Cardiff has been added.

That is no accident. It reflects the withdrawal of the WDA from Cardiff. If that is the case, it is a matter for serious concern. I do not want to detract from the importance of the areas within what is described as the Treforest region. However, I suggest to the Secretary of State that there is a need to re-examine the WDA's role in respect of Cardiff.

That need is emphasised by the WDA's 1989 programme. I can find only one entry for the proposals for Cardiff. It refers to a size range of 5,000 to 10,000 sq ft with no reference to numbers. One sentence in the text refers to Cardiff:

"There is no shortage of industrial land within the Cardiff Area and the Agency will be actively pursuing this issue."

I hope that it will be encouraged to pursue that issue in partnership with the bay development corporation and the local authorities. I hope that the Secretary of State will encourage those organisations to work in partnership rather than to pursue their own individual paths.

The lack of land is important. On numerous occasions I have referred to the high unemployment level in Cardiff. Despite our success locally in creating new jobs, there is a gap primarily in the skilled and semi-skilled sectors, and it is precisely that type of job that will be subject to possible relocation as the bay development progresses. At the same time, we are getting the inquiries and the home-grown results. The spaces provided previously by local authorities in partnership with others, including the WDA, have been filled.

In conclusion, I want the Secretary of State to note these points. First, many of the activities referred to in the WDA's proposals published today have been pioneered by local authorities and in partnership with others. I hope that they will be encouraged to continue. Secondly, I hope that he will note the opportunities and the needs in Cardiff. I want him to support the request for partnership and involvement with the WDA in Cardiff, and specifically I want him to note the need for land, factories and workshops.

I have many details that I would be happy to follow up with the Secretary of State outside the Chamber. However, we must remember that the city of Cardiff has many communities with horrendous levels of unemployment. Despite the success of some of the initiatives, they are suffering extreme levels of unemployment, especially among the young. Those problems are of the same order as those experienced in inner cities. I ask the Secretary of State not to be hypnotised by his public relations or by our public relations locally. We do not want to undersell Cardiff in any way—we have a great deal to be proud of—but we must recognise the employment difficulties and the specific areas that require positive action.

10.58 pm

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): This debate has been about the proposed increased borrowing powers of the WDA and the Secretary of State's announcement of the WDA's development programme. My right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) welcomed the proposals, and that welcome was echoed by every Opposition Member who has spoken. The purpose of the WDA is to regenerate the economy and improve the environment of Wales. Those objectives are as relevant as ever.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West also reminded the Secretary of State that the WDA, when it was created, was opposed by the Conservative party. It was opposed even by the wets and the soft-soapers, right down to the mavericks—and even they have occasional twinges of enlightenment. Our criticism of this short Bill is based on the inadequacy of the measures contained in it; and, indeed, of the amounts involved, which in any case form only a guideline of the figures that could be spent, because the veto is still with the Secretary of State.

The problem of unemployment in Wales is massive. We have an Everest to climb. However, we hear from the Government a fanfare of trumpets to herald the most minimal measures. Reading the Welsh press, and in particular yesterday's leading article in the *Western Mail*, one would have thought that a millennium had been reached. Yet the Government have reached only the foothills: the mountain has yet to be climbed.

Let us examine the figures. In December 1987, the average unemployment rate in Wales is given as 11·7 per cent., or 40,300. But even that hefty figure is reached after a degree of massaging that would make a physiotherapist green with envy. The Library informs me that the figures are calculated with the use of a wider denominator, expressing the unemployed as a percentage of employees: that is, the unemployed, Her Majesty's forces and the self-employed. All I can say is, "Amen to all that."

We can compare those figures with the figures in 1979, when the rate was 5·9 per cent., or 73,100. That is half the present doctored figure. Let us look at the league table. I quote the figures for many Welsh districts: Pwllheli, 24·7 per cent.; Cardigan, 24 per cent.; South Pembrokeshire, 23·9 per cent.; Holyhead, 20·8 per cent.; Aberdare, 19·7 per cent.; Lampeter and Abereeron, 18 per cent.; Haverfordwest, 16·8 per cent.; Merthyr and Rhymney, 16·8 per cent.; Machynlleth, 16·2 per cent. I could continue, right down to Newport, where the figure is 12·6 per cent. Newport was once the gravitational point in industrial development for a vast area of south-east Wales.

What is the reality behind those figures? The facts are even more revealing. The hon. Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Sir R. Gower) said that we were recovering. I can only say, "Good heavens, we need to." Nearly 30,000

men in Wales have been out of work for more than five years or have never worked at all. Nearly 80,000 men and women have been jobless for longer than two years. Some 5,000 people have even given up looking for work. The 160,000 men and women who are out of work face a life of poverty and hardship. The brief facts that I have given are not figments of my imagination; they come from the Welsh Office document of September 1987 entitled, "Health, Wealth and Living Conditions in Wales".

When the Secretary of State visits the Rhondda, Cynon Valley, Merthyr, and Newport, which I have already pointed out has 12·6 per cent. of its people out of work, perhaps he could take with him Mr. Ian Kelsall, of the Confederation of British Industry, and the new editor of the *Western Mail*. They could tell the people there, at first hand, how buoyant the Welsh economy is at present. All I can say is that the response to that would not be very charitable.

Mr. Peter Walker: Does the hon. Gentleman share Newport council's current optimism about how successful it is at attracting new industries and new firms? Does he join that council in its impression that Newport is a real growth area at the moment, or does he think that it is a decadent area in decline?

Mr. Hughes: I have always had great faith in Newport's ability to attract jobs, because of its favourable geographical location and its transport facilities. However, that does not alter the fact that, even with all those facilities, Newport still has 12·6 per cent. of its people out of work. I hope that more new factories will open, but at present the position is dismal.

The Secretary of State has a duty to the people of Wales to include social reasons in the development of the WDA, not just market and commercial values which, as I see it, are still uppermost in the new property programme that was announced today. We argue that insufficient financial aid has been given to meet the dire economic and social consequences of the past nine years on the industrial and manufacturing base in Wales.

The Government tend to say, "Leave it to private enterprise and market forces," but surely that is what has caused so many of the present difficulties, such as the drift to the south-east of England, with its great disparity of wealth and employment opportunities, thus creating massive problems of congestion in that region. Regional policy is certainly good for the south-east of England, and the WDA is very much an arm of regional policy, which is why my hon. Friends and I so firmly support it.

Let us consider the thousands of jobs that have been lost in Wales in steel, coal and many other industries. Wales was in danger of being turned into an industrial wasteland, but fortunately — directly as a result of regional aid — some new industry has been brought in, although it is not nearly enough. That is why we deplore the decision to end regional development grants. As my hon. Friend the Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell) so lucidly pointed out, we know the background, as do the officials of the WDA, and, indeed, the civil servants in the Welsh Office.

The WDA needs to be assisted financially far more substantially than is provided for in the Bill or in the Secretary of State's announcement. Of course we welcome the boost to the property programme. However, let us consider what has happened to Wales and look at the outflow of population. Some 169,000 people have left Wales in the past five years. Some of our youngest and brightest have left, and that cannot be good for Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: I am interested to hear that 169,000 people have left Wales. Will the hon. Gentleman now give us the figures for those who have come into Wales?

Mr. Hughes: I do not have the figure to hand. [HON. MEMBERS: "Ah!"] What I am trying to say is that among the 169,000 who left were many who we needed to hold on to for the future good of the Welsh economy. Many of those who have come to Wales have tended to be pensioners—not that they are unwelcome.

The funding base of the WDA is still not sufficient to enable it to meet its statutory duties, let alone fulfil popular expectations of what could and should be done to meet the vicious regional cut-throat competition that Wales has to face in trying to attract new jobs. The agency should be allowed to invest far more than is planned. There is so much to be done. My right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) rightly pointed out how much needs to be done in his area alone. The investment function is the element most in need of support and change. The WDA requires more funds over a longer period to counteract the fact that Wales has lost 113,000 of its manufacturing jobs — 36 per cent. — since 1979 when the Government came to power.

Finally, the debate must be seen in the context of the massive unemployment that Wales has to face. Opposition Members support the Bill, but it is only a minimal measure. It tends to confirm our belief that the Government are incapable of expanding the activities of the WDA to meet the real and pressing needs of the Welsh economy.

11.11 pm

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Mr. Wyn Roberts): Wales has had some superbly good news today. While many Opposition Members have acknowledged that, others have found it a bitter pill to swallow. Much has been made of the point that we owe the existence of the Welsh Development Agency to the Act passed by the Labour Government in 1975. However, I remind Opposition Members that today's WDA is a very different animal from the one that they envisaged and we opposed. We changed its functions in the Industry Act 1980. We repealed the provision dealing with the promotion of industrial democracy and substituted the promotion of private ownership of interests in industrial undertakings. As a result, the agency is a much healthier animal than it was when it came into our care.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Sir R. Gower) said, there is widespread approval for the WDA's work in recent years, and agreement that it should be given the resources to build on its successes. The agency has undoubtedly played a full and vigorous part in transforming the outlook for the Welsh economy. Confidence among CBI members has been high throughout 1987, and nearly 910 of them believe that 1988 will be as good, if not better. Export orders have grown at a faster rate in the four months to January than in the previous six, and this upturn is expected to continue despite the strength of sterling. Dudley Fisher, the chairman of the CBI in Wales, is reported to have said that the latest survey reveals the best figures in the organisation's 10-year history.

[Mr. Wyn Roberts]

However, perhaps the most encouraging feature is that his members' investment intentions are 40 per cent. up on what they were, with the general outlook for Wales being better than that for the United Kingdom as a whole. That exceptionally good news comes on top of the forecast of the Institute of Directors that its members are likely to take on 10 per cent. more staff this year.

Those two surveys reflect the general upbeat mood now clear to all in Wales — except for some Opposition Members—and provide firm evidence of our new-found ability to face the future with confidence. Even the *Western Mail*, which has never been renowned for its optimism, makes very pleasant reading these days. Among yesterday's headlines in the *Business Mail* were:

"Industry Shakes Off Blues."

I hope that the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) will shake off his blues.

It continued:

"Confident Welsh Firms Plan Investment Spree."

The leading article, to which the hon. Member for Newport, East referred, was equally sanguine. It was headlined:

"Yes, Wales is a Going Concern."

Its very first sentence read:

"The signs look better and better for a buoyant Welsh Economy."

The last paragraph was almost ecstatic:

"It is for industrialists and businessmen in Wales to build confidence on confidence; Wales is a going concern. It is an uncommonly good investment."

I think that the *Western Mail* is right. It has got the picture about right. It is against that background of buoyancy that the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) should consider the Government's current proposals.

The budget that has been agreed for next year for the WDA will be the biggest and best that it has ever had in cash or real terms for mainstream spending. At £113 million—over £108 million at 1987-88 prices—it beats by a wide margin the best that was ever achieved under a Labour Government—in real terms by a staggering £33 million or 45 per cent.

That is the true measure of what has been secured for next year by my right hon. Friend and of the Government's commitment to maintaining the momentum of development in Wales.

Gross spending, compared with the agency's budget for the current financial year, will rise by over 30 per cent. in 1988-89 alone and by 36 per cent. in 1990-91. The direct taxpayer contribution will increase by over 40 per cent. next year.

Across virtually the full range of its activities, the WDA has achieved record levels this year. The 30 per cent. increase in planned spending for next year will mean that further improvement will not be held back for lack of resources.

Mr. Morgan *rose*——

Mr. Rowlands *rose*——

Mr. Roberts: I shall not give way, because I want to answer as many points as I can.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones) spoke of the misconceptions about the WDA's role in relation to small businesses. We have already heard that the WDA's business development unit small firms service is responding to a surge of inquiries for business advice and assistance.

I say to my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, North that the vast majority of the WDA's venture capital activity has been focused on helping small businesses to start up and expand—220 Welsh companies in 1987-88 alone. The average investment was about £40,000.

For the benefit of the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands), I can confirm that the venture capital figure is £10 million. The agency's investment generates £4, not £2, as the hon. Gentleman suggested, for every £1 put in.

The business development unit will be providing access to the business development consultancy services provided through Enterprise Wales, which my right hon. Friend announced on 13 January.

I advise my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, North and the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael), to take up specific Cardiff problems with the WDA. Similarly, that advice applies to the constituency problems of other hon. Members.

The hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells) referred to the Felinfach creamery closure and the position at Llangefni in Ynys Môn. We obviously recognise the hon. Gentleman's concern, and I am sure that the WDA will do what can be done to alleviate the effects of the closures. The agency's latest factory programme will be of great assistance, with new workshop units being built in key towns in the whole of west Wales and particularly in Narberth, Tenby, Kilgetty, Cillefwr and Pembroke dock, and Mid Wales Development will shortly be coming forward with plans for the area within its responsibility.

With regard to mid Wales I must tell the hon. Gentleman and others who referred to Mid Wales Development that WDA expenditure does provide some help, but, in addition, my right hon. Friend has added £1·5 million to Mid Wales Development's own budget for 1988-89. That is an increase of 20 per cent.

Of course, we are very much involved through the WDA in rural initiatives and spending on rural-related schemes. The DRIVE scheme, started in 1986, for example, rose by more than 70 per cent. in the current year.

Higher resources for 1988-89 will also benefit rural Wales directly and the WDA's budget for its rural affairs unit will be pitched at about £2 million, four times its size in the current financial year. This will obviously supplement the benefits that the area will enjoy from general increases for the agency's full range of programmes, factories, venture capital and advice.

My hon. Friend the Member for Vale of Glamorgan and the hon. Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell) said that there was need for more emphasis on high tech. I fully agree with this, and of course the new WDA factory programme includes a wide range of new high-tech units. Specific examples include projects at Llanelli, Gilwern, Newport and Bangor. And of course, WINtech, the agency's new technology arm, is stimulating innovation and having a major impact. Its resources are being increased substantially.

Mr. Morgan: I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman has noticed that under the WDA's own building programme it is now constructing only one third as many high-tech

units as it was three years ago—150,000 sq ft three years ago and 50,000 sq ft this year. Is that an indication of faith in the high-tech side of WDA?

Mr. Roberts: Of course, WDA's building plans are based on its experience, its appreciation of the market and the likely level of demand. But there is no doubt as to the importance of high-tech development.

The right hon. Member for Swansea, West talked about the need for more land reclamation resources. We fully accept this, and that is why the WDA's resources over the next three years for this purpose will include about £75 million for land reclamation, environmental improvement and urban renewal—40 per cent. more than originally planned. A good proportion of this will go to the valleys, about which my right hon. Friend will say more in due course.

The hon. Member for Gower and my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) referred to the loss of predictability, the switch to selective assistance. I agree that predictability is very important for economic development, but there is also the predictability that arises from having confidence in a sound and growing economy; the predictability associated with the knowledge that modern industrial floor space is available at competitive rates; the predictability of knowing that a good project will secure financial backing; predictability, too, arising from the better and more professional flow of business advice now available to most companies in Wales.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) got his factory completions completely wrong and he has misunderstood the situation. Factory completions, advance and bespoke, in 1987-88 will be 859,000 sq ft, and in 1988-89 the agency has been set the target of completing 1·5 million sq ft.

Mr. Gareth Wardell *rose*——

Mr. Morgan: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Roberts: I do not wish to pursue this matter. The hon. Member for Cardiff, West spent a great deal of time boring the House with the wrong facts.

WDA's total spend since 1979-80 has totalled £850 million at today's prices—£700 million of this was mainstream spending—that is, excluding that earmarked specifically for the steel closure areas. Private sector investment triggered by this spending is likely to have been about three times higher, providing a massive and substantial boost to the Welsh economy.

Mr. Alan Williams: Will the Minister give way on that point?

Mr. Roberts: Let me complete it first.

The average mainstream budget since 1979-80 has been £78 million at today's prices—13 per cent. higher than that provided by Labour in the previous three years. This is an excellent record that is only bettered by the plans for the next three years. The agency budget for 1988-89—at £113 million—will never have been higher in either cash or real terms for mainstream activities—45 per cent. higher in real terms than the best mainstream budget under Labour. Those are the facts, and there is no running away from them.

Mr. Williams: The Minister has just given the figure of £850 million over eight years, which gives an average of £106 million. The figure he has quoted for next year is £108 million. Therefore the improvement for next year is, on average, only £2 million. What an achievement!

Mr. Roberts: The amount of money that we are spending through the WDA in gross terms next year, at 1987-88 prices, is greater than the normal mainstream and special spending on account of steel closures in 1978-79. I have given the facts.

The agency is, of course, alert to the need to look for and take advantage of any new opportunities. Increasingly the new emphasis is on it becoming a catalyst, a facilitator, rather than a direct supplier. The new property and business development grants are prime examples of the new approach. In their own ways, both represent radical changes, and could well be models for other initiatives.

Notwithstanding the clear path on which the agency has embarked, the Government fully recognise that there is a need for immediate action to ensure that the economic recovery in Wales is not hampered by capacity restraints, or under-exploited technology. We recognise, too, that the drive to remove the legacy of dereliction associated with the old traditional industries, and to regenerate our older urban communities, must be fuelled by well-targeted resources.

Mr. Rowlands: I hope that I am not spoiling the Minister's peroration, but I asked for a simple assurance, and I would like it to be placed on the record. Will he assure the House that there will be no attempt to pare or clip the role of the WDA as a venture capital provider? If the budget for the venture capital side of the WDA was £10 million last year, what will its budget be for the next financial year?

Mr. Roberts: I confirm the figure of £10 million. We lay considerable emphasis on the WDA's role in that area. The huge increase in the agency's budget for 1988-89 is proof positive that our commitment to the agency has been translated into action and cash. The new financial limit will provide the WDA with the headroom it needs to pursue the tasks during the lifetime of this Parliament. I urge the House to support the Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House. —*[Mr. Durant.]*

Committee tomorrow.

WELSH DEVELOPMENT AGENCY BILL [MONEY]

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Welsh Development Agency Bill, it is expedient to authorise the following, namely—

(a) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any increase which is attributable to an increase to £700 million of the financial limit specified in section 18(3) of the Welsh Development Agency Act 1975 in the sums payable under the said Act of 1975 out of money so provided; and

(b) the payment out of the National Loans Fund or the Consolidated Fund of any increase which is so attributable in the sums payable under the said Act of 1975 out of that Fund. —*[Mr. Durant]*

WELSH GRAND COMMITTEE

Ordered,

That during the proceedings on the matter of the National Health Service in Wales the Welsh Grand Committee have

leave to sit twice on the first day on which it shall meet, and that, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 88 (Meetings of standing committees), the second such sitting shall not commence before Four o'clock nor continue after the Committee have considered the matter for two hours at the sitting.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101 (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments &c.)

Customs and Excise

That the Customs Duties (ECSC) Order 1987 (S.I. 1987, No. 2184), dated 17th December 1987, a copy of which was laid before the House on 18th December, be approved.

Harbours, Docks, Piers and Ferries

That the draft Ports (Finance) Act 1985 (Increase of Grants Limit) Order 1988, which was laid before this House on 17th December, be approved.

Nurses, Midwives and Health Visitors

That the draft United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting (Electoral Scheme) (Variation) Order 1988, which was laid before this House on 14th January, be approved.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

Question agreed to.

National Health Service

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn—*[Mr. Durant.]*

11.30 pm

Mr. Robert B. Jones (Hertfordshire, West): In his excellent speech in last week's debate on the National Health Service, my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) characterised the speeches from the Opposition Benches as a series of complaints, not as an attempt to address the problems of running a multi-billion pound organisation. I hope not to fall into either error.

First, I want to express my gratitude to those who have significantly improved the NHS in my constituency. In Hemel Hempstead we now have the first phase—the Tudor wing—of a brand new hospital. The other phases are due to start soon. It is worth noting that this is a hospital that was cancelled by the last Labour Government. I am therefore grateful to the Conservative Government for delivering on a promise that others broke. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to take the opportunity of her reply to confirm that the DHSS is not blocking the approval in principle of further phases of that hospital.

Secondly, I should like to express my appreciation of the two top health officials in my area—Roger Stokoe, our general manager, and Nick Tiley, the district health authority chairman. Mr. Stokoe's excellence has convinced me of the benefits of general management—in my district, at any rate. Mr. Tiley has been the driving force behind a thorough examination of costs, which has resulted in the North-West Herts district health authority being among the most efficient in the country. I hope and expect that my right hon. Friend will reappoint him.

On the subject of the NHS management at national level, in recent months we have had in Parliament and in the media a national debate that has highlighted many of the inefficiencies of the NHS, without paying proper regard either to its achievements or to the money that has already been spent on improvement. It is easy to see why we have had such a debate. Headline stories about waiting lists, ward closures and staff shortages have very properly caused us to ask probing questions about the ability of the NHS to deliver the standards of health care expected by our fellow countrymen.

To me, one of the most significant features of these headlines is the fact that they are not universal, but local. The west midlands readily springs to mind as an example of that feature. Analysis reveals many common factors. Some of these headlines are caused by the consequences of the redistribution caused by RAWP, though recipient areas either stay quiet, or, worse still, sometimes claim to be hard done by.

Staff shortages often turn out to be the direct consequences of national pay bargaining. Put bluntly, what is a fair income for living in the north is unacceptably low in much of the south. Therefore, nurse and junior doctor retention, recruitment and motivation become very difficult. As for nurses who specialise in intensive therapy, there must be a case for abandoning national pay bargaining and looking to rewarding their specialties. Other problems are caused by sheer incompetence and inefficiency.

Two great questions have never been answered in the history of the NHS. Since both are fundamental, I think that we must at least start the debate by encouraging people to recognise them. First, no one has ever attempted to lay down the medical parameters. Is the NHS there to provide unlimited health care for everybody, regardless of cost, life expectancy or chances of success? The clear and implied answer is no. However, since no guidelines exist against which individual situations may be judged, we inevitably end up with unlimited public expectations every time a case is featured in the media.

Put crudely, we need to know how to answer the question whether an expensive operation with a slight chance of success should be carried out at the expense of large numbers of operations with a high rate of success. While we must pay due attention to the needs of developing medical knowledge, we must not try to hide the ethical dilemmas that actually exist.

Secondly, we must take a more fundamental look at the way in which we budget for the NHS. To some Labour Members, the service should not be cash-limited at all. But it is significant that no Labour Government have ever followed that course, partly because they always end up broke, and partly because they, too, realise that there must be some limit.

Unlike Opposition Members, I do not believe that money alone is the key. If it were, there would be no complaints in Scotland, where NHS spending is about 25 per cent. higher than in England, and that is a greater increase than has ever been asked for by any Opposition spokesman.

Given this apparent conflict between unlimited demand and limited resources, I cannot see how any politician can fail to address the issue of how to get best value from the NHS. Inevitably, being a large organisation, it has a natural tendency towards inefficiency. This is compounded by a lack of effective control and the absence of a competitive framework. The NHS, we are told, is the largest employer in western Europe. It has also doubled its work force since 1960, partly due to a shorter working week, and partly because the NHS is doing more things. Because of this huge wage cost, we must start looking at the efficient use of manpower.

I would start with the consultants. Studies have shown them to have widely differing work rates and work practices that should make them the laughing stock of the commercial world. The trouble with the present system is that they are independent contractors to the NHS. They are contracted not to the authorities that use them—the district health authorities—but to the regional health authorities. One of the simplest reforms which the Government could make, and which would lead to falling waiting lists, would be in consultant contract reform.

Another area, that of competitive tendering, has already been tackled by the Government in catering, cleaning and laundry services. I shall not comment on that, other than to say that private independent quality control on those services would be an even greater boon. The lessons from the exercise are obvious; the NHS benefits from specialist firms in spheres where they are more aware of new techniques and materials.

We should not rest on our laurels. It surely makes sense to involve the same private contractors—for example, in decorating and in the purchase of linen. That is the road to a proper balance between initial costs and running costs, including cleaning. Private companies would in all probability fund the acquisition of such materials, freeing capital for other purposes. The logical extension of this is to look at private management on an experimental basis, and I commend to the Minister the work of my hon. Friend the Member for Boothferry (Mr. Davis), who I see *in his place.*

One reason for health authorities not grasping these opportunities, except sporadically or under direction from central Government, is the absence of a parallel system to that of the Audit Commission. I believe that investment in a series of best practice units enabled to look at each health authority and make recommendations for action would repay itself many times over. This could be reinforced by a central fund, or perhaps 2 per cent. of NHS spending, which could be directed to individual health authorities in the pursuit of best practice.

The same technique would also repay examination in the capital sphere. At present, overwhelmingly, new projects secure investment at the expense of less jazzy projects which are aimed at reducing running costs. For example, it makes sense to invest in energy-saving equipment and other such measures. This would be greatly encouraged if districts could bid for money from an allocation of capital specifically set aside for cost-saving projects. This sum could be paid back over five years, automatically refilling the pot and ensuring that DHAs delivered on the cost improvements. I find it astonishing that there is no provision for depreciation in the NHS.

These are all limited measures which are intended to improve efficiency within the present framework and are all relatively short-term. In the medium term, we must look at the whole system and introduce some of the disciplines of the market place into the NHS. At present we tend to reward the inefficient and penalise the efficient, sometimes through the lack of effective internal RAWP and sometimes because of the political clout of the teaching hospital system. Thus, in London and the south-east, patients are encouraged by shorter or non-existent waiting lists in inner London to have routine operations there. The trouble with this is that the operations cost more than they do in the shire counties, and we end up treating people in the most expensive way possible.

The best model for an internal market would be for patients to register with the district health authority of their choice and for them to be funded on a per capita basis to cover all routine operations and treatments. The DHAs would then purchase the more complex operations and treatments from teaching hospital boards, which would be encouraged to avoid unnecessary duplication and to bring about further specialisation.

Furthermore—I realise that this is not a point for my hon. Friend the Minister—we need to make sure that people know how much the NHS costs them. Too many people think that the NHS and social security are funded from the stamp. It makes a great deal of sense to me that we should have three levies to pay on income: general income tax, health contributions and a social insurance stamp. That would really hammer home the costs.

I sat through all last week's debate, which was on the whole remarkably sterile. Many hon. Members on both sides of the House attacked the failure of the NHS to deliver the goods, but sadly few, with honourable exceptions, were prepared to address themselves to new ideas. Indeed, the Labour party is opposed to new ideas, which may account for the total absence of any of its representatives tonight.

[Mr. Robert B. Jones]

That opposition should not surprise us, because the same has applied in every other policy field. Those on the Labour Benches believe in open mouths; we on the Government Benches believe in open minds.

I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will encourage new ideas from all quarters and rule none of them out until they have been properly examined, since no thought process should be stifled by presumptions at the start.

I commend those few thoughts to the House and invite other hon. Members to contribute to the continuing debate.

11.42 pm

Mr. John Redwood (Wokingham) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Does the hon. Gentleman have the consent of the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) and the Minister to intervene?

Mr. Redwood: Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I am very grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and to my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) for allowing me to participate in this important debate, developing good ideas for the future of our Health Service and to improve the quality of patient care.

There has been much debate recently about the internal market and about increasing efficiency. These are good ideas, but they are not phrased in a way most likely to make them beloved of the British public. If we put across to people what we are after—more patient choice, more and higher-quality patient care—and the fact that we wish to see that happen by the patients having more power within our health system to encourage good practice and good delivery and discourage bad practice, particularly to discourage long waiting, we would release forces that could be most important, not only in delivering a better service, but in delivering a service that gives better value for money.

As my hon. Friend said, a starting point must be adequate information in the hands of managers within the NHS. We are in danger of seeing information systems proliferate and information becoming too complex and difficult to use. What the managers need is the right amount of good information, the basic statistics on quality, on cost, on access and on facilities. Then they can start to ask the right questions and, more important, to deliver the right service to the patients, who should be empowered to move the money with them in order to get the service they seek.

We could do that with some reforms of the structure and with a change in the culture and style of management. I do not believe that we can live with the regions for much longer. There must be a direct relationship between the National Health Service management board, at the top, and the districts and hospitals at the base of the pyramid. Long lines of communication cause fuzzy messages and involve cost and unnecessary resource use, which could be much better employed delivering service to the patient.

I wish to take briefly two topical problems, which have been highlighted in the recent uproar over the National Health Service, to illustrate how this better information and the new culture might begin to work in favour of the patient and the taxpayer, who are, of course, one and the same person.

First, let us take the problem of waiting lists, particularly for acute care, which have been highlighted in a number of noisy exchanges across the Floor in recent weeks. If it had the right information, the NHS management board could ask why so many operating theatres around the country are only half used, or partly used; why some hospitals have a shortage of the necessarily highly trained intensive-care nurses, for example, and others have a surplus or an adequate supply; and why babies or children in Birmingham cannot get immediate access to the care their parents would like them to have, whereas there is no such waiting list in other parts of the country.

It could also ask why district and hospital boundaries should be impenetrable barriers that seem more successful than the Berlin wall in keeping people in or keeping people out. These are the questions that good management information could ask. The development contained in that inglorious phrase, the internal market, is a solution to the problem because it would allow people to go across boundaries to get the care they want.

There is the second important problem of the closure of the small hospital. I am suspicious about the costings and the analyses used in many closures. If we went into it in more detail, I think we would find that very often the community hospital, like the one in my constituency at Wokingham, is not only a much-loved facility for the local community but offers a relatively cheap and caring environment in which basic surgery, cold surgery and maternity services and the like can be supplied.

I think we would find that it is not cost pressures so much as dogma and often management misinformation that lead to the closure of these facilities. I think that a managerial review would bring this to light, as would sensitivity to patient demand, because if patients were turning up with the power of money behind them, they would create a demand for the local hospitals which would thrive.

I know that the Minister wishes to answer in full the points that my hon. Friend has made. So, in conclusion, let us have good information and a simpler structure at the top, and let us empower the patients to deliver the service that we want to see.

11.46 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mrs. Edwina Currie): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) on obtaining the debate and selecting this most important issue. I know that he is a tireless campaigner for the health of his constituents. I have no doubt that my hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood), who is new to the House, will follow the same path. We might also note the presence of my hon. Friends the Members for Maidstone (Miss widdecombe), Boothferry (Mr. Davis), Ludlow (Mr. Gill), Gedling (Mr. Mitchell), Dover (Mr. Shaw), Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson) and Battersea (Mr. Bowis). I think it is worth noting that they are all new Members and, as my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West said, there is not one Labour Member here to listen to this important debate.

The National Health Service is a subject of considerable current interest, if the volume of work coming through the

offices of Ministers in the Department of Health and Social Security is anything to go by. As hon. Members are probably aware, this is the 43rd Adjournment debate that I have answered since I was appointed a Minister. Since October, I have met 17 delegations and answered 984 written questions. The total number of what are called yellow jackets — letters requiring a Minister's personal signature — which I have had thrust under my nose for signature since 19 October is 2,964. They are coming in at the rate of 350 a week from Members of the House alone.

As my office tells me that we ran out of our posh new notepaper this afternoon, I hope that I may be permitted to make two points. First, I apologise to any hon. Member or member of the other House who has had to wait more than a week or two for a reply. The replies are on their way. Secondly, I want to put on record my heartfelt thanks to my private office staff, led by Mrs. Grafton, who all work like Trojans. I am very lucky to have them.

My hon. Friend mentioned the future development of Hemel Hempstead hospital. North West Thames region has submitted papers seeking approval in principal for phase 3 of this hospital, which will contain 40 mental illness beds, 40 beds for the elderly severely mentally ill with associated day facilities, a 54-bed obstetric unit and a pathology department and mortuary. The scheme is estimated to cost £14 million, with a further £2·25 million for land purchase. Therefore, it represents a major capital investment. It needs to be cleared not only by my Department but by the Treasury, in accordance with normal procedures.

There has been a delay in processing the submission, for which I apologise. The region has a number of capital projects with the Department for approval. We have not yet reached a decision; therefore, I am sorry that I cannot give my hon. Friend the assurance that he seeks. However, I will urge the development and I hope that a decision will be taken shortly. My hon. Friend knows, of course, that the new Tudor wing at the hospital opened last year.

As for my hon. Friend's extremely kind remarks concerning the district health authority general manager and chairman, I am grateful for those, and I am sure those gentlemen are as well. We are considering the appointment of district chairmen when the current postholders' terms come to an end on 31 March. We are not yet in a position to make an announcement, but I will ensure that my hon. Friend's views are taken into account in making the decision.

My hon. Friend spoke about some of the problems of inefficiency, and I would not disagree with many of his remarks. However, I should emphasise the extent to which health authorities have already improved efficiency. Over the past four years, they have made cost improvements — that means productivity improvements — worth £600 million. Those savings represent cash released from the running costs of the services, which becomes available for patient care.

In addition, the substantial increase in funding for the Health Service — from £7 billion in 1978-79 to a planned £22 billion in 1988-89, a real terms increase of about 30 per cent. — has enabled authorities to do something very important with all the money that we give; that is, to treat increasing numbers of patients.

Between 1978 and 1986 health authorities treated over 1 million more in-patient cases, nearly 500,000 more day cases and dealt with nearly 4 million more out-patient attendances than under the previous Labour Government. We should make no mistake. Many health authorities have a record of improved productivity which is second to none, and which compares well with industry.

I make no apologies for repeating these figures, as they reflect credit on all our staff and management. However, we expect our health authorities to continue to improve efficiency in all areas, partly by further extensions of competitive tendering, partly by looking critically at current arrangements for the procurement, storage and distribution of supplies to ensure that that is carried out as effectively and economically as possible, and partly by looking, as my hon. Friend suggests, at savings on energy usage. We seek savings of 1·5 per cent. a year, and we are expecting savings of about £12 million on energy this year.

Authorities need to ensure that the best possible use is made of the Health Service estate. We expect authorities to look critically at their estate holdings, because sales of surplus land and buildings can generate significant capital proceeds — disposals since 1979 have realised over £370 million and we expect an additional £240 million from land sales this year — and enable authorities to reduce the running costs of the estate. It is worth putting on record that the costs to the Health Service cleaning, maintenance, rent, rates and energy alone is some £48 per sq m, before a single doctor, nurse or patient has walked in the door. In other words, the sheer maintenance cost of our enormous estate is about £1·5 billion a year.

My hon. Friend asked about holding consultant contracts at district level. That was considered carefully when the Health Service was restructured in 1982. Following consultation, it was decided to keep the contracts at regional level. From my personal experience — I was chairman of a teaching district health authority, so I held the contracts — I can tell my hon. Friend that it is no easier to enforce them there either.

Where we think we can make progress is to involve the consultants much more in managing their own budgets, so that they know how much things cost and can make sensible clinical decisions in the light of cost information. We are currently piloting that approach, which is jointly sponsored by the Health Service Management Board, the joint consultants committee and local health authorities, at five acute hospitals and nine community sites. If that produces the sort of result that we are expecting, decisions on the wider dissemination of the approach to other acute hospitals will be made later this year.

Good management, as my hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham said, needs information. We are now making real progress. Each year the Department produces a package of 450 performance indicators which are distributed to the health authorities. Those enable the authorities, and in many cases individual hospitals, to compare their performance with others and to identify areas where there appears to be scope for improvement.

The performance indicators include financial information, such as the cost of treating cases, and non-financial information, for example, on the length of stay of patients and numbers of staff employed. The figures show substantial variations between districts, even after taking out extreme values in the top and bottom 10 per cent., which may result from faulty data, but I suspect result from excessive adequacy — or inadequacy — of management staff.

Let me take two examples from 1985-86, the last year for which we have performance indicators. We shall take out the top and bottom 10 per cent. The cost of treating

[Mrs. Edwina Currie]

a patient in a large acute hospital varied by a factor of two, from £560 per case to £960 a case, while the number of patients treated per surgical bed in districts varied from 35 to 54 per year—an astonishing gap.

The latest figures that we have available are for 1985-86. The figures for 1986-87 will be available very shortly, and we hope to produce the current year's figures much more quickly. It occurred to me, therefore, that my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West might like to have the latest performance indicators as soon as we have them, and I undertake to send them to him as soon as they are available.

Mr. Jones: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for her kind offer, which I certainly wish to take up, but I imagine that I speak for many of my hon. Friends when I say that this will be of much wider interest, and I hope that it will be made available to all hon. Members.

Mrs. Currie: I will take advice on that. I am sure that my hon. Friend realises that these are very bulky things. It may be that I should select some items from among them, to assist colleagues. I am sure that he and others will find, as the district health authorities have found, that they are very interesting indeed.

I would like to go into competitive tendering a little more throughly. Savings from competitive tendering are running at over £100 million a year. We are encouraging authorities to consider its use for other services. Some authorities have already put portering and internal audit out to tender, and, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State indicated at the party conference in October, there may be other possibilities.

More generally, we consider that the National Health Service and private health care sector should co-operate to provide the best possible total health care for patients. The private sector offers flexibility to authorities for short-term relief of pressure and long-term contractual arrangements. Co-operation of this kind is not new—it goes back right to the inception of the service—but we think that there is scope for both more, and more diverse, collaboration.

We take on board what my hon. Friend said about best practice units. Existing statutory audit arrangements provide for auditors to ensure that authorities have adequate arrangements for achieving economy, effectiveness and efficiency but we want to go further.

We are establishing a value-for-money unit intended to promote local and regional initiatives. We have taken steps to disseminate guidance on good practice in energy conservation. We have established a small group in support of the NHS management board's property adviser to assist authorities to make the best use of the estate. We have launched a number of central studies in areas with potential for value-for-money improvements — for example, a recent study into the paymaster function, which identified areas for improved efficiency in the payment of salaries, wages and creditors.

We are also encouraging authorities to establish their own value-for-money groups, and, as my hon. Friend knows, we are setting up an income generation unit from the centre, to help and advise authorities on the exploitation of commercial possibilities, as set out in clause 4 of the Health and Medicines Bill which is currently in Committee, of which my hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham is a most valued member.

I endorse everything that my hon. Friend said about capital management and the need for investment in revenue-saving schemes. I suppose that my hon. Friend may not know that at least one region, Oxford, is already running schemes on some of the lines proposed by my hon. Friend.

As regards capital depreciation, the Department is sponsoring pilot studies in four regions on improving the management of capital assets, including the possibility of introducing depreciation. I must say that I share my hon. Friend's views on this question.

In general, we welcome the suggestions made by my hon. Friends. It is very helpful and encouraging to hear such suggestions made by them, and by others too. I take the points about the barriers, the boundaries and the nurses. Those points are very well made. What we ought to do, in the light of current discussions outside the House, is to agree some very simple propositions.

First of all, we have funded the National Health Service better than ever before, with more money, more staff and more patient care. So more money alone is not the answer —which is what Opposition Members would say if they had bothered to come along. Perhaps I should add that, however much money we have, we still have an absolute obligation to spend every penny wisely.

Secondly, I am sure that we can agree that our ability to provide a well-funded Health Service depends on a strong economy, which will depend, in the future as in the past, on firm control of public spending.

Thirdly, increased personal prosperity makes it possible to look to individual pockets as well as to the public purse for a contribution. The state does not have to do it all.

Fourthly, our objective overall is not endlessly to build more hospitals, whether they are in the constituency of my hon. Friend or not, or just to employ more doctors.

Our objective is the better health of our people. That involves more than the Health Service or the whole health care industry. It involves individuals taking responsibility for their own lives and for those of their families far more vigorously than has ever happened in this country before. I know that my hon. Friend joins me in this belief and endeavour.

With those points, I commend my hon. Friends' remarks to the House as a reasonable and worthwhile contribution to the debate.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at one minute to Twelve midnight.

House of Commons

Friday 29 January 1988

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Parliamentary Questions

9.36 am

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I should like to draw the attention of the House to Standing Order No. 17, which deals with the answering of questions.

Standing Order No. 17(7) says that for questions that are given the letter W,

"the Minister . . . shall cause an answer to be so printed"

on that day. A convention has grown up that Ministers give holding answers. Although holding answers are no longer printed in *Hansard*, when the substantive answer is given the holding answer date is referred to in brackets. This convention has grown up because we understand that Ministers occasionally require a day or two to gain the necessary information. This occasion is important because there are no other requirements for Ministers to give answers to this place. To delay answers for an inordinate period of time seems to amount to contempt of this place.

I draw your attention, Mr. Speaker, to the fact that I asked the Department of Health and Social Security a question for written priority answer on Tuesday 1 December 1987. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), gave a holding answer on that date, but I have not yet received a substantive answer.

On Monday 18 January I tabled a further question asking why I had not received a substantive reply to the question that I had tabled for written priority answer on 1 December 1987 on the matter of care for the mentally handicapped. I received an apology from the Minister, in which she said that she was sorry that I had

"not yet received a substantive reply. It has been necessary to make inquiries to bring up to date the information held centrally. I hope to be able to let him have a reply soon."
—[*Official Report*, 18 January 1988; Vol. 125, c. 579.]

That was on 18 January. It is now the end of the month, and the original answer was tabled for answer on 1 December. If that were to happen to 30 or 40 hon. Members, I think that one could guarantee a large number of points of order. It seems to me that the Minister is failing in her duty to the House in allowing time to pass in this way. I delayed raising the matter in order to allow the Minister plenty of time to come to the House. I have waited until Friday, so I have allowed the Minister a whole week in which she could have placed an answer on the Board.

I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to remind the Minister of the requirement that written priority questions shall be answered by a Minister and the strong convention that when a holding answer is given the substantive answer is supplied in as short a time thereafter as possible. That has clearly not happened. The Minister seems to be extremely inefficient and careless of her duties towards the House.

Mr. Speaker: I can understand the hon. Member's concern, but it is not a matter for me. The Leader of the House is present, and I am sure that he will have heard and noted what the hon. Member has said.

Birmingham Pub Bombings

9.39 am

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it in order to ask whether, in the light of yesterday's Appeal Court ruling, your ruling that discussion of the Birmingham pub bombing case is sub judice is now lifted? Is it also in order to ask whether you have been notified by the Home Secretary of his intention to make a statement this morning?

Mr. Speaker: I have not been notified of any such intention. The deadline for notification is 10 o'clock. I have no notification at the moment. The matter is not sub judice. The case has ended.

Orders of the Day

Consumer Arbitration Agreements Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

9.40 am

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

At the outset of the debate, I freely acknowledge the help and support that I have received from the Consumers Association. In particular, I refer to its legal officer, Mr. David Tench, who has, indeed, been the proverbial tower of strength. I also acknowledge — this may be more unexpected—the help and support that was given to me by my hon. Friends the Members for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page) and for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden). They have been must supportive, and I am particularly grateful to them.

The Bill represents a further step forward in increasing consumer protection. Currently, it is possible for a consumer to enter into an arrangement with, for example, a remover or a builder for certain works and services, and it is quite possible for an agreement to be drawn up between the two parties. Frequently, there will be a clause in that agreement, usually in small print and on the back of the agreement, that states that, in the event of any dispute arising between the parties, such dispute will automatically be referred to and settled by arbitration. The compulsory arbitration clause, as it is generally known, is unfair to the consumer as it removes certain important opportunities to obtain redress via the courts. My Bill—specifically clause 1 — will have the effect of drawing teeth. In gives the consumer additional rights to decide how best he should proceed against a supplier. I stress that the Bill provides additional choice and should not be seen in any way as an anti-arbitration measure. It is simply a move that will enable cases that are currently not resolved to have recourse to law. If a consumer wishes to use arbitration—clearly, there will be occasions on which he would be wise to do so; for example, cases involving technical points, particularly in respect of building—he will have the right to continue to do so.

It will be helpful for the House to know that, in Committee — that is, on the assumption that the Bill receives a Second Reading — I shall move certain amendments. Most amendments will be of a strictly technical nature and will tidy up drafting in the Bill. However, one amendment will be material to the content of the Bill. It follows discussions that I have had with my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Corporate and Consumer Affairs. That amendment will result in cases, where a claim is for less than £500, being referred by the consumer, at his discretion, to the small claims procedure in the county court. Hon. Members will recall that the current limit for small claims is £500. For claims between £500 and £5,000, a consumer will have the right to take his case to the county court, with a discretion for the court to enforce the arbitration clause. That will allow courts to enforce arbitration in cases in which it is in a consumer's interest so to do. For claims over £5,000, any arbitration clause written into a contract would stand and be legally enforceable, which is, of course, the current position.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): Will there be guidelines to assist a registrar or judge of the county court? For example, will it be clear that such discretion can be exercised only when it is specifically and clearly in the interests of a consumer to do so? To what extent will a registrar or judge of the county court be guided on the criteria to be applied?

Mr. Pawsey: I assure the hon. Gentleman that that matter will be written into the amendment and, therefore, will appear on the face of the Bill. Appropriate guidance will exist for the court to observe.

The costs of arbitration can sometimes be prohibitive, compared with the amount in dispute. The British Association of Removers helpfully sends out a leaflet about arbitration and the costs of arbitration in cases in which it is being considered. I use the word "helpfully" quite deliberately. I am not trying to be ironic or sarcastic in any way. Under the section headed "Costs", the leaflet states:

> "Arbitration is a legal process and as such is not free. The costs are not borne by the British Association of Removers. Since the president of the BAR almost always appoints a barrister the fees will be in accordance with a barrister's usual scales."

The leaflet then sets out what such costs may be. For example:

> "Fee on appointment £5
> Fee on summons for directions £25
> Fee for sitting as arbitrator per day or part thereof whilst engaged on the arbitration £200."

Therefore, it will be appreciated that when a fairly small sum—let us say about £100—is involved in a dispute, it is clearly not worth a consumer's while to take his case to arbitration. But the matter would be different if the consumer were able to use the small claims procedure in the county court. There the maximum fee for the issue of a summons in respect of a claim of not more than £500 is £37. If the matter is contested and goes to a hearing by the registrar, nothing further has to be paid to the court for the form of justice that is readily available there.

It is reasonable to assume that the overwhelming majority of disputes will not take more than one day to dispose of. That applies to arbitration or, indeed county court claims. Therefore, the comparative costs are £230 for arbitration, on the one hand, and £37 for the small claims procedure, on the other hand. It will be further appreciated that legal aid is not available for cases involving arbitration. However, a consumer might be entitled to legal aid if he proceeds against a supplier through the courts. That is an important consideration.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): Does my hon. Friend say that in all cases the costs of the arbitrator are £200, or does he refer only to the specific agreement of the trade association that he quoted?

Mr. Pawsey: I refer to the case of which I have specific knowledge, the British Association of Removers. My hon. Friend will note that a barrister is appointed. I suspect that he will know better than I the costs involved in appointing a barrister. *[Interruption.]* I hear a voice gently saying that my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) is a solicitor, not a barrister.

Mr. Stanbrook: I have the great advantage of being a barrister. But I was suggesting that sometimes solicitors act as arbitrators. They could be even more expensive.

Mr. Pawsey: I would be wise to let the matter lie where it is.

In any contract between a supplier and a consumer, the consumer is invariably the weaker party. In all fairness, the choice of which path to pursue — arbitration or the courts—should lie firmly with the consumer.

Mr. Anderson: I am inclined to accept the hon. Gentleman's view that this is an appropriate matter for the small claims court, given the limit involved. But can he give some indication — some revelation — of the Government's motive in seeking to persuade him that that limit is appropriate? Was it related to the likely costs on the legal aid fund, or were there other and perhaps more worthy motives?

Mr. Pawsey: The hon. Gentleman seeks to draw me on a matter involving legal aid, on which I suspect that I should not say too much. I note, however, that my hon. Friend the Minister will be responding to the debate, and he may well choose to make some passing reference which may satisfy the hon. Gentleman.

Let me return to my theme. The consumer is involved in legal activity as a once-in-a-lifetime experience. He is therefore the classic one-shotter, often against a repeat player who will be more powerful, and certainly more experienced at litigation.

It has been argued that, once a consumer has entered into and signed an agreement, he should be bound by the terms of the contract into which he has freely entered. However, hon. Members will know probably better than most, through their constituency and surgery experiences, that the small-print clauses are seldom read and even more seldom understood. In any case, the Unfair Contract Terms Act 1977 has breached that principle, and enables one party to set aside an unfair condition.

In my view, the compulsory arbitration clause is unfair to the consumer. The business man supplying the service usually has behind him a trade association, legal expertise and, above all, the day-to-day experience that he has gained from the running of his business, and from being in his particular industry. The consumer has one of those advantages.

Again, it has been argued by certain trade bodies that the legislation is unnecessary, for two reasons — first, that the number of cases taken to arbitration is small, and, secondly, that arbitration is in any case a fair and reasonable method of resolving the difficulties. Let me deal with the first objection. The reason that the number of cases is relatively small is the high cost that may be involved in pursuing a case to arbitration. Secondly, if the suppliers are as professional and good as is sometimes claimed, what can be their objections to the consumer having the right to defend himself in the nation's courts? I do not believe that they can have it both ways. The Bill simply gives the consumer additional protection. That is its raison d'etre. It enhances the consumer's choice, and, as such, it should commend itself to the House.

Older, or perhaps I should say more senior, hon. Members will recall that in 1977 the Unfair Contract Terms Bill was introduced. During its passage, an amendment was moved the effect of which was to remove from the Bill clauses broadly similar to those that I am introducing today. I must make it clear at this point that this Bill is not opposed by my hon. Friend the Minister.

Hon. Members will recall the old adage that the principal duty of an Opposition is to oppose. Clearly, the Opposition between 1974 and 1979 were particularly successful in that duty, which no doubt had something to do with the very small majority of the Government of the day. They were therefore able to impede the progress of legislation that the Government were trying to get through. *Hansard* refers to one successful operation mounted by the then Opposition:

"*Question put*, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment:—

The House proceeded to a Division, but no Member being willing to act as Teller for the Ayes, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *declared that the Noes had it.*

Question accordingly negatived." — [*Official Report*, 22 July 1977; Vol. 953-2, c. 2202.]

Hon. Members will note that the Government did not put in Tellers, which suggests to me—perhaps I am cynical —that an understanding had been reached through the usual channels: a quid pro quo had been struck. The price for getting the major part of the legislation through the House was the dropping of one relatively minor part. My case is that the part that was dropped was very similar to the legislation that I am introducing this morning.

Mr. Stanbrook: Surely my hon. Friend is discounting completely—indeed, ignoring—the furious and sustained attack made in another place by a very distinguished former Lord Chancellor, leading for the Opposition, who mounted his attack on the basis that the legislation was an interference with the general principle of English law that a man should be kept to his bargain. That, surely, was the real reason for the 1977 Government's acceptance that there were strong arguments against that clause.

Mr. Pawsey: I am obliged to my hon. Friend for that interesting intervention, and I have heard what he has had to say about what happened in the other place. I must repeat, however, that the general principle of a man having to be kept to the bargain that he has struck was breached by the Unfair Contract Terms Act 1977. The Bill enjoys support from a wide range of bodies, and it is worth reminding the House that my hon. Friend the Minister will not be opposing it either. Circumstances change, and so do views. I put it to my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington that that may well be the case in this instance.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that, as John Stonehouse had supposedly swum off a beach in Australia, the then Labour Government were in the minority? As a consequence, the scenario that the hon. Gentleman has outlined, in which a quid pro quo was reached, is much more likely than the fierce confrontation on principle suggested by his hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook). The reality of the Labour Government's latter years was that they lived virtually from week to week.

Mr. Pawsey: I am obliged to the hon. Gentleman for an extraordinarily helpful intervention. I do not think that I have ever made such a comment to him before, and I may not have the opportunity to do so in the future, but he has summed up the matter extraordinarily well. The legislation that was lost in 1977 now has an opportunity of being put back in place.

The Bill does not touch commercial arbitration agreements, as is made clear by clause 1. If it receives a Second Reading—as I hope it will today—arbitration agreements that emanate from abroad, as well as those between companies and businesses, will continue to

[Mr. Pawsey]

operate in precisely the same way as at present. The clauses in such contracts that require participants to go to arbitration will therefore continue to be upheld. It is only where a consumer is a party to the contract, and it is a contract to which United Kingdom law wholly applies, that the Bill will change existing law. Clause 1 refers, and clause 3 defines.

I have pointed out that a consumer is in a different position from a business man. A business man makes a commercial judgment about any transaction into which he enters. His commercial judgment is applied to that transaction and to what may be in prospect. As a business man, I am expected to understand, adopt, and apply the criteria of a particular market place. As a business man, I am expected to be able to understand and, if necessary, take advice on any contract into which I am likely to enter. That is why I make a distinction between commercial contracts and those involving consumers.

The Bill enjoys the support not only of the Consumers Association but of the Institute of Trading Standards Administration and the Office of Fair Trading. It will be helpful if I quote from a letter of 16 December 1987 from Sir Gordon Borrie, the Director General of Fair Trading, to Lord Justice Mustill, who chairs the departmental advisory committee on arbitration at the Department of Trade and Industry. Sir Gordon said:

"I see an advantage in the consumer being able to choose between binding arbitration or the court and would not wish to see any inadvertent restriction of this choice."

Sir Gordon continued:

"I am aware that some contracts . . . may contain a compulsory arbitration clause. This practice I oppose because I do not think it desirable for consumers to be deprived of their right of access to the court. In my view the effect of the Consumer Arbitration Agreements Bill would be that consumers would not have to submit their disputes to arbitration unless they had given their agreement to do so in writing after the dispute had arisen or they had themselves embarked upon arbitration proceedings. As such, the Bill, if enacted, would go some considerable way towards assisting my policy goal."

Sir Gordon's comments are extremely important and pertinent to the debate.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): As many of the bodies to which the hon. Gentleman has referred influence affairs in Northern Ireland, does he intend that the Bill should apply to Northern Ireland? For my guidance, will he consider at a later stage giving protection to consumers who are tenants of properties formerly owned by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive? The executive is escaping responsibility under the phrase caveat emptor.

These first-home buyers, with no previous experience of contract, duly signed their names on cheques concluding a purchase deal. They did so with no advice, placing full faith in the Government and a Northern Ireland quango. Subsequently, they found that the property was dangerous to their health. The Housing Executive is spending up to £600 on all other properties, yet these first-time owner-occupiers can get no support, not even a grant, to reline flues emitting dangerous fumes. I trust that the hon. Gentleman will enlighten me as to whether my constituents will be able to use his Bill to enable them to seek justice at reasonable cost, either through the arbitration process or through the small claims court.

Mr. Pawsey: I listened with interest to the hon. Gentleman. I assure him that the Bill will apply to Northern Ireland in precisely the same way as it applies to the rest of the United Kingdom. I hope that that answers the hon. Gentleman's point. As for the Housing Executive, if I may take refuge in that time-honoured method. I shall write to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): Can the hon. Gentleman explain why he has included clause 3(3):

"This Act shall not apply to Northern Ireland"?

I am not arguing against its application. I suggest that it should be applied to Northern Ireland.

Mr. Pawsey: I am sorry, but I cannot quite make out what the right hon. Gentleman is talking about.

Mr. Molyneaux: I am sorry; I got it wrong.

Mr. Anderson: The hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) has referred to Sir Gordon Borrie's letter of 16 December. If the hon. Gentleman has a copy to hand, may I refer him to the last paragraph and ask to what extent he will be willing in Committee to amend the Bill in the light of Sir Gordon's comments. Sir Gordon says that a consumer may look at a contract and assume that he is compelled to go to arbitration. Sir Gordon say that if this contract contains a compulsory arbitration clause, the consumer

"will think he has to go to arbitration despite the new law unless advised to the contrary. This problem could be avoided if arbitration agreements had to apprise consumers of the non-obligatory nature of arbitration clauses in much the same way that the Consumer Credit Act requires credit or hire agreements to contain certain information about legal rights."

I hope that the hon. Gentleman agrees that that is an important point. If he accepts its validity, will he reveal what steps he will take during the Bill's passage to ensure that the consumer, when faced with a contract which, on the face of it, contains a compulsory arbitration clause, is made aware of his rights?

Mr. Pawsey: The hon. Gentleman raises an important and interesting point. I shall seriously consider it. On the assumption that the Bill is given a Second Reading and is considered in Committee, we shall thrash out that point. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will wish to serve on the Committee, and I look forward to his comments.

I have referred to the fruitful discussions between me and my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate and Consumer Affairs, and, therefore, I am happy to assure the House that the Department does not oppose the Bill.

The House is concerned about people's rights. We take pride in being regarded as the defenders of the rights of people. It is no accident that the badge of the House is the portcullis—a symbol of defiance and defence. My Bill extends the principle of fairness. It extends choice and reduces the imbalance between the consumer and the supplier. It does not take away anyone's rights, for the right to arbitration remains, albeit in a permissive rather than obligatory form. The Bill extends choice and consumer rights. I commend it to the House.

10.9 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate and Consumer Affairs (Mr. Francis Maude): It may be for the convenience of the House if, at this early stage, I outline the Government's position. May I tender

my apologies to the House for having to leave the Chamber for a short period not very long after I resume my seat.

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): Stay for the applause.

Mr. Maude: Applause is unlikely to delay me for very long, unless the hon. Gentleman is feeling particularly enthusiastic. I have a meeting that I must attend, but I aim to be back in the Chamber as soon as I can. I hope that the House will forgive any discourtesy.

May I too, tender my congratulations to my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey), not only on bringing forward the Bill and his excellent good fortune in drawing such a good slot in the ballot, but on proposing the Bill in such a temperate and well-argued way. In common with my hon. Friend, I congratulate the Consumers Association, which has also pursued this matter in a moderate and rational way. I suspect that the general inclination, in common with mine, is that the best protection for consumers is for them to be able to make well-informed and responsible decisions on their own behalf. I know that it will have been with reluctance that the Consumers Association felt it necessary to bring forward a Bill of this kind, which interferes with rights of contract. However, my hon. Friend and the Consumers Association have made a good case and the Government are not unsympathetic to it.

The Bill advances the proposition that an agreement to refer future differences to arbitration should not be enforceable against the consumer, unless the consumer gives his consent after a dispute has arisen. It is a short Bill, but it raises some important points of principle.

My hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth has argued that, as a matter of principle, consumers should not have their right of redress before the law effectively restricted by small print in contracts that they sign, but which they do not necessarily understand, even if they have read them. I appreciate the force of that argument. However, the Bill erodes the principle that an agreement to resolve future differences by arbitration should be binding. This is an important principle of arbitration law. Although section 4 of the Arbitration Act 1950 gives the court discretion to allow court proceedings to continue, notwithstanding an arbitration clause, the grounds for exercising the discretion are very restrictively applied.

As my hon. Friend said, the Bill also erodes the principle of sanctity of contract. It would allow a consumer to revoke an arbitration clause in a contract, even if he signs the contract knowing full well the implications of the clause. The Bill does not give the trader an equivalent right. I tend to the old-fashioned view that when someone signs an agreement he or she should be committed to its terms. My hon. Friend has said, quite fairly, that that principle has already been breached. However, the fact that it has been breached does not mean that one should erode it further. It does not mean that one should allow unrestricted powers to the courts to interfere with the terms of the contract freely agreed. One should be extremely chary about extending that breach, and with that approach in mind I have formulated my view on the Bill.

Mr. Cryer: Will the Minister accept that for many years Parliament has been modifying contracts freely entered into, and not necessarily in connection with arbitration? The Sale of Goods Act 1893 gives implied terms to the sale of goods, and those goods should be, "of merchantable quality" and fit for such purpose. Even though the contract itself may make no reference to those requirements they become, by virtue of an Act of Parliament, terms of the contract whether people know it or not.

Mr. Maude: I accept the hon. Gentleman's argument, but, without becoming too legalistic, there is a difference. Acts such as the Sale of Goods Act imply an additional term into the contracts so that at the outset of the contract it becomes a term of it. The principle contained in the Bill means that the court can come along and overset an explicit term to which both parties have freely given their consent. That is a difficult principle and one which the House, with its concern for the respect in which the law is held, should be reluctant to consider. None the less, if the case has been made, one cannot say that the principle is unbreached, but we should be reluctant to take the matter further. Before we do so we must make sure that there is a specific mischief that needs to be met and can be met.

It is clear that the Bill raises difficult issues of law and principle that require to be reconciled. Therefore, last November, I referred the Bill to my Department's advisory committee on arbitration law, chaired by Lord Justice Mustill. I did so with the agreement of my hon. Friend who is promoting the Bill.

I should like to put on record my thanks to the chairman and members of the committee for the thoroughness with which they examined the issues and the speed with which they produced their report. A copy is available in the Library. The committee took evidence from interested parties on 5 January, and I am grateful to my hon. Friend, to the Consumers Association and to many others, for their contribution to the committee's deliberations.

There are four aspects of the committee's conclusions to which I should now like to refer. First, the committee agrees that the Bill does address an unfairness, at least in theory. The unfairness is essentially concerned with the comparative costs of resolving a dispute through the small claims procedure in the county court, and through private arbitration. The small claims procedure is automatic for defended county court claims for less than £500. No legal costs are awarded and the consumer risks no more than the cost of issuing proceedings, a maximum of £43. In private arbitration, on the other hand, costs do have to be borne and it is the loser who bears them. I understand that £200 is the daily rate for an arbitrator hearing a dispute under a removal contract. It may be that that is also the daily rate for a barrister arbitrator, but the costs for a solicitor to provide the same service are likely to be considerably higher. The House is aware that the Bar provides an excellent economic service to the community.

It is clear that a consumer with a disputed claim against a trader for, say, £200 or £300 may judge it worth while to risk £43 in pursuing a claim before the small claims court, but not to risk £200 or more if the only route open to him is comparatively expensive private arbitration. Therefore, I can see the potential scope for using arbitration clauses as an unfair means of discouraging consumers from pursuing disputes in cases where the sums of money are of this order of magnitude.

[Mr. Maude]

That brings me on to a second aspect of the committee's findings, the extent to which there is evidence that arbitration clauses are actually in practice, operated unfairly against the consumer. It appeared from the evidence to the committee that such clauses are presently confined principally to contracts in two industries, building and household removals. I understand that no examples were put to the committee of arbitration clauses giving rise to unfairness in building contracts, but that a small number of cases concerning household removals were presented as evidence. In those cases it was alleged that consumers who were bound by arbitration clauses were deterred by the high costs involved from pursuing claims for damage to property during household removals.

The conclusion that I draw is that although, in theory, there is potential for mischief, there is little evidence in practice of a large-scale problem.

Mr. Pawsey: I have a number of papers with me that give examples of unfairness. Indeed, I received a letter only yesterday from someone from Hertfordshire—it was not from a constituent—who said:

"We now find ourselves in a ridiculous situation whereby we cannot go to court, cannot get our money back and the manufacturers are ignoring us."

The whole burden of the letter is that it is not worth the consumer's while to pursue a case through arbitration once he discovers the cost of arbitration. This case was a complaint not about removals, but about another industry. As soon as that person received advice about the cost of arbitration, he had to withdraw.

My hon. Friend is a barrister, and he has a legal mind. He puts matters to the House, quite properly, within a legal framework. However, at the same time he is also a constituency Member of Parliament and, as I do, he sees many people at his surgery who come to complain. The saddest phrase that I hear is, "I thought that it would be all right." We have a duty to defend those people, and I believe that the Bill does just that.

Mr. Maude: I accept my hon. Friend's point. Indeed, the next sentence of my speech reads:

"It is possible that more cases will come to light."

My hon. Friend proves the prescience of that sentence by bringing another case to light while I am on my feet.

My hon. Friend gently chides me for dealing with this matter in a legal context, but I must remind him that this is a legislative Chamber. We are in the business of making law. As a result of today's debate we shall create new law. We must consider that, without being unduly legalistic, on a legal basis. I take my hon. Friend's point that we must bear in mind that unfairness can arise in practice as well as in theory. The evidence suggests that the unfairnesses that arise in practice are not widespread. This is not a major problem, although it is a real one.

I also take my hon. Friend's point about the people who say, "We thought it would be all right." Every time Parliament goes down the route of allowing the courts to intrude in a freely agreed contract there is a danger that we encourage people not to look at the fine print. My hon. Friend claimed that we may be dealing with people who do not read the fine print, but we should not allow a message to go out from this debate that there is a reduced need for people to read the fine print. People should read what they are agreeing to. We will do our constituents and the public a disservice if we allow them to think that every time possible unfairness arises Parliament will leap in to deal with it. People should read what they are agreeing to and accept that they should be bound by it.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: Does the Minister accept that that is a counsel of perfection? Even if people read the small print—and most of them, including myself, do not—they would not know the costs of arbitration. It sounds like a perfectly fair procedure, but when barristers are paid £200 a day on job training schemes, it is unfair and exorbitant. People do not know that.

Mr. Maude: I take the hon. Gentleman's point. It is perfectly fair, but the House must endorse the principle that people should read what they are signing and be bound by it. We must accept any dilution of that principle reluctantly and only in the face of a perceived and proven problem. I accept that in this case there is a proven problem, albeit of a relatively minor nature, but relatively few cases involving such a problem have come to light. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman agrees that we should convey the message that the best protection for the consumer is to protect himself by reading what he is signing, and by enforcing the terms of the agreement, which are often in his favour.

Mr. Beggs: Surely the Minister agrees that, the Government, or an agency acting on behalf of the Government should protect tenants of 13 years' standing who, in good faith, purchase property, believing that the Housing Executive, representing the Government, would not be out to do them down in an underhand deed. Subsequently, when things go wrong, there should be protection for those parties to the contract who have erred unwittingly and have little, if any, previous experience of entering into any contract.

Mr. Maude: The hon. Gentleman certainly takes me well beyond my brief. I do not mind that, but he also takes me well beyond my responsibilities. I do not think that he would want me to produce an off-the-cuff reaction to his point. I shall consider his comments and ensure that they are dealt with satisfactorily.

I now turn with the third aspect of the Mustill committee report that I want to highlight. The committee took the view that the Bill, as presently drafted, is drawn too widely because it would affect all consumer contracts, not simply those where there is perceived to be a scope for mischief. I accept that there are good grounds for this point of view. Private arbitration is not a means of resolving disputes that the Government would wish to discourage. On the contrary, the Government would wish to give it every encouragement because it provides an efficient dispute resolution procedure that is an alternative to the courts and helps to reduce ther work load. It would be undesirable to allow a consumer to insist on litigation in the court in a case where arbitration did not involve him in any financial penalty, and where arbitration was clearly more convenient and sensible, perhaps because of the technical nature of the dispute.

Fourthly, I should note that the committee examined the question primarily in relation to the position in English law, but it noted that adaptations would be necessary in relation to the law of Scotland. This applies in particular to the drafting of limitations on the scope of the Bill.

The Government have no reason to dissent from the four aspects of the committee's findings that I have

described. The Government take the view that there is little evidence of a problem in practice, but we accept that in theory, it would be possible in certain circumstances to use arbitration clauses as an unfair means of discouraging consumers from pursuing disputes. The Government will not therefore oppose the Bill, provided that it is narrowed to disputes of a size where the scope for mischief has been identified.

The committee concluded that the only practical way of narrowing the Bill would be by a monetary limit, and it identified two possible options. The first is the limit of the small claims jurisdiction, which is £500. The second is the limit of the county court's jurisdiction, which is £5,000. In this latter case the committee proposed a discretion for the courts to enforce the arbitration clause in cases where it would be in the consumer's interest to do so. Thus, the court should have a discretion to insist on arbitration in cases where there would be no disadvantage to the consumer in arbitration proceedings as opposed to court litigation, and where the case was better suited to arbitration, perhaps because of technical complexity.

Mr. Anderson: One of the findings of the Mustill committee referred to the costs to the legal aid fund. Has the Minister made any attempt to estimate such costs?

Mr. Maude: The committee was not particularly concerned with the effects on the legal aid fund. It agreed that there would be an effect on the fund, but the committee's remit is to advise me on the legal implications for arbitration law. The committee addressed that matter and the Government must address it too. The main reason for seeking a limitation of the Bill is not financial, but because any incursion into the freedom of individuals to enter binding contracts should be limited to matters in which scope for mischief has been identifed.

Mr. Anderson: In paragraph 8 of its conclusions the committee refers specifically to the effect on the legal aid fund. It states:

"where the parties might be eligible for legal aid,"

this could lead

"to an increase in the burden on the legal aid fund."

That is one of the committee's key conclusions and may have been a motivating factor.

Mr. Maude: It is certainly a proper consideration to be borne in mind, but it was not the principal consideration, either for the committee or for me, in recommending that the Bill be limited in this way. The measure aims to limit incursion into the sanctity of a freely agreed contract.

Mr. Stanbrook: The Conservative position has changed since it was established by Lord Hailsham of St. Marylebone in 1977, when he vigorously defended the principle against such a Bill. My hon. Friend the Minister says that we are now agreeable to a breach of the principle, provided it is very small and related to the mischief that he has identified. Perhaps he will confirm whether such a measure may be used to deter the consumer from taking up any sort of complaint?

Mr. Maude: This is my position, as contrasted with that of my noble Friend Lord Hailsham. That debate took place on what is now the Unfair Contract Terms Act 1977. That Act breached the principle of contract and gave the courts power to intervene in a contract between two parties. My noble Friend was, in those circumstances, properly concerned that that interference should be limited as much as possible. It is the same principle that guides me today in saying that only where a specific problem is identified should we take this breach of the principle any further. Further evidence may have come to light of possible abuses, but we do not say that there is a major problem now, and if a problem has been identified and a case has been made out, I shall respond to it.

The hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) should not press me too far on this. I have made it clear that my position is that while I am not opposing the Bill in the form into which my hon. Friend has proposed it be amended, I am an agnostic, and this is not a measure that commands my whole-hearted enthusiasm. I accept the case that my hon. Friend has made so persuasively, and that has caused me not to invite the House to oppose it.

Mr. Gerald Bowden (Dulwich): While recognising that it is a fundamental principle of English law that there should be a sanctity of contract, will my hon. Friend also recognise that there is an even greater fundamental principle, which is access to justice? Those who have sustained injustice should go to the court. That is something that supersedes the sanctity of the contract.

Mr. Maude: My hon. Friend puts his point in a vigorous way, but part of justice is requiring people to keep to their word, which has been freely entered into. As a general rule, people ought to know what it is they are signing, and the House should be reluctant to endorse the principle that it is all right for people to sign contracts without reading them. It is not, and it never has been. We may be addressing a limited area, but there may be many other factors in contracts that people may not like when they find out about them. People should read the fine print, and there is nothing that the House and the courts can do in the generality of contracts to protect people from the consequences of agreements that they have signed. We should reassert that today.

My hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth has said that he is willing to accept amendments that combine the two options that the Mustill committee proposed. In other words, he is prepared to narrow the scope of the Bill to the limit of the county courts' jurisdiction of £5,000, with the courts retaining a discretion to enforce the arbitration clause in disputes above £500 where it would be in the consumer's interests to do so. On this understanding, the Government will not oppose the Bill. As my hon. Friend knows, the Government stand ready to provide drafting assistance to him in formulating suitable amendments for this purpose.

10.33 am

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): I congratulate the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) on the reasoned and reasonable way in which he introduced his Bill. I am a little jealous of his good fortune in coming fourth in the ballot. It has been the story of my life to come, if I feature in it at all, way down at 18th 19th or 20th, as I did on this occasion. I wonder what I might have done had I been in his position.

I apologise because I will have to leave the debate before the end, for a reason which I hope he will understand. I am going to a funeral and will have to leave the Chamber in half and hour or so.

I was interested in the position taken by the Minister, in which he himself described as agnostic. I believe that he was not in the House in 1977 when we discussed the Unfair

[Mr. Donald Anderson]

Contract Terms Act. A very proper question was posed by the hon. Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook), who asked what had happened over the 10 years which has persuaded the Government to alter their position on this fundamental issue. All that the Minister could say was that it was a modest change which could be justified on its own terms. Like the housemaid's baby, it was only little.

I suggest that there is another difference. At that time, the hon. Gentleman's party happened to be in opposition, and, as the records show, was adopting a rather partisan view towards the Act, but the world looks mildly different when one is in Government. I have not spoken to my hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell), who leads for the Opposition on this matter, but I understand that we shall adopt our normal position on consumer matters, and not harry the Government or seek to delay the proceedings on the Bill.

The Tory party in opposition espoused a number of causes. The name of the former Lord Chancellor, Lord Hailsham, was mentioned, and he made a number of eloquent speeches in favour of a Bill of Rights which would protect fundamental freedoms. Where are all those in the Conservative party who were rushing to defend a Bill of Rights and writing learned articles about it? What is the change? The only change that I can see is that those who were so eloquent in the past in favour of a Bill of Rights are now in Government, and their perspective is mildly different.

Let us come to the Bill. The Government's position on such legislation has changed since 1979. It was passed over then, but I shall not delay the House by going over its history. The Bill is described in the summary of the conclusions of the Mustill departmental committee report in this way:

"the Bill does address a problem though not a great one".

The hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth stated that this was a modest Bill. I make only this general, and non-partisan point as to what we have learned about private Members' Bills from our experience over the past few years. It is quite clear that, however high in the ballot one comes, and the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth had the good fortune to come fourth, it is impossible to make any progress with a private Member's Bill unless it has the approval of the Government. There is a point at which almost all our constitutional textbooks have to be re-written. Any Member can choose to promote a modest, technical Bill, and if he goes to the Government and says, "Look, this is a modest, technical Bill, will you please agree to it?", the Government, while they may extract some of the substance from the Bill, will allow it to go through.

However, any other Bill will make no progress. I say that with a certain amount of feeling because a Bill which I am promoting, which I believe addresses a social evil and will lead to a modest social advantage, will be blocked by the Government Whips later today. Contrary to what all the textbook writers tell us, the business of the House, whether it be Government business or so-called private Members' business, is dominated by the Government of the day, who can turn on the tap or not, who can smile or frown on a Bill. The role of the private Member as opposed to the Executive has been marginalised almost out of existence.

Mr. Cryer: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I want to raise a point of order that is entirely relevant to the point that my hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) was making with regard to the Government's position.

At the beginning of the sitting, Mr. Speaker was asked whether he had received any request by the Government to make a statement on the Birmingham bombers' trial which has just ended involving a very serious and important decision and, in my view, a very serious and grave miscarriage of justice. At that time, Mr. Speaker said that he had not received any request for permission to make a statement, but that a request could be made prior to 10 am. In view of the very important and grave nature of the decision and the fact that Mr. Speaker made it clear that, because the decision had been taken, the matter was no longer sub judice, will you advise the House, Madam Deputy Speaker, whether any request for permission to make a statement has been made?

This is a relevant point of order because the Government have a responsibility, when a trial of this magnitude and seriousness is involved, to come to the House at the first opportunity to make a statement on how they propose to redress this enormous injustice.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Mr. Speaker has not received an application from any Minister to make a statement on this matter to the House today. Perhaps I may refer the hon. Gentleman and other hon. Members to the written question that appears on the Order Paper today relating to this matter.

Sir John Farr (Harborough): Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. In view of the public concern about the announcement that has just been made and the fact that this is the earliest parliamentary opportunity for hon. Members to raise questions about the decision taken last night, would it be in order for a message to be sent by you, asking my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary to present himself at the Dispatch Box some time today in view of the wide and deeply felt concern on both sides of the House about what happened at the Old Bailey last night?

Madam Deputy Speaker: I appreciate the concern that hon. Members have expressed. It would not be in order for me to send the message requested by the hon. Gentleman. Ministers are present on the Treasury Bench and they will no doubt have heard the request.

Mr. Anderson: Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I want to stress the immediacy of this issue. There is no doubt that this is a matter of profound public interest. The matter vitally affects the relationship between this country and the Republic of Ireland, which is a friendly country.

We heard a ruling this morning that this matter would not now be sub judice in the House. However, the lawyers representing the appellants have made it clear that they are considering appeals urgently. I assume that if they decide to appeal—I confess that I have no knowledge about this, but as a lawyer I know that they may consider the position over the weekend—there may be a danger, if the appeal was to be launched, for example, in the early part of next week, that it would pre-empt any discussion in the House if the Chair were to rule that the matter was sub judice as a result of the appeal. I need not rehearse the

points about the public interest and its importance, but I submit that there is an immediacy about this matter. It would be wrong of the Government and Ministers to seek the cover of sub judice, having delayed the matter until after an appeal is launched.

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I want to remind you that when the Home Secretary announced in January 1987 that he was referring the case to the Court of Appeal, he made a statement to the House and answered questions covering a range of issues relating to the case. He thereby acknowledged the great public importance of the matter, which, as you can see, Madam Deputy Speaker, is shared by hon. Members on both sides of the House. Because of Mr. Speaker's correct ruling we have been unable to discuss this matter in the House for 13 months, until yesterday when the ruling was suspended. As my hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) has said, if this little window opens to allow us to discuss real public concern on this issue, it would be wrong to allow the window to close again because of a reimposition of the sub judice rule. I hope that you will convey our great concern to Home Office Ministers and say that we would like to hear from them on this matter.

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is it not correct that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary made his statement because he had a responsibility under the Criminal Appeal Act 1968 to consider whether to refer the matter to the Court of Appeal? He did that in accordance with his powers under that Act. Thereafter, it was an appeal like any other appeal to the Court of Appeal. It would be an extraordinary precedent if the Home Secretary was expected to make a statement in the House every time that the Court of Appeal made a ruling. That is a matter for the judiciary. One of the basic principles of our constitution is a separation of the powers of the judiciary. The judiciary is independent and it has painstakingly listened to the appeal and reached the decision that the convictions were safe.

Mr. Stanbrook: Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I intervene on this point only to state that if these points are to be considered elsewhere, we should remember that in the early 1970s, when a Conservative Government were in office, the Standing Orders of the House had to take account of a revised ruling about sub judice matters. I believe that we took a fairly tolerant view of the rule which elsewhere, in the courts and for the media, is absolute. We must accept in the House that the purpose of the sub judice rule is to ensure that a jury in any particular case, or the court in the first instance in the case of a civil dispute, should not be influenced by extraneous or extramural considerations through pressure from the press. I believe that the House recognises that such pressure is not necessarily so sensitive when it is applied to the Court of Appeal or to the House of Lords.

Madam Deputy Speaker: This is a very long point of order.

Mr. Stanbrook: I am just finishing. It may not be necessary to apply the effect of a sub judice rule in the House between a hearing in the Court of Appeal and a hearing by the House of Lords.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman's comments are somewhat hypothetical. I am sure that he will not expect me to respond to them. However, I cannot and will not allow points of order to develop into a debate. That is outside our Standing Orders. I can only repeat that Mr. Speaker has not received any application from a Minister to come to the House to make such a statement. No such request has been made. I repeat that Ministers on the Treasury Bench are aware of the very deep and understandable concern that has been expressed on both sides of the House about this matter. We can take it no further now.

Mr. Cryer: On a different point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. You are right to state that Mr. Speaker has no power to request or order a Minister to this place. However, in view of the wholly exceptional nature of this case and the fact that it is causing international repercussions, through very severe criticisms from the Irish Government and enormous strains on the Anglo-Irish Agreement, as the Leader of the House occupies a special position in relation to the operation of this place and the position of the Speaker, could we, through you, Madam Deputy Speaker, prevail on the Whips to ask the Leader of the House to tell us when the Home Secretary will be available to make a statement to the House? The Leader of the House has a particular and distinct duty in such a case. This case involves one of the most serious miscarriages of justice ever in the history of British criminal jurisdiction.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I cannot allow the hon. Gentleman to express an opinion during a point of order. I am sure that the earlier part of his comments will have been noted. We must proceed with today's business. I call Mr. Anderson.

Sir John Farr: Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Hon. Members on both sides of the House will rest happy in your totally impartial judgment in these matters and will accept what you say with great respect and alacrity. However, will you at least assure the House that the Home Secretary and the Leader of the House will be made aware of the unease manifested on both sides of the House, with very good reason, on a special morning after a very tragic event last night? Will you, Madam Deputy Speaker, with your renowned sense of fair play, ensure that Ministers are notified in the usual manner?

Madam Deputy Speaker: I can give the hon. Member and the House the assurance that their concern about this matter will be passed on to the appropriate quarters mentioned.

10.49 am

Mr. Anderson: Earlier exchanges revealed a fundamental divide on key principles. The Minister properly drew attention to the rule of caveat emptor, under which contracts freely entered into should be honoured, and to the danger that once a breach has been made and a point of principle has been yielded there is no easy stopping point. That is an important consideration, but my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) dealt with it. For many years, through the Sale of Goods Act 1893 and through other consumer legislation, we have accepted a breach in the principle of caveat emptor, under which contracts freely entered into should in all cases be

[Mr. Anderson]

honoured. We accept that such contracts, by definition, are not really freely entered into because of the inequality of bargaining.

Mr. Cryer: Does my hon. Friend agree that the Sale of Goods Act arose from that problem? With the development of an industrialised nation, the principle of caveat emptor was not always applicable. Machinery became so complicated that people were not able, simply on the basis of a contract freely entered into under the principle of caveat emptor, to decide whether a machine was of sufficient quality to do the job. The House passed the Sale of Goods Act so as to include in contracts terms to ensure that machinery was of a merchantable quality and fit for its purpose. It set aside the principle of caveat emptor, which had been invaluable until that time.

Mr. Anderson: I agree with my hon. Friend that that was the genesis of the breach in the traditional principle. I should be out of order if I were to pursue that point, save only to summarise it by saying that it was accepted then and that it has been increasingly accepted in our consumer legislation.

The opposite point was put dramatically by the hon. Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden) who said that, as Members of Parliament, we have a duty to defend people. If we are doing our jobs properly, we know from the people we meet in our surgeries and elsewhere that the terms of contracts with which they are presented often baffle and confuse them. They cannot take a second opinion. Even those of us who are literate, and those of us who have legal training are sometimes confused by the nature of the clauses and can easily be bowled over by commercial pressures. That is another factor — in addition to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South—that makes us ready to defend the little people who are unable to defend themselves and who are vulnerable to big business interests.

That is a proper view of justice. The House would not be doing its duty if it allowed a free rein and did not seek to balance the position between those who appear to hold all the power and influence and those who can be deterred from seeking justice by the fear of the costs and the inconvenience which they could incur under the present system. It is a proper approach, and I congratulate the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth on his introduction of the Bill.

I raised a number of points during interventions. I shall not repeat them, but I stress that our historic role as parliamentarians, on behalf of the little man should apply throughout legislation. It is accepted in our landlord and tenant legislation, and elsewhere. I certainly put myself squarely in the school of the hon. Member for Dulwich in terms of our duty as parliamentarians.

To allow other hon. Members to speak, I shall not go over the history of the legislation and what happened in 1977, and I shall not spell out, as has the Consumers' Association in its excellent briefing, examples of the problems that the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth tries to address, such as the contracts which Pickfords and other removal firms put out. If I were encouraged by the hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames), I might be tempted to read out some clauses in the contracts of some of those removal firms, but the House can do its own homework and see what was set out in the briefing from the Consumers' Association.

The Government accept that there is a problem. The Mustill committee recommended one way of proceeding — persuading relevant trade associations to make arbitration optional. The Government rejected that and considered that it was more appropriate for legislation, but they suggested that the scope of the Bill should be limited in the way that the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth now accepts, according to the limits of the small claims jurisdiction. Perhaps the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth will concur that since he has tied the present limits to the small claims limits, as the small claims limits rise, perhaps the ceiling within the Bill will rise correspondingly. I note that the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth agrees on that point. It was certainly accepted by the Minister, and I share his explanation of the relevance of the legal aid fund to that.

Finally, I refer to the very wise and helpful observations of Sir Gordon Borrie, the Director General of Fair Trading, which is available in the Library. In his letter of 16 December 1987 he sets out the general position of the Office of Fair Trading. He states:

"My philosophy is that arbitration should, as far as the consumer is concerned, be a simple, low-cost alternative to going to court. It should not be a barrier to redress or in effect deny anyone their normal legal rights. This policy was outlined in a debate on the Unfair Contract Terms Bill on 22 July 1977. It was then said that I believed that in many cases arbitration was preferable to going to law but that within the OFT codes of practice the consumer always has the choice. I see an advantage in the consumer being able to choose between binding arbitration or the court and would not wish to see any inadvertent restriction of this choice."

Understandably, in the light of those principles the Director General is in favour of the Bill. The letter goes on to say:

"I am aware that some contracts (rather than codes) may contain a compulsory arbitration clause. This practice I oppose because I do not think it desirable for consumers to be deprived of their right of access to the court."

It is clear, therefore, that under the current system, albeit it in restricted cases — removal firms have been mentioned — consumers, because of the costs they are likely to incur if they fail, not least because of the inconvenience of hearings by an arbitrator being in a town some distance from where they live——

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I apologise to my hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) for interrupting his speech, but can you, Madam Deputy Speaker, tell us whether you have recieved any representations from the Secretary of State for Education and Science about whether he intends to come to the House today to confirm or deny the rumours that he himself peddled yesterday that he is to announce the abolition of the Inner London education authority? It is quite unsatisfactory that rumours about the education of more than 250,000 of the capital's children, and more than 500,000 people in inner London, are being peddled when the Secretary of State has not come here to announce whether he proposes to abolish the ILEA. The action of the right hon. Gentleman in not doing so is an insult to the House and a further sign of the extent to which the Government are ruling by whim and fancy and, in this case, on a totally malignant whim against the ILEA— behaviour which seems to many of us to show that the

future of inner London's education system is just the plaything of leading Tories who wish to succeed the Prime Minister.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I have to tell the hon. Gentleman and the House that Mr. Speaker has not recieved a request from the Secretary of State to make any statement today. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that we have a major debate on this matter on Monday, and I believe that the issue will have to rest until that time.

Mr. Dobson: Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am not disputing your ruling, but Monday's debate is about a timetable motion for a Bill which, for the ILEA, proposes putting into law the commitment, which appeared in the Conservative election manifesto, to enable boroughs in London to opt out of the ILEA. There are many people who would think it quite unsatisfactory for ILEA, which has existed in some form and served inner London's children for the whole of the century, to be wiped out by a sideshow announcement in the middle of a guillotine debate or, for that matter, for it to be abolished by amendments to a Bill that has been before the House and approved on Second Reading on the basis of there being some changes to ILEA.

Madam Deputy Speaker: We cannot have a debate on this matter now. I am not making any ruling—I am merely responding to the hon. Gentleman's point of order by saying that Mr. Speaker has not received a request from the Secretary of State to make a statement to the House this morning.

Mr. Anderson: A consumer who signs a contract which purports to lay down compulsory arbitration may be unaware that, as a result of the Bill becoming law, as we hope it will, he has another option. I hope that the hon. member for Rugby and Kenilworth will give some thought to how he proposes to inform consumers of their rights and, by the time we reach Committee, will say how he proposes to ensure, by "health warning" or otherwise, that consumers are aware of their rights.

The Bill has substantial support. As far as I am aware, the only body which is firmly opposed to it is the British Association of Removers. It seems that the Bill is a consensus measure. It is certainly modest, and I wish it a fair wind.

11.4 am

Mr. Richard Page (Hertfordshire, South-West): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) on three counts. First, I congratulate him on having the luck to come fourth in the ballot. It was with a slightly wry smile that I listened to the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) bemoaning the fact that he could do no better than 20th as, in nearly 10 years, I have not got anywhere near that. Maybe next year will produce a better result.

Secondly, I thank my hon. Friend for choosing this issue because his Bill will give consumers some choice when there is a dispute with a supplier. Thirdly, I thank my hon. Friend for inviting me to be a sponsor and having the courage and kindness to do so.

The object of the Bill is to offer consumers the choice of going to court or arbitration when they are in dispute with a trader whose contract includes a compulsory arbitration clause. The vast majority of consumer contracts which refer to arbitration already allow the consumer a choice between going to court or to arbitration. A small number rule out the option of going to court to obtain redress. A customer who signs a standard contract such as that often finds out too late that he does not have a choice and has to go to arbitration to settle his dispute. That is not fair. Consumers' choice should not be removed in this way.

My hon. Friend has done a great deal of delving and research to produce the Bill. I should like to follow the hon. Member for Swansea, East who quoted various letters from the Director-General of Fair Trading—Sir Gordon Borrie. One paragraph in his letter to my hon. Friend encapsulates the view of the Office of Fair Trading. He wrote:

> "I should say that I have not endorsed any Code which included an arbitration scheme that excluded a consumer's right to seek redress in the Courts. The arbitration schemes available are intended to be an attractive option available to consumers wishing to pursue disputes and not to replace other forms of redress available, such as access to the Courts."

I should like to underline the phrase, "attractive option". It is not intended to exclude going to court.

Concern has been expressed about breaking a contract that has been freely entered into. The argument sounds logical, but all of us have experienced the mass of small print on the back of a contract which refers to this or that Act of Parliament. Unless the client has a legal training, there is little chance of his understanding the full ramifications of the contract.

Moreover, it is doubtful whether, if the consumer asked the trader to explain what any of the Acts meant, the trader would be able to give a full explanation. It is only when a dispute arises and the legal profession enters the scene to shed some light on the matter that the full consequences of the contract become clear. The Bill would give consumers rights and the fair play to which they are entitled.

As I have said, the Bill is sensible. It removes an unfair condition and it is unlikely that a long speech from me will sway the House to an even more favourable position than the one it has already adopted. I feel the vibrations from all sides that there will be——

Mr. Stanbrook: My hon. Friend seems to be inviting those of us who have reservations about the Bill to put them to him. I am particularly anxious that he, as a sponsor of the Bill, should deal with this point. By itself, an arbitration clause is not unfair. But my hon. Friend is saying that we should remove this unfairness. An arbitration clause is found in a freely undertaken contract. Both sides have the option of signing or not signing. One side, the consumer, may accept or reject it. If he wishes to reject it he has two options: he may delete it and let the other side proceed without it, or he may opt for not proceeding with the contract and go elsewhere. That is essentially a fair process; how can my hon. Friend say that it is, in itself, an unfair one?

Mr. Page: I was just coming to my peroration and hoping to make a run for the line without being picked up by someone emerging to say that he was not entirely happy about the Bill. I have already——

Mr. Pawsey: Would my hon. Friend agree that if the consumer struck out the compulsory arbitration clause from the agreement that he was being invited to sign, the supplier would not pursue the provision of the service any further? I have letters from consumers who have tried to

[Mr. Pawsey]

strike out the compulsory arbitration clause, but who, sadly, were unable to do so because the work that they wanted done would not have been done. So merely striking out the clause is not, perhaps, quite as easy as my hon. Friend has said.

Mr. Page: My hon. Friend has made a powerful point. As I said earlier, there is a confusion of small print on the back of these consumer documents and the consumer looks to us in the House to provide fair play in the area of consumer rights.

To conclude my remarks in support of the Bill, I reiterate that it is fair and gives the consumer choice. I hope the House will give it a smooth and speedy passage.

11.14 am

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I congratulate the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) on his good fortune in drawing a high place in the private Members' ballot and on presenting this modest piece of legislation. On winning the ballot, the private Member always has the problem of choosing either to pursue a controversial piece of legislation—such as the Bill dealt with last week—that attracts huge numbers of people and will certainly be ferociously fought in Committee and argued over for many weeks, probably to the exclusion of other private Members' Bills or, more sensibly, he can produce a piece of modest legislaton about which there may be nuances of difference but which, most people would agree, remedies a relatively minor wrong. Adopting the latter position, which is much nearer consensus, is a proper use of private Members' legislation. A hugely controversial Bill will no doubt be accompanied by a great deal of publicity, television appearances and newspaper articles, but it often puts the rest of the private Members' legislation, which seeks to remedy minor matters that are not in the spotlight of television and the media, off course. It seems to me that the course adopted by the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth is much the preferable of the two. So some words of commendation are worthwhile.

One of the problems of controversial private Members' legislation is that it often tackles subjects that are not suitable for private Members' legislation because they are complicated and involve wide-ranging matters of conscience. So it is useful to be able to draw the House's attention, as has already been done, to the work of the Mustill committee. Even on such a slight piece of legislation as this, background work has already been carried out by the Department of Trade and Industry, and the report has been placed in the Library for the guidance of hon. Members. I shall come to the work of that committee in a moment.

I notice that the hon. Member for Gatwick airport, the hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames), keeps trying to attract my attention. I hope that he will not succeed in that, because I shall be diverted from my carefully prepared and brief notes, and I may well take much longer that I would otherwise have done. So I hope that he will behave himself. He has been, I thought, rather sullen this morning: perhaps he has some notion that his Bill may not be reached, but that is not in my mind.

I want to concentrate on the issue raised by the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth — the cost of arbitration, towards which people who are subject to these contracts in the building and removals industry are inevitably propelled if a dispute arises. There have been some pleasant jokes about the £230 a day for barristers, which is the pay for chairing these arbitration panels, but for people outside that is an enormous sum. I have cases at my advice surgery, to which, no doubt, people will roll up at city hall tomorrow, of people who are facing electricity cut-offs. I remember one case that demonstrates just how much £230 a day is. It concerns a lady whose electricity has been cut off. It was restored, together with a load limiter. The deductions by the DHSS go to current debt and towards paying off previous debt. She can use only a single ring of the electric stove, and has to use a Dutch oven to cook with—a sort of container placed on that single electric ring. If she puts on a light or a fire in any other room the load limiter is brought into play. Her husband, like many of us, is in his fifties, although he does not have a grand job in the House of Commons or a merchant bank. In fact, he does not have a job at all, and at the age of 52 he does not think he will have much chance of finding another one. That family is not unique; thousands of people are similarly affected.

I know another woman, the head of a single-parent family, who has to work an extra five hours a week merely to keep pace with the wage that she earned when the cleaning work that she did was in the public sector. When privatisation occurs, the profits of contractors are created from cuts in the wages of the people who work in a concern. The Government have removed the fair wages resolution, to prevent public authorities from requiring private contractors to observe the standards of wages and terms and conditions of employment that operate in the public sector—an example of how the Government are trying to force down wages.

That is the context in which we are talking about £230 a day. The cost of £33 a day for a court case is outlandishly high for millions of people. They cannot put their hands in their pockets for 30 or 40 quid to pay those costs. Millions of people are struggling from one week to the next, not knowing where they will get an extra five quid from if they need it. That is the grim reality. If we are given the choice of £230 a day or £35 a day, the £35 is preferable.

The chatter and light laughs that went round the Chamber at people earning £230 a day is ironically cruel for the vast majority of people who do not earn anywhere near £230 a week, let alone a day. We had better put that in context and acknowledge that access to justice is important. As the hon. Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden) said, there is a greater principle involved than interfering in a contract, which is what we are in effect doing today, and that is access to justice. Free access to justice is an important principle and many people do not believe that they have it, particularly when they hear of the sort of fees that lawyers receive.

Quite honestly, I sometimes wonder how solicitors and, particularly barristers, can justify the enormous sums that they receive in daily refresher fees and drink in so deeply. The cost of court cases which run for several days and, indeed, weeks about which one reads in the newspapers sometimes amount to sums in excess of £100,000. That is frightening. Those costs are a diminution of justice and mean that in certain cases, for example libel cases, only the wealthy can go to court. In that context the Bill is a useful bit of legislation, providing the £35 a day access.

The way in which the arbitration clause can be used to deter people from access to arbitration has not been touched on. If one must pay £230 a day, one had better not pursue the issue. For many people that would be sufficient deterrence. One may not use the removal firm, the building contractor or whoever again, but the matter is done and dusted and one must accept that, whatever the damage or dispute about payment, it has gone by the board. One must accept the position because the arbitration clause can be used as a lever.

It is not beyond the bounds of possibility that that sort of economic leverage may be used against people. Recently I had a minor job done by Rentokil. Although the firm had not finished the job, it threatened me that if I did not pay, it would ensure that my credit standing was diminished throughout the length and breadth of the country. I wrote to Rentokil and settled all my outstanding debts, as hon. Members would expect me to do, and asked what the explanation was for the threat. I have been waiting for more than two months for a response; no doubt it will come soon.

That is the sort of threat that can be used. I can well imagine that people will use the arbitration clause—not everybody because many will try to be as fair as possible, but the unscrupulous will try to use every lever, including this one.

The hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth mentioned the Unfair Contract Terms Act 1977. There was some dispute whether the sections of that Act which are repeated in this Bill were removed under duress from the Conservative Opposition, because there were voting difficulties, or because of the stand on principle of the hon. and learned Gentleman who became Lord Hailsham and the Lord Chancellor. I intervened in the hon. Gentleman's speech to point out that the Labour Government were in some difficulty and prone to compromise through the usual channels if they could possibly avoid a vote where there was a threat of defeat.

My hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) said that we were in a majority at the time, but I must correct him as we were in a minority. My hon. Friend had just about been elected in 1977 to replace another distinguished Member, Tony Crosland, whom we miss to this day for his contributions in this House and other places. My hon. Friend will remember that we lost Ashfield, so we were even fewer on that distinguished day when my hon. Friend arrived. The plaque is not yet on the wall, but no doubt in time it will be. Indeed, the plinth is empty, waiting for a likeness of my hon. Friend to be installed. So the Labour Government were having a thin time and I regret that that sort of compromise had to be made.

I well recall Lord Hailsham's attacks on the Labour Government—and they have not been repeated since. He attacked the minority Labour Government as an elected dictatorship. I have never heard him produce that argument in relation to subsequent Conservative Governments with a majority of about 100. He was deeply concerned about the principle of interference in contracts. I regard that with a certain cynicism because if Lord Hailsham could get hold of any stick with which to beat the Labour Government, he would do so. He would fervently grip a principle simply to defeat the Government.

For the benefit of Conservative Members present, I might say that when commentators ask me about the behaviour of the House of Commons and whether it has worsened, I always refer them to the two years from 1977 to 1979 when the Conservative Opposition had regained their confidence and used to hiss regularly for sustained periods at Labour Ministers. They were led by the present Secretary of State for the Environment, the hon. Member for Eastbourne, (Mr. Gow) and others, and they used every possible device to harry and defeat the Labour Government. I make no complaint about that because I try to do the same from these Benches.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: My hon. Friend does not hiss.

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend is right. Our standards are higher than those of the Conservative Opposition in the 1970s. There are a few leaves that we could take from their book. When people ask about behaviour in the House I point out that the way in which the Tory Opposition harried us in the 1970s is an object lesson for this place.

It was not so much the principle of interference with the hallowed sanctity of contract that motivated the removal of those clauses, as the difficulties that the Labour Government faced, and they felt that the clauses were relatively minor which, indeed, they are.

Interference with contract is not new. During the development of the industrial revolution the Sale of Goods Act 1893 came about because people recognised that the old rule of caveat emptor, meaning let the buyer beware, which had held from the middle ages, simply was not adequate. By the end of the 19th century, the complicated machinery on which the industrial revolution was based —steam engines, looms and spinning machines— was becoming far too sophisticated to enable a buyer to say, "This machinery is satisfactory. I have examined it and I take full responsibility."

A substantial body of opinion grew up which said that "let the buyer beware" was not a satisfactory basis for contract law and that there should be a provision to allow the buyer to say, "This is a complicated and sophisticated machine. It will cost a lot of money to repair and I want some sort of term to give me security. I want to be sure that it will be fit for purpose and that if it is not fit for purpose and of merchantable quality"—of a quality acceptable to the buyer—"I want the assurance that it will be held that there has been a breach of contract."

Many vendors were not producing decent machinery of good quality and in good working order. They tried to pass off as good machines inferior quality machines and shoddy workmanship because they wanted to increase their profits. The Victorian value of increased profits—an obsession of the present Prime Minister — was prevalent at the time. The buyer had no rights when it came to breach of contract, and in 1893, Parliament passed the Sale of Goods Act, which said that whatever the arrangement or understanding—whether the buyer had read the fine print or not—two terms were implicit in a contract for the sale of goods. First, the goods should be fit for purpose—which speaks for itself—and, secondly, they should be of merchantable quality. Those two principles held good unchanged until 1965, when they were further enlarged. The principles laid down by Parliament became accepted, although no doubt at the time it was argued that the legislation interfered in a scheme of things that had held sway in our courts since the middle ages — as if, because someone had done something unsatisfactorily over the years it should prevail for all time.

[Mr. Cryer]

That is an erroneous argument. Parliament made the correct decision, as is shown by the fact that the Sale of Goods Act 1893 has not been challenged since.

When I raised that point with the Minister, he said that arbitration legislation seeks to set aside components of a contract once the contract has been agreed rather than change the nature of the contract so that people understand at the outset that they are entering into a contract qualified by legislation. That is not quite accurate. The setting to one side of the understood term of the contract—caveat emptor—was much the same as this Bill, which says that an arbitration clause will be qualified by the contract entered into, irrespective of whether the parties understand it. Several hon Members have suggested that we should dwell on that point. We want members of the public who enter into contracts to understand that any arbitration clause is superseded by the Bill.

The hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth said that in Committee he would introduce changes to ensure that contracts refer to the legislation. That would mean altering the Bill to include a clause to say that all contracts that have hitherto contained arbitration clauses must contain a reference to the Act. That is a very reasonable requirement. Otherwise, if a dispute requiring arbitration arose over a contract, with, for example, a removal firm, the aggrieved person might never have realised that he had the option of going to court. If the information is not contained in the contract, we might lose much of the value of the Bill.

The hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth may say that the aggrieved party can get legal advice, and so he can, but that is often difficult. As everyone agrees that we want to encourage people to read contracts carefully before entering into them, it would be much better if the information about their rights was contained in the contract. They should not have to depend on seeking the advice of a solicitor, a citizens advice bureau or their local Member of Parliament. I strongly suggest that the promoter of the Bill considers that as a possibility for the Committee stage, because it would be a very useful device.

Another Act was passed in 1963. A number of people had been sold encyclopedias on the doorstep. They discovered that when they had paid a deposit for the first volume—perhaps £5—they had entered into a contract to buy a range of encyclopedias from A to Z, costing perhaps £250, which is the equivalent of about £1,250 today. Parliament therefore decided that there should be a cooling-off period with the right to cancel the contract. People were thus given a number of days to reflect on the glib salesman who knocked at their door and said, "You can buy all this knowledge with only £5 to pay. If your children are to get through the school certificate or GCE, you must have these encyclopedias." Parliament made it a requirement that there should be a cooling-off period and, more important, that that cooling-off period should be notified to the purchaser so that his rights were enshrined and made clear to him at the point of sale. Such a principle—again the result of Parliament interfering in a contractual arrangement—should be applied in this valuable Bill.

May I refer to the Mustill report. Unlike many private Members' Bills, this Bill has had the benefit of being scrutinised by the Department of Trade and Industry. As the Minister said, the Mustill Committee, chaired by Lord Justice Mustill, examined evidence from a number of sources, listed in the report, which incidentally, is available in the Library. It received oral and written submissions from the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth, the Consumers' Association the Director General of Fair Trading, the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators, the Federation of Master Builders and the British Association of Removers. Written submissions were provided by the National Association of Retail Furnishers, the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, the Direct Selling Association and the Building Employers Confederation.

The committee heard a fair cross-section of opinion, including critical opinion, and at page 7 of the report it said:

"The committee has concluded: That the Bill does address a problem though not a great one, the problem being essentially one of cost and its deterrent effect."

That is a useful definition of private Members' legislation. It addresses a problem, although not a great one. The hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth wishes to remedy a problem and provide people with some security. It is hard to say what the problem is, but most people move at least once in their lives and, unless they hire a van and do it themselves, they will have to use a firm of removers. Several million people may be involved, a proportion of whom will get into dispute. The problem may be greater than we think.

The committee continued:

"There are at least two ways of addressing the problem, either by persuading the relevant trade associations to make arbitration optional or by legislation. If both approaches were considered equally practicable the committee would favour the first option"—

which is persuasion. So would we all. It would be nice if we lived in a society where we did not need legislation or the problems of administering it and we did not need to go to court when disputes occurred. If people were of uniform good will, we would have no disputes. But the reality of human existence is that some people are unscrupulous, some are well-meaning, some are kindly and some are mean-minded. Those disparities in attitude mean that disputes arise. We have developed a system of rules for the guidance of our conduct which we call legislation, and people who are not of good will and are not kindly disposed must follow those rules whether they like it or not. The notion that we can do everything by persuasion is not borne out by experience.

Sometimes we think that there is too much legislation. For example, each year we get 500 pieces of paper from the Common Market that I suspect we could do without. They may relate to the harmonisation of noise levels for lawnmowers or to narrow-wheeled tractors, which are used only in vineyards in Italy. Some of the legislation is not directly relevant to the needs and problems of Britain, but we must accept the principle of using legislation, not a set of guidelines or persuasion. Legislation is the best way of ensuring the standards of conduct which we expect from our fellow human beings. The committee referred to that principle and opted for legislation, thus supporting the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth.

In health and safety at work, codes of conduct have been used instead of legislation. But in many injury cases those codes have been shown to be less than satisfactory. The best way of reducing the enormous number of working hours lost in our factories, offices and shops is to lay down standards in legislation which can be enforced

by factory inspectors, with the possibility of prosecution. Of course, that is the criminal law, and we are dealing here with civil law, but the principle is still important.

The committee says that the Bill presents no insuperable technical problems. Indeed, it is a short, straightforward Bill. Paragraph 6 of the committee's conclusions states:

"Since the logic of the Bill is directed towards the disparity in costs between the Small Claims procedure and private arbitration, the conflict between the principles in 3 and 4 above"—

that is persuasion or legislation—

"might best be resolved by limiting the scope of the Bill to disputes of a size which are automatically referred to arbitration under the Small Claims procedure."

That is a reasonable proposition. People entering into building or removal contracts for much larger sums than £5,000 may receive legal advice before entering into the contract.

Mr. Pawsey: The hon. Gentleman will probably be aware that the limit is likely to be increased to about £10,000, which gives even more emphasis to his point.

Mr. Cryer: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. The limits under which courts operate are always being reviewed, and I have no doubt that the Minister involved will wish to introduce a statutory instrument to increase the limits. As a member of the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments, I know that we discuss many orders reviewing the procedures of courts and their areas of jurisdiction. The hon. Gentleman's remarks do not surprise me. He is saying that the Bill will automatically have wider application. A good way of ensuring that its provisions are widened is to link it to the limits under which the small claims court and the county court may deal with the matter.

I take it from what he said in his introduction that the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth will accept the comments of the committee and that he will table amendments to accommodate them. That would be a prudent course to follow.

How will people be affected by the legislation? I can imagine a time when a couple who live in tied housing are thrown out. Fortunately, they have put together a few bob and they have bought a house in, let us say, Dulwich. It was built by a major firm of builders which has not done the job well enough. The white-haired old lady, who is retiring down there, gets past the guards and turns round and says, "Denis, there is a big crack in the wall and if we are not careful it will fall down and break the drinks cabinet."

Mr. Gerald Bowden: Does the hon. Gentleman have a particular hon. Member in mind? Is he referring to one of my constituents who has recently moved in—I refer, of course, to the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman)?

Mr. Cryer: I did not have that case in mind. My example was purely hypothetical.

The lady might say to Denis that the crack in the wall is such that the wall will break and fall on the drinks cabinet. Having spent all their savings on the house, the couple are then inexorably propelled to arbitration involving the builder and face the cost of £230 per day. Although it is pleasing to think of that lady's departure from the tied accommodation at Number 10, the reality is that she has a few bob put to one side to deal with such matters. However, the vast majority of people have not.

I have come across cases—as I am sure have all hon. Members—where people have entered into contractual arrangements, especially with builders, but find themselves unable to deal with the problems that arise and have to accept the difficulties because of the cost of going to court. Arbitration means so much more leverage. People simply give up because they cannot get a satisfactory settlement other than by going to arbitration.

I recall that in a former constituency of mine Barratt built an estate which had a whole host of defects, and which was subject to exactly those circumstances. The people who bought their homes in the belief that they would improve their environment and house found that the mortar of their houses was affected by the rain which combined to produce an acidic attack on the brickwork. Quite literally, sections of those houses were crumbling within months. Entire gable ends had to be replaced. Indeed, they were subsequently replaced by the building firm of Barratt, but not without a great deal of argument and difficulty. People took me round the estate and told me that although the firm had replaced a section of the gables, the brickwork was crumbling under the windows. They said that they had begged Barratt to carry out the work round the windows but that they were unable to persuade the firm to do so.

That is a classic example of where, if there is an arbitration clause in a contract, people are deterred by the cost from taking real action against the builder. As I have said, I am talking about people who use hire purchase to buy their furnishings and carpets, and who have high mortgage payments. Such people saw their move to that Barratt estate as an improvement in their environmental circumstances. For many, it was their aspiration. I suppose that they were carrying out the Prime Minister's notion in working for their own improvement. However, they did so on such a margin of expenditure that they could not possibly hope to pay £230 for the day's arbitration that might be involved.

I recall the hon. Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) intervening in the speech of the promoter of the Bill to ask whether that £230 per day was a general fee or was confined to the costs of the removal arbitration. The hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth did not know, so £230 may be a minimum fee. The fee could be higher for other areas of activity and could escalate to £250 or £300 per day. If any hon. Member has any evidence of higher fees, I shall be extremely interested to hear about them.

Mr. Beggs: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his illustrations. Does he agree that in far too many instances justice cannot be obtained? Does he further agree that we should do anything that we can do to make it possible for those who are aggrieved to obtain justice?

Mr. Cryer: I entirely agree with the hon. Gentleman. The difficulties that he has described in earlier interventions have my sympathy because they have strong similarities to the difficulties that I faced on behalf of constituents in a previous constituency.

I should add that most of the people on the estate that I have described did not share the Victorian values and aspirations of the Prime Minister. They were good Labour party supporters, but that is another matter.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): Well, they did not vote Labour, and the hon. Gentleman lost his seat.

Mr. Cryer: The problem at the time was the Boundary Commission changes. It was nothing to do with that estate. *[Interruption.]* I do not wish to go into that matter because you would stop me, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Patten: I apologise, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Cryer: I was drawn by the sedentary comments of the Minister. I do not want to be drawn down any side avenues. I have seen the sullen looks of the hon. Member for Crawley. He is anxious that we should get around to the bookies' Bill. Therefore, I do not want to detain the House for any great length of time on this useful piece of legislation.

I am constrained to extend my remarks a little, but I do not wish to do so. The Bill is a useful addition to private Members' legislation. I hope that it sees its way on to the statute book.

Here is a perfectly good piece of legislation. It is short. It will be altered. I hope that, in addition to the county court small claims matter, the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth will consider altering it to ensure that, subject to arbitration, contracts contain information about what I hope will be an Act, but that is another thing.

The Abortion (Amendment) Bill, which we discussed last week, is in line with the Scotch Whisky Bill and several other Bills. If the Abortion (Amendment) Bill spends a great deal of time in Committee, as is possible, a small Bill such as the one that we are discussing may not see the light of legislative day. That would be a great pity.

Because of time limits on drafting and on the examination of the background to a Bill—in this case, it has been remedied by the Mustill committee—it behoves an hon. Member to say, "Here is a minor matter that can be remedied. Should I go for something minor, or should I seek the bright glare of publicity for a Bill that has little chance of getting through?" That is a reality. He may further ask, "Should I spend time on television and writing newspaper articles, or should I devote my time to the detailed work of legislation, which will benefit a handful of people, perhaps, but will remedy what seems to be an injustice?"

The hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth has taken the latter course. The Bill has my support. In spite of that, I am sure that he will pilot the Bill to its conclusion. I hope that the Bill will become legislation. When it does, I shall reflect on its value and the suggestions that have been made. I shall look forward to the outcome of the Committee's deliberations. I hope that the Bill gets to Committee, but I fear that its chances may not be too high because of the attraction of a Bill on a controversial subject, which tactic is too often used as an abuse of the private Members' Bill procedure.

Mr. Stanbrook: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that, at the moment, there is a queue of private Members' Bills to get into Committee? One Bill in particular is being held up by what some people call a filibuster. That may well protract consideration of the Bill and following Bills. If we get some co-operation from the Opposition, we may be able to get more private Members' legislation through. While such delaying tactics are used in regard to all legislation, it is not possible to do so.

Mr. Cryer: I am astonished that the hon. Gentleman should suggest for a moment that a Bill should be delayed in the queue because the Bill behind it is less desirable than that currently being examined, for instance, in Committee. However, I dare say that it happens.

What I was referring to was not the business of delaying legislation to defeat a Bill that is of value. I was suggesting that, if a controversial Bill such as the Abortion (Amendment) Bill—which many people regard as highly desirable, and many others see as reactionary legislation which would take away women's hard-won rights—is detained in Committee, it will be because of genuinely held views which will be passionately argued. The argument will not be simply used as a means of delay; it will take place because the issue is so important. That is why, if there is to be a change in legislation, or a reconsideration, it should be dealt with by a Government Bill. The other side of the argument is that it is a matter of private conscience, and that the Government must therefore ensure a single-line Whip. We know what the process is like, because we have experienced the White, Corrie and Benyon Bills.

Legislation such as this is in difficulties, but it follows what I consider the proper path of a Private Member's Bill, on the ballot system. The Bill's provisions are modest. It will remedy injustice, and provide more of a defence for consumers. Moreover—the hon. Member for Orpington may not agree with this—it may take us out of the clutches of barristers charging £230 a day. If we can do that, we shall have achieved something worthwhile.

Mr. Stanbrook: The hon. Gentleman obviously has not read into the Bill the implication that I have read, which is that the activities of barristers and courts will be encouraged, because arbitration will be transferred to the normal courts in the normal way. There will be more work for barristers as a result of the Bill's passage. That cannot be desirable, can it?

Mr. Cryer: I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman's conclusion. Barristers—one hopes—are unlikely to make an appearance in the small claims courts. People may well appear by themselves in those courts, which I hope will be the basic area of activity in disputes over the Bill. However, I know that appearing before even half a dozen people is very intimidating for the vast majority of our fellow human beings. Hon. Members happen to have acquired a certain immunity to the difficulties, but some people have not, and even some of us may feel a bit intimidated in the Chamber on occasion.

People who go to the small claims courts are likely to be represented, but they certainly will not be represented by barristers. Barristers appear in the county courts, but solicitors have the right to appear. My guess is that, because local parochial cases would be involved, people going along to their local firm of solicitors would accept that those would be the appropriate people to deal with their case. Therefore, my original statement that the legislation might get us out of the clutches of barristers at £230 a day is more likely to be true than not.

Barristers, of course, play a useful part: I do not deny their value in our society. However, I must point out to the hon. Member for Orpington that they seem to many people to receive extraordinarily lavish fees for doing very little. The problem is that we cannot sue barristers if they are negligent, whereas we can sue those who do humdrum

tasks, such as plumbers and painters, and workmen who connect the electrical circuit to the toilet. They get only a few quid a day. Why can we not sue barristers who get these extortionate sums? We should eradicate this disparity and injustice. The barristers, who are supposed to apply justice, apply these rules to keep themselves immune from prosecution. The arbitration costs of £230 a day seem to be largely taken up by the costs of the chair, the barrister or the solicitor. This measure gives people greater access to the courts.

The arbitration procedure may be all very well, but it is not well known. People know about courts. They read about them every day. Newspapers are bound to refer to a court case—perhaps a civil case but, more likely, a criminal case. Many civil cases are reported — for example, the findings of small claims courts are reported in local weekly and evening newspapers, and county court cases are certainly reported. People are more familiar with courts that with arbitration. Those aspects with which people are not familiar are much more forbidding than those with which they are familiar. This legislation puts people in contact with an option with which they are familiar, and it is desirable on that basis alone. Of course, because of the great disparity in costs, it will be an enormous help.

The hon Member for Rugby and Kenilworth said that legal aid might be available. I should have thought that advice would be available under the legal aid scheme. I hope that legal aid will be available for the reasons I have mentioned. Those people who are struggling and find the building work undertaken for them unsatisfactory often have had to borrow the money for that work, and to ask them to face the extra task of having to be represented, because they feel unable to make their own case in unfamiliar circumstances, would be asking a little too much.

The hon. Member for Dulwich made a striking point, which is rather surprising, coming from the Conservative Benches, but we are grateful to him for making it. He said that access to the law is an important underlying principle, and I hope that we all share that view. I hope that legal aid will be available for those who wish to go to the county court to ensure that they have the right to justice. That alone will provide pressure for a more equitable settlement to be made without the need to go to court. The fact that two parties are acting on the basis of equality is an important means of ensuring that they bend their minds to achieving a settlement. We do not want people to have to go to court. Court means confrontation. We want people to be able to settle their disputes outside court—two people of good will making a decision that is fair and equitable. The fact that both have equal access to court will encourage moves in that direction.

This useful legislation has my support. I hope that amendments will be dealt with in Committee so that on Report we see improved legislation. I hope that this will be an example of the way in which private Members' legislation has followed the course which we all accept, of dealing with minor matters in detail to the benefit of the community at large.

12.9 pm

Mr. Gerald Bowden (Dulwich): May I add my congratulations to my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey), not only on his good fortune in being drawn so high in the ballot, but also on his good judgment in choosing to deal with consumer arbitration in a private Member's Bill. I also thank him for inviting me to be associated with this issue.

I believe that I first became aware of the matters that the Bill seeks to address some 30 years ago when I was a law student taking part in a moot which Lord Denning was to judge. I forget the issue of the moot, and I forget the main part of Lord Denning's judgment, but, as is the custom of judges, he digressed slightly, and it is that digression that I remember.

Lord Denning told us about a recent holiday that he and his family had taken. They had travelled by car and ferry across the Channel to Brittany. During the journey he sat on the boat with nothing to do but watch the sea. He took out of his pocket the standard contract for the carriage of his family and car. I do not know whether at that time Lord Denning was a judge or a practising barrister, but he told us that he had entered into a contract for the carriage of his family and car without reading the contract. He was an expert, advising others every day of his professional life, but on holiday he had not taken the trouble to look at the contract until he had entered into it. He discovered that he had no rights for his car or his family to be conveyed to Brittany, and that if the boat sank or his car was thrown overboard as a result of the crew's frolics, he had no redress.

Lord Denning's contribution to contract law and the operation of exemption clauses is well known. Perhaps it was an accident that drew his attention to that area of the law. His speech made a profound impression on those of us who listened. The main issue of the moot was forgotten, but the main point of his speech was not.

Over the years, consumer legislation and the protection of the individual against a large monopoly has been one of the greatest aspects of judge-made law. Such judge-made law is often derided or held in contempt, but it has led the way for this House to legislate on this matter. I am pleased that today we are, I hope, taking a step further on this unfinished business.

Ten years ago, before I entered the House, my Friday occupation was to lecture on the law of contract. Today is almost like going back to that earlier activity. Indeed, for nostalgia's sake, I picked up a textbook used by my students, which I am sure is well-known bedside reading to most in the House. That book is entitled, "An introduction to the law of contract and tort" by Bowden and Morris. With regard to exemption, exclusion and limitation clauses it says:

> The court will take into account the relative bargaining strengths of the parties, whether the parties are contracting as equals, or whether one party is in a stronger negotiating position than the other, perhaps as a monopolistic supplier of services."

That is the view taken by the courts, and it is also the view that has directed this House to make good some of the injustices that exist in contract law and redress the balance between the monopolistic supplier and the person who has no opportunity to assess and agree the terms of a contract before entering into it.

I note that the various pieces of legislation, including the Unfair Contract Terms Act 1977, which was cited earlier, do not cover this point. The reasons for that omission were given by earlier speakers from both sides of the House. The reasons were roughly in the same direction, but on a different basis, from both sides of the House, why this provision, which seeks to oust the jurisdication of the

[Mr. Gerald Bowden]

courts and to impose arbitration in certain circumstances, has remained an anomaly in our law for so long. Neither I nor my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) or the other sponsors of the Bill, wish to devalue the contribution of arbitration in settling a dispute.

I have a case before me at present, involving a constituent who, in 1973, entered into a small building contract, following a specification, for some minor rebuilding work to his home. The total cost was about £1,500, but the work was inadequately done. I am not able to judge exactly how inadequate it was, but my constituent decided that he would not make final payment to the builder, and he consulted a solicitor about what redress he might have. The solicitor did not deal with the matter as speedily as a member of the senior branch of the profession might handle papers, and he found that the building contractor's solicitor had served notice on him to pay and proceedings had been instituted in court.

I shall not detain the House with the details of this case, but, if I simply say that for 15 years my constituent, Mr. Z, has had six solicitors and is at present pursuing a case of negligence against five of them, one can understand how litigation can take control. If an arbitration clause had been offered in my constituent's original building contract, he would have been spared the agony of the past 15 years. Indeed, the case has become his life. It is an obsession. It is the main motivating force in what he does.

I do not deny the value of arbitration clauses. I received a letter, in connection with the Bill, from my good friend Mr. Ray Baker, who is secretary for parliamentary and public affairs at the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors. He writes regularly to hon. Members about matters which concern his organisation and which hon. Members might be considering. Over the years I have valued the thoughts that he has put to me and to other hon. Members, and this is the first time that I must disagree with him. In his letter he says that the institution believes that

"this Bill undermines a fundamental principle of our highly successful system of arbitration."

The sponsors of the Bill do not believe that that is the case. Arbitration or litigation should be available where appropriate, but somebody who is not accustomed to being in dispute with a professional organisation should have access to the small claims procedure. I support the Bill on this basis.

The supremacy of the law is important. Arbitration is part of the law of contract, and therefore falls within that law. The hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson), who told us that he would not be present for the whole debate, hinted that a health warning might be put to those who are not accustomed to entering into formal contracts. I could not agree with him more. It would be a good idea, when a standard form contract is issued and one is invited to sign at the bottom of the form to indicate assent, to print at the top, "The large print giveth and the small print taketh away." That would be a way of directing people's attention to the fact that there was something in that contract that should alert them.

As has been said, this is modest legislation. It is modest in the sense that it deals with small, individual claims. It does not deal with the big issues of state, but it is the small individual injuries and claims, such as that affecting my constituent whose litigation has taken over his life, that are the concern of us here today. For this reason, the Bill should go on to the statute book, and I commend it to the House.

12.21 pm

Mr. Clifford Forsythe (Antrim, South): I welcome the fact that the Bill, if passed, will apply to Northern Ireland, because we have problems along the lines of those mentioned by hon. Members. The hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) mentioned the problems of one of his constituents who had had a load limiter fitted to her electricity supply. In Northern Ireland, we do not have load limiters on the electricity supply because of various complaints that have been made. That means that if one of my constituents, receiving a social security benefit or a low wage, is behind with his electricity payment, and the electricity supply company says that unless he pays the bill or reaches an agreement the electricity will be cut off, he will usually immediately sign the agreement or contract. Later on, he will find that he is unable to buy his food or maintain even a basic standard of living. Unfortunately, the position is even worse in my part of the country.

I support the Bill. However, although it has been said that it would be better to go to court, there are times when arbitrators are more competent to make a decision on a defect. Such cases often arise in the building trade, as other hon. Members have said. My hon. Friend the Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) mentioned flues. A court would not be competent to deal with the merits or otherwise of a defective flue. In those circumstances, one wonders whether the court is the best place to go to. The basis of the whole operation is that it gives the person signing the contract the choice of going either to arbitration or to court, and I support that.

One can quote many cases of housing defects, particularly in Northern Ireland, many of which are not apparent when the house is first bought or when the contract is signed, but appear later. In such circumstances, it is essential that, in the case of a dispute, house purchasers are able to go to court or to arbitration, whichever they prefer.

I support the Bill. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) for ensuring that the Bill applies to Northern Ireland and so includes the whole of the United Kingdom.

12.24 pm

Mr. Den Dover (Chorley): It gives me great pleasure to speak on behalf of the poor individual who is often forced into an impossible situation by Big Brother business. I very much welcome the Bill introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey). I believe that it is up to hon. Members to ensure that the rights of individuals are protected and supported against businesses.

Businesses of course, have big budgets and expense accounts. They can corner an individual who has very little or no redress if he is the victim of an agreement in which an arbitration procedure is outlined and he has no redress through the courts. That is completely inequitable. I have experience of so many cases in my constituency in which individuals, even where no compulsory arbitration procedure applies, are unaware of their rights. They do not know which way to turn. They visit the citizens' advice bureau in the local town—if they are lucky enough to

have one there—and they stutter and splutter between friends and relatives giving advice or advice from a solicitor or lawyer whom they know in some shape or form. However, they do not really know where to go.

I support the Bill so readily today because it is a move to support the individual and strengthen the rights of the consumer who, after all, is responsible for so much trade and business activity in the United Kingdom. My hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth should be commended and applauded for his efforts. I wish the Bill well in Committee and I hope that as hon. Members representing our constituents, we can rest assured that the hopes and aspirations of our constituents will be helped by the Bill.

It is no good us expecting those individuals to take on arbitration. They cannot afford the worry or the hundreds of pounds to start a case when they barely have any pounds to rustle together. The small courts procedure over the past few years has been a major advance. Surely it is right and proper that that channel should be used to resolve so many of those disputes? Often we are not talking about large sums of money. However, it is not the scale of the problem, but the principle which matters.

The Bill is a major step forward. It is only a minor private Member's Bill and it is being debated on a Friday when the House is not well attended. However, that does not mean that there is no massive groundswell of support in its favour. Therefore, I wish it well and a speedy passage through the House, and I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth.

12.28 pm

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): I join hon. Members in congratulating the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) on choosing this Bill, on his speech and on coming fourth in the ballot. It is possible to be a Member of this House for more than two decades and not win the ballot. However, it is also possible to win the ballot and then use the opportunity for curious purposes, as happened last Friday. This Bill is a triumph. It is a great thing to win the ballot, and the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth has seized his opportunity well.

It is right to do something which is too small for the Government to do, but something which needs doing. It is right to do something to help the small person, the consumer. The Bill helps the consumer against the big battalions. This Bill is a lucky opportunity and the hon. Gentleman has made a wise choice. That is crucial. A private Member's Bill may be either so controversial that it simply makes a gesture and does not reach the statute book, or it is so unimportant that it is frankly not worth bothering about. Today's Bill is worth bothering about. It is certainly not uncontroversial judging from the degree of discussion that we have had about it today.

I congratulate the hon. Member on working with the Consumers' Association and taking its trenchant advice. It is difficult for an hon. Member to do the job of a lobbyist, to consult interests, to follow his own cause and to do all the work necessary for a private Member's Bill while carrying on his normal existence as a Back Bencher. The hon. Gentleman had the backing of the Consumers' Association, and that was essential. I am happy to support the Bill.

For the Opposition, it is unfinished business. It is left over from 1977 when we passed the Unfair Contract Terms Act 1977. The first draft of that Bill said that arbitration clauses such as those in the contracts with which we are dealing today would not be subject to the legislation, if they were deemed to be reasonable. That provision was challenged by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) who introduced an amendment similar to the provisiohs of today's Bill. The Minister at the time agreed to take up the principle of the amendment. Amendments were tabled in the other place where, at that time, Lord Hailsham was opposing everything put forward by the Labour Government on convenient grounds of high principle that he seemed to pluck out of the air when in Opposition, but that he never invoked when a Conservative Government were in power. He criticised the amendment as a breach of principle.

Mr. Cryer: Does my hon. Friend agree that that point is best encapsulated by Lord Hailsham's accusation that the Labour Government, in a minority and with people such as John Stonehouse disappearing all the time, was an elective dictatorship? That phrase has never escaped his lips under a real elective dictatorship—under a Prime Minister who has a political drive and a dictatorial and authoritarian attitude such as we have never seen since 1945.

Mr. Mitchell: My hon. Friend is over-critical. The Government are not an elective dictatorship. They are a spontaneous generation of joy, led by a Prime Minister who speaks in dulcet tones, who is keen to consult and who has the willing co-operation of a team of Ministers who think of nothing else but following willingly and enthusiastically wherever she leads. Lord Hailsham would have been totally out of character to describe such a system as an elective dictatorship, but Opposition Members are not privileged to participate in the explosion of joy on Conservative Benches.

Lord Hailsham's opposition in the other place was for nothing, because the clause introduced by the Government was carried without a Division in the other place. On 22 July 1977 the Bill returned to the House of Commons. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) pointed out, at that time there was an obscurantist, bitter and hectoring Opposition, and the official Opposition spokesman on consumer affairs spoke strongly against the new clause.

A Government who faced daily dangers of defeat, were clearly about to be defeated on what was for them a minor concern, compared with their survival. They were the last barrier against the onrush of alien hordes who threatened to come to power and turn the country into an economic disaster, which is what they did. That Government had to give way. The clause was dropped. I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Erdington has come to the Chamber because he raised this matter in 1977. It is a national tragedy that legislative processes mean that we have had to wait 11 years to get back to a principle which is so important and beneficial to consumers.

That, however, was the playway politics that the then Conservative Opposition were indulging in. It is good to see a Conservative Back Bencher making amends and admitting that what the Conservatives did was public school fun politics and utterly irresponsible. It is good to have that admission. The Department of Prices and Consumer Protection, as it then was, was enormously strengthened after the defeat because I became a Parliamentary Private Secretary — so we never faced such humiliation again.

[Mr. Mitchell]

I can give the Minister some advice on the basis of my long years of experience in Government. I was a PPS for a full seven months before the Labour Government were defeated. It is on the strength of that meteoric rise that I should like to give him some serious advice. I am glad that he has come back from the Franglais summit. I heard that he could not understand what was going on. As he said, there has been an agreement that the Bill should be modified in Committee.

I do not blame the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth for agreeing to that change. A private Member's Bill is vulnerable. It is like an infant fresh into the world. It can be slaughtered or trampled on by brutal alien hordes. There is no alternative but to compromise. When the Government say compromise, you compromise. The compromise dilutes the Bill's intentions, however. Cases involving less than £500 are to go to the small claims court. I assume that when the limit for cases that go before the small claims court is raised to £1,000, it will, pari passu, increase at the same time.

Cases which involve between £500 and £3,000 will go to the county court, which can decide whether it is in the interests of the consumer to pursue the case through the courts. I think that that modification is unnecessary. The Bill gives the consumer freedom of choice. The consumer is free to pursue a case through arbitration, as on the contract, or through the courts. Surely we should give the consumer that choice because, once again, we are considering the plight of the small consumer challenging the big battalions.

Mr. Stanbrook: The hon. Gentleman seems to be taking it for granted that there is a choice, but if the consumer, after the execution of the contract, is entitled to say that he will no longer agree to a clause which he agreed to before, there is an inherent unfairness. How does one justify that ex post facto choice?

Mr. Mitchell: By definition, nothing which is unfair to barristers and solicitors is unfair. Surely the principle that we should apply is that of strengthening the minor figure in the relationship and giving him advantage of choice. We are trying to serve the consumer. Why should he not have the choice?

Why are a Government who are so keen on freedom of choice trying to restrict it in this instance by modifying the Bill in this way? If they want arbitration they can have it. The consumer is in a position of force majeure. I accept the Minister's point that people should read contracts; that is always a counsel of perfection. People should read them. I do not always read them; when I do, I do not always understand them. I put myself in the position of the layman. Even if the consumer read, learned and thoroughly digested and understood the contract he would not always know what was implied in it. The consumer does not know that the costs of arbitration—it sounds like a marvellous procedure, invoked out of the sky to decide between right and wrong and administer British justice—will amount to £5 for an initial fee, £25 when the papers come through and £200 a day for the arbitration itself. That is not specified in the contract.

Mr. Maude: I take the hon. Gentleman's point, which is why the Government have been so accommodating to the way in which my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) proposes to restrict the Bill. Does the hon. Gentleman suggest that if people enter contracts for a value of £5,000 or more they should be entitled to go back on their terms? Of course, not all of us read the fine print on contracts all the time, but the greater the value of the contract and the more there is at stake, the greater the onus on people to ensure that they read what they are letting themselves in for.

Mr. Mitchell: The Minister should not congratulate himself on being accommodating towards the Bill; he should embrace it with enthusiasm. He should clutch it and say that it is right and that the Government want to do something about it. There is surely an essential distinction between two firms entering into a contract and the consumer, as an individual, entering into one. The individual is far more vulnerable than business, which can be expected to have the backing and access to the advice that the consumer does not have. The odds are unequal in such a contractual relationship. It is wrong to say that the contract is binding in this harsh, unforgiving fashion. The principle of contract has been breached in other areas, so why not in this? That merely provides a choice.

I want to give a couple of examples—provided by the Consumers' Association—of people to whom this choice has not applied. A Mr. John Forrest of Hampstead moved house. I shall give the name of the removers because it deserves to be given—W. Freeborn and Son. A valuable breakfast table was damaged in the move, and the estimate for repairs was £200. Freeborns told Mr. Forrest to get the money from the insurance company. He consulted that company, which would offer him only £100. That is typical of the small person against the big battalion. The damage had been notified too late because of the procedures of going to Freeborns, who referred Mr. Forrest back to the insurance company, and so on. He refused to accept the £100 and threatened legal action. The insurance company refused to increase its offer, and Mr. Forrest then gave Freeborns 14 days' notice of a county court summons unless he received £230. So the company invoked the arbitration clause. As that was going to cost, as he then found out, £200 a day, he not unnaturally decided to take the £100. That shows the unequal relationship that can occur when larger sums are involved—they should be covered.

Some of the removers' provisions are quite draconian; I quote from Pickfords' provisions:

> "If there is disagreement on the appointment of an arbitrator the President of the British Association of Removers at the time of the dispute will upon application by you appoint an arbitrator who shall have been a barrister for not less than ten years . . . The arbitrator who will decide who pays the cost of the arbitration".

That sounds intimidating enough.

> "You may not take legal proceedings against us in a court of law over any matter arising from this agreement until the arbitrator has made his award."

What right has Pickfords to say that? People should have the right to go to law, and all that the Bill seeks to do is to give it to them.

Mrs. Audrey Wise (Preston): I was most interested in the important passage that my hon. Friend quoted, but I found it difficult to follow. If he has any more information of this nature to give to the House today, could he do it a little more slowly? It is important that we are informed, so that we can advise our constituents on these matters.

Mr. Mitchell: I apologise for that. I feel a certain sense of nervousness in speaking at the Dispatch Box for the first time. [HON. MEMBERS: "The hon. Gentleman is doing well."] It is a terrifying ordeal, particularly being barracked by the brigades of buckies on the other side. *[Interruption.]* I apologise, but hon. Gentlemen look like a brigade. Perhaps it is the spread. It is appropriate that I am talking about Pickfords and heavy removals when I mention the hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames).

I was about to give the Minister advice from my position of enormous experience on a point of principle. In this issue we have one principle set against another: the principle of choice versus the principle of the sanctity of contract. I would have thought that the Conservative Government would have erred on the side of choice and the small man.

Mr. Maude: The consumer's choice is whether to enter into a contract in the first place. We cannot extend the principle of choice beyond areas such as we have identified, where there is an identified need to allow the consumer or any party to a contract the choice later on to abandon his role in the contract.

Mr. Mitchell: As the Minister is providing choice for cases under £500 and in a modified degree for cases between £500 and £5,000, why does he not go the whole hog and say that in consumer relationships, not business relationships, the consumer should have the choice? His seems an unnecessary restriction.

The Official Referees Bar Association, which I gather comprises barristers dealing with construction cases—it is surprising to see barristers abdicating fees in this fashion, but they are—recommended the extension of this provision to housing problems, which can involve sums much bigger than £500 and sometimes bigger than £5,000. Those cases are particularly difficult. Why should consumers not have the choice? It is an unequal relationship.

My advice to the Minister is to seize the opportunity, to take a bold stand and to embrace the Bill, not to quibble and hide behind the skirts of lawyers or high principle. Let the Bill through as it is. What is the enormous harm that will ensue, what collapse of civilisation or collapse of the Bar will ensue, if the Bill is passed as it stands? Why should it be subject to this niggling restriction?

Mrs. Wise: Does my hon. Friend agree that the companies to which he referred engage heavily in advertising to persuade people to enter into contracts with them, but do not feature this particular matter in advertisements? Does he further agree that unless people are trained to scrutinise with a legal as well as an eagle eye the terms of a contract, they will probably not realise the implications until those implications hit them?

Mr. Mitchell: I agree with my hon. Friend. This is an unequal relationship. If all organisations in one line of business, whether removals or whatever, include this arbitration clause in their contract, what escape is there for the average consumer from the position that I have outlined? Consumers cannot be expected to know the legal niceties. The advantage for the removers, for example, is that as soon as it is revealed to a consumer anxious to pursue a case against them that the costs involved will be £200 a day, large numbers of cases are withdrawn. Companies are using the clause unjustifiably as a defence for themselves, for the strong against the weak and further to load the odds.

Let me offer the Minister some career advice; think big. I am not urging him to avoid the Jenkins, Joseph and Moore syndrome but merely to establish his independence at the Department. He should not accept the heavy grey departmental imperatives that are always urged on Ministers when something revolutionary like a private Member's Bill is proposed. Departments say, "Shocking!" and recoil in horror. They say, "Compromise. Tone it down. Get it modified. Cover it with gobbledegook." That is the advice that the Minister seems to be taking. He would do better to rush forward and not be weighed down by gobbledegook.

Why should this extension of consumer rights be curtailed? Here is an opportunity for the Minister to assert himself in his Department against all those grey men who want to do down this Back Bencher with his radical, daring proposal. My advice to the Minister is, "Embrace it. Go forward for the purposes of the people." The removers' advice to the Committee, which he cited today, may have been deeply moving. However, official committees always want to split the difference, compromise and tone things down. The civil servant's doormat always says, "Not unwelcome." That generous spirit characterises official bodies. The Minister should show a generous spirit to the people and to good sense. I hope that he will not pursue his earlier inclination to tone down the Bill.

Opposition Members support this very welcome proposal. We have supported it since the debacle of 1977, and it is nice to be able to make some kind of atonement today. In our handling of consumer matters it is essential to support the small against large — the individual against the organisation—because consumers are very much at risk and they need whatever protection can be provided. It is by small but worthwhile advances such as this that we defend and advance the cause of the consumer, and I congratulate the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth.

12.52 pm

Sir John Farr (Harborough): I join hon. Members on both sides of the House in congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey). I congratulate him, first on his choice of subject, which has received widespread acclaim; secondly, on the manner of his presentation; and thirdly, I do so with a tinge of envy on his good luck in coming so high in the ballot. It must be pretty obvious from that that I think that this is a good Bill. I want it to reach the statute book, and I do not think there is any reason why we should impede its progress.

The Minister has implied that the Government will grudgingly support the Bill if amendments are made to it. Those of us who are friends of my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth in more than the formal sense of the word will be consulting him in due course to see whether the amendments do not destroy the impact and content of the Bill. While it is not exactly a politic edifice of great importance, the Bill is, nevertheless, a significant measure, and it is typical of the good that my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth seeks to do for his constituents regardless of the political consequences.

Having ingratiated myself with my hon. Friend, I shall deal with one or two aspects of the Bill with which I am

[Sir John Farr]

not altogether happy. I congratulate my hon. Friend on his choice of sponsors, although I do not see the name of the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), who spoke at length this morning. The hon. Gentleman is in some danger of becoming known as a lawyers' friend. I hesitate to make such a remark in his absence, because he would be livid to hear an hon. Member being so rude to him. But he is a good parliamentarian, and I am sure that he will take it in good spirit. My hon. Friend has attracted a strong all-party team to sponsor the Bill, and many of those hon. Members are in the Chamber today.

Mrs. Wise: Does the hon. Gentleman share my regret that it is an all-male team? I notice that my hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) had a tendency to talk about defending the small man, and I almost intervened to correct him. It should be made clear that many women, as consumers, will be protected by the Bill, and I wish that that had been reflected in the choice of sponsors.

Sir John Farr: I give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth.

Mr. Pawsey: I know that my hon. Friend is keenly interested in the sponsors, so I should tell him that I approached an Opposition lady Member who, sadly, declined to be a sponsor. It is not for want of trying that no lady is listed among the sponsors.

Sir John Farr: I will not attempt to speak on behalf of members of the other sex because I learned long ago not to do that. Indeed, I mention them with trepidation inside and outside the House. But I know that one lady, who is at the top of the tree—my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister—is keenly and favourably interested in the Bill. I hope that that will help the hon. Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise) to support it. If she does not support it, she may have the opportunity to serve on the Standing Committee and table amendments to the Bill then.

Mrs. Wise: I make it clear to the hon. Gentleman that I am here for the express purpose of supporting the Bill. I want to make it clear that women will benefit from the Bill. Despite the all-male sponsor team—I accept what the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) said about that—and the constant references to the small man as the consumer, on behalf of women, I join hon. Members in supporting the Bill.

Sir John Farr: It would be tedious and time-wasting if I asked my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth to explain that curious lapse, but, knowing his courtesy and instinctive reaction, I am sure that he has taken on board the hon. Lady's points and recognises the defect—although not fatal—in the Bill. I hope that the regrettable absence of lady Members will be corrected in the Standing Committee that discusses the Bill. Ladies, females or women—whatever one calls them today—must know more about being consumers than men, and my hon. Friend's Bill has been introduced largely because of concern among female consumers. Indeed, females are the key to the Bill's success and I hope that we can put that attitude right in Standing Committee.

The Bill hinges on the need to give consumers more rights. I underline—I do not attempt to initiate—what my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby said about the magazine "Which?" in his admirable speech. Consumers have a doughty champion in "Which?". Like most hon. Members of all parties, I read that magazine avidly every month. It is not true to say, as did my hon. Friend the Minister, to those of us who are students of "Which?" that there is a occasionally an odd example of a consumer being held to ransom. That happens frequently. I shall not detain the House by giving examples of the many cases that have come to the attention of "Which?"—some cases have come to my attention also—which show not only a positive need for the Bill, but a crying need. It is wrong of my hon. Friend on the Front Bench to recommend that the Government should stand aside. My hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth is doing a good thing, which is much needed.

Although I shall not go into detail, there are many examples. My hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth mentioned the case of Mrs. Lynn Thompson. One could say that she was held to ransom by Pickfords, which said, "Right, you have a claim but read our small print. You can go to arbitration but you cannot go to court." Mrs. Lynn Thompson asked about the cost of arbitration and Pickfords said that it could be as much as £200. How can that attitude be justified on the part of any company when dealing with a customer? The sum of £200 is quite sufficient to deter ordinary people from going to arbitration. I should add that I bet that it could be more. My hon. Friend will sweep that attitude away in his Bill.

Mr. Beggs: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, if at all possible, when the Bill is discussed in Committee, consideration should be give to removing small print from all contracts?

Sir John Farr: I note the hon. Gentleman's point, in which there is a great deal of strength. No doubt the House will be able to consider that later. I do not want to dwell on the hon. Gentleman's remarks because it is important that we approach the conclusion of this important Bill. I do not want to do anything to prejudice its success.

A moment ago I pointed out the example of Mrs. Lynn Thompson and there are many other examples including that of Mr. Forrest. It is important that we recognise that this little Bill seeks to achieve for the consumer the choice of going to court or to arbitration. As I have said, the Bill seeks to correct a situation in which the law needs changing. Several examples from my constituency highlight that, such as that of Mrs. Lynn Thompson and Pickfords, Mr. Forrest, Mr. Flint and many others.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth on consulting the Director General of Fair Trading about the purpose of his Bill. I have several cases before the Director General at present. He is absolutely scrupulous in dealing with complaints from Members of Parliament. It would be out of order for me to dwell upon one or two cases that I have before the Director General. Elderly tenants have had service charges foisted upon them by landlords in a manner that is quite contrary to the service agreements that were entered into. That demonstrates the Director General's wide responsibility. He deals adequately with such matters. In response to a letter from my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth, the Director General stated that he has not:

"endorsed any Code which included an arbitration scheme that excluded a consumer's right to seek redress in the Courts."

That is what the Bill is about. Access to the courts is not only important but vital. The small claims procedure in the county court was introduced in 1973 by my right hon. and learned Friend the present Foreign Secretary. If that procedure were not to be used, it would be a disservice to the country. It has proved to be an outstanding success. It gives consumers access to justice in disputes involving claims of no more than £500.

"Which?" has pointed out to me that arbitration and the small print on many would-be contracts are unsatisfactory to many consumers. The "Which?" personal service has dealt with many cases—not one or two, as my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State seemed to suggest — in which individuals have had difficulty in being compensated for loss or damage because they were bound by contract to go to arbitration.

The aim of the Bill is not to take away a consumer's right to go to arbitration but to ensure that there is an alternative, the right, for which many hon. Members have fought, to seek redress through the courts. For those few reasons, I congratulate my hon. Friend. He has done a first-class job. I wish the Bill bon voyage.

1.8 pm

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): I am grateful to you for calling me, Mr. Deputy Speaker. However, I must say that I wish that you had called me before you called my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr), because I wanted an opportunity to do my duty in the House and congratulate the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) on his maiden speech from the Opposition Front Bench. That it is a significant occasion in the lives of all of us who are so favoured, and I am sure that the whole House will look forward with interest, gratification and not a little amusement to the hon. Gentleman's future contributions. Indeed, we all hope that his natural ebullience and irreverence will not be diminished by the acquisition of his new responsibility, because we all enjoy his contributions — although we may not always agree with them.

The subject of the Bill is interesting, but I am afraid that I cannot congratulate my hon. Friend the member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) too warmly on its introduction, because I wish that he had taken the opportunity to introduce legislation on a more important matter. We all congratulate him on his high place in the ballot—No. 4—which entitled him to first place on a Friday, but I wish that he had tried to serve a greater need and deal with a greater mischief.

Although the name of the Bill is the Consumer Arbitration Agreements Bill, it could with equal justice be called the Lawyers Benefit Bill. In effect, it returns certain contracts to the sphere of the courts and the hands of the lawyers — contracts that are at present out of their grasp. Far be it from me, as a practising barrister, to object to that on professional grounds. However, we as politicians owe it to the general public to explain the significance of measures of this kind, which sound so desirable, but, which in practice militate against the public interest.

The Bill proposes that a consumer should not lose his right to go to court to obtain legal redress in the event of a dispute with a supplier merely because the firm with which he dealt included in the contract a clause providing that the case could go only to arbitration. At common law, a buyer of goods had no warranty of their quality, fitness or condition. He had to take the risk, and he had no remedy if the goods turned out to be below the quality that he had expected, unless he could show fraud. That rule of caveat emptor, or buyer beware, has been watered down by statute to correspond with modern conditions, when a buyer often has no opportunity to exercise his judgment before the purchase. Some people say that this process has gone so far——

Mr. Denis Howell (Birmingham, Small Heath) *rose in his place and claimed to move*, That the Question be now put.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I am afraid that I am not prepared to accept that motion.

Mr. Stanbrook: I am most grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because I have been sitting here since half past nine waiting to make this contribution.

Mr. Howell: I do not in any way impugn the hon. Gentleman's motives, but most of us had assumed that he had been waiting to oppose the next Bill, as, presumably, have some of the previous speakers.

Mr. Stanbrook: I have already declared an interest as a practising lawyer, and, if the right hon. Gentleman will allow me, I propose to make what I hope will be a constructive criticism of the Bill.

Some people feel that the process of watering down the natural rule of caveat emptor has gone so far that nowadays it is a case of caveat venditor, or seller beware. The conditions now imposed by statute on the sale of goods are increasingly weighted against the seller.

Mr. Gerald Bowden: Does my hon. Friend accept that under many contracts there is an equal bargaining position between the parties, and that in many cases a professional business organisation offers a standard form of contract? If my hon. Friend were stranded on a motorway in a snowstorm because his car had broken down and he rang the emergency services, which then came out, would he look at the small print? Would he not accept that he wanted his car moved and that he wanted to be helped out of his difficulty? In such a case the supplier is in a monopolistic position and my hon. Friend is in no position to bargain. That is what the Bill seeks to redress.

Mr. Stanbrook: My hon. Friend has expressed the focus of the Bill well. The legislation takes it for granted that the idea that anything that protects the consumer against the supplier must make life fairer. The relationship is not that fair when one side has the option, after the performance of the contract, of saying, "I shall cross out that clause now because it does not suit me; I want something else," which is what the Bill provides. There is an inherent unfairness about that provision. I accept what my hon. Friend says about being caught in a storm and being in a difficult situation. If I may revert to Conservative philosophy, it is not desirable that the duty of individual responsibility should be continuously diminished. Every man must take responsibility for his actions.

A person chooses to sign an agreement. We all know about small print. It is there for all to see. A person knows that there is small print. I see no reason why, if he chooses to sign an agreement that includes a clause that limits his future action, we should say, "No, we must protect him from folly." Protecting people from the consequences of their folly is inherently a bad thing to do in legislation.

Sir John Farr: I have listened carefully to my hon. Friend and heard his reservations about the Bill. Because of the way in which the legislation has been emaciated, as my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State implied, does my hon. Friend not feel that the fears that he has expressed in detail have been allayed to a certain extent?

Mr. Stanbrook: That is all very well.

Sir John Farr: It is critical.

Mr. Stanbrook: We are dealing with the Bill as it stands. Promises of this kind have not always been honoured.

Sir John Farr: Is my hon. Friend suggesting that my hon. Friend the Minister has not always kept his promise?

Mr. Stanbrook: The best hopes and the best laid plans of business managers, whether private or Government, "gang aft a-gley", as they say north of the border. My hon. Friend refers to occasions when Ministers of this Government——

Sir John Farr: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Stanbrook: No, I must make my point. My hon. Friend refers to occasions when Ministers of this Government have put themselves in a position in which they can be trusted. That is perfectly true normally, but there have been many occasions in the House when the Government have been unable to secure a majority for their business. Should we not exult in that and in the fact that, in the end, it is the Back Benchers who rule the Government? It is a case of "caveat government" in terms of Back Benchers, especially on Fridays, when the Government reveal the policy that they have in mind.

However able my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth—I admit his ability and perspicacity—he cannot guarantee to deliver the goods. Although we have been told that there may be certain amendments here, there and everywhere.

Mr. Pawsey: There will be.

Mr. Stanbrook: My hon. Friend confidently asserts that there will be. I reserve my judgment.

The Bill deals with the clause in any contract for the supply of goods and services that, at present, any supplier is perfectly entitled to impose. That clause provides that any dispute arising out of the contract should be submitted to arbitration. The arbitrator is often named, or there is provision for him to be nominated by the president of the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators or the head of some other worthy institution. Anybody who wishes to do business must either accept that clause and thus rule himself out of the chance of going to court, through lawyers, over the contract, or he may delete it and force the supplier to decide whether he shall continue with the contract.

Mrs. Wise: I will not labour the point that the hon. Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) will keep insisting that all consumers are men. That is not the point on which I rise. Among the examples given by my hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby was that of the large removal company. Will the hon. Gentleman accept that the ordinary person—man or woman—in the street who is arranging a house removal is looking to a company that they feel they can trust? They may be led into thinking that a large company, by virtue of its size, is more trustworthy than a smaller one. Such people are concerned about their day-to-day affairs and house removal is a stressful occurrence. It is not reasonable to expect them to devote as much care to the perusal of the small print as would the hon. Gentleman, with all his professional experience. Surely we should think about the real world rather than ideal considerations.

Mr. Stanbrook: I am glad that the hon. Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise) puts it that way because if we are considering the real world we should beware of situations arising in which the Government legislate for the choice and actions of the individual. We are on a slippery slope. We are fettering the hands of individuals with regard to contract law. Indeed, my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden), the author of a book on contract law, has admitted that the Bill would do that. I am trying to warn against the continuation of that tendency.

Before signing any contract an individual would be wise to read the small print. If the person does not, it is for him or her to face the consequences. However, the consequences will not necessarily be as bad as my hon. Friends have made out. The Bill makes unnecessary such a choice on the part of the consumer because the customer, with minor exceptions, would not be bound to go to arbitration, even after the performance of the contract.

My hon. Friend the Minister has told us that we should be careful about a change in the law that allows a breach of the contract, given that previous legislation that intervened in contract law inserted an implied term into contracts. That is an important and significant distinction and one that I wholeheartedly accept. That is the nub of the objection that was made in the other place by Lord Hailsham to which I shall refer later.

It is not surprising that many professional arbitrators are unhappy about the Bill. After all, arbitration as a means of settling disputes has an honourable and important place in our lives. Most people are afraid of courts. Speaking as a Member of the House who holds weekly advice bureaux, like other hon. Members, I have particular reason to advise people to avoid going to court, and to expensive solicitors or barristers. If they can avoid doing that, nine times out of 10 it is far less painful and less expensive for them to resolve their dispute in the long run. I do not say that to them as a professional lawyer, but experience of life suggests that.

The fear of many people of the courts, the rigour of the law, the laws of evidence, and the ensnarement by the legal profession of individuals in trouble cause many people to see arbitration—the adjudication of a dispute between the parties by a knowledgeable and wise judge and, if the subject is a technical matter, a judge who is technically qualified, untrammelled by the suffocating rules of law and evidence—as the best, cheapest, quickest and most efficient way of settling a dispute fairly.

There is an important role for arbitration in domestic, national and international affairs. Some of my best friends are arbitrators in the professional sense. Some hon. Members are distinguished international arbitrators. The world respects British arbitrators for that combination of common sense and logic which characterises our national character and helps to smoothe the wheels of trade, industry and international relations.

However, professional arbitrators are not too keen on this Bill. They would like the courts to decide whether a compulsory arbitration clause should apply. If it is already in the contract, should it be upheld? There is no provision

in the Bill for it to be upheld rather than invalidated altogether. Rather than stating the circumstances in which an arbitration agreement cannot be enforced, the Bill should specify a form of arbitration agreement that would be enforceable. Arbitration agreements — independent agreements which may be separate from the terms of the contract—should not be prescribed by the Bill.

It is a fundamental rule of arbitration law, dating back to the decisions of English courts in the 17th century that, unless they have agreed otherwise, neither party should be able unilaterally to withdraw from an arbitration agreement without the leave of the court. The Bill ought to recognise and allow such a provision, rather than cutting out compulsory arbitration altogether, with no right of either party to insist on the provisions of the agreement.

The consumer contracts covered by the Bill would then be in the same position as many specific contracts at present, which provide that differences may be settled by litigation or arbitration at the option of the consumer when first entering into the contract. There are many such contracts, sponsored by trade associations with codes of practice approved by the Department of Trade and Industry.

One of the undesirable consequences of the Bill would be to deprive suppliers of the option to offer arbitration at all. It would be better to leave it as an option. We should question whether it is right to breach the general principle that compulsory arbitration clauses should be invalidated only by the decision of a court able to look at each case on its merits. This Bill suggests that we abolish them altogether by statute. The possibility ought to be left to a supplier or a consumer entering into an agreement at arm's length to make a binding agreement for the reference of any future dispute through arbitration.

Sir John Farr: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I hope you do not mind me intervening at this time, but a little while ago, a number of us asked, through your predecessor in the Chair, for a sign from my right hon. Friends the Home Secretary and the Leader of the House. She fairly undertook to give the House a response, preferably during the debate today, as to what sort of reaction we are likely to receive from my right hon. Friends to the wish, expressed earlier, that as early as possible there should be a debate on the findings at the Old Bailey yesterday.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have the hon. Gentleman's point. I am aware that points of order were raised earlier in the day, and that rulings were given from the Chair. There is nothing to add to what was said at that time. I know that there are genuine feelings, but these are not genuine points of order and I deprecate them being raised during valuable private Members' time.

Sir John Farr: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I point out that I am not seeking to make a bogus point of order. If you had let me finish, I was going to convey to the House what I have received from my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary since I raised my point of order. This information should be made available to the House today because it——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Not at this particular moment. I realise that the hon. Gentleman feels strongly about this matter. It was raised earlier and he heard what was said from the Chair then. There is nothing that I can add, and he must find other opportunities to raise what he obviously regards as an important matter.

Sir John Farr: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Further points of order cannot arise.

Mr. Cryer: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If you are arguing the case, very reasonably, that this matter should not be raised in private Members' time, which, as you say, is limited and valuable, is not the point that it can be raised at 2.30? This is an important and new issue and relates to a previous ruling made earlier, and 2.30 will be a completely separate time from the time of these Bills.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The time of 2.30 has not yet arrived and I will have to deal at 2.30 with anything that happens at 2.30.

Mr. Stanbrook: The view of the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators of the Bill ought to be stated, published, and considered by the House before the Bill goes through. As I understand it, and I have the benefit of the institute's communications with me, it is that the problem which the Bill aims to deal with occurs rarely, and the Bill will tip the balance in favour of the consumer and against the small business man, that is the one or two-men or women businesses, for two reasons. First, the contract without a requirement for arbitration will lack certainty when it comes to resolving disputes with the small business man's customers. Secondly, if he wishes to bring a claim against his customer, for example for non-payment where the customer may dispute the value of the work done or services performed, he is barred from using arbitration unless he can obtain the customer's agreement.

To solve the problem, the institute has suggested that legal aid should be available for arbitration. That aspiration is shared by many people, but we all know that the extension of legal aid is highly unlikely in that area as it is in other areas which nowadays have been suggested as fit subjects for legal aid. Alternatively, the institute suggests amending section 4 of the Arbitration Act 1950 to permit the courts to stay arbitration in favour of litigation in certain circumstances, for example, where it is desirable that one or other of the parties should be legally aided.

The institute also states that the Bill changes the law of arbitration fundamentally. Therefore it should be considered in the wider context of arbitration law reform as a whole which is currently under review by the interdepartmental committee led by Lord Justice Mustill.

The chartered institute administers several small claims schemes that have been approved by the Office of Fair Trading. It administers those most successfully on behalf of various trade associations. Most of the horror stories that have been published concern the furniture removing trade. Those firms are not covered by the chartered institute scheme at present, but no doubt they might be. Many trades are covered by the scheme.

I want to consider Lord Justice Mustill's inter-departmental committee report about the Bill. The Minister and my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth have already referred to that. The report is certainly useful. It narrows the definition of the problem

[Mr. Stanbrook]

—such as it is—to the effect of binding agreements to arbitrate under the contract. That is seen as a problem. There is inadequate scope in section 4 of the Arbitration Act 1950 for the courts' discretion to allow for proceedings in such cases. The committee referred to the fact that that is not a large scale problem when we are dealing with larger sums and larger subjects. Where the problem exists it is more acute because of the extra cost of private arbitration compared with the small claims court.

Mr. Denis Howell: I refer to clause 3(1)*(a)* of the Bill which states:

"A person deals as a consumer in relation to another party if—

(a) he neither makes the contract in the course of a business nor holds himself out as doing so;"

If a person wants to place a bet with a bookmaker on a Sunday—which some of us would like to permit if we can progress to the next Bill—would he be covered by clause 3(1)*(a)* of the Consumer Arbitration Agreements Bill?

Mr. Stanbrook: The right hon. Gentleman is concerned about another Bill. I am referring to the Consumer Arbitration Agreements Bill. It is my duty to do that, otherwise Mr. Deputy Speaker would rule me out of order.

Mr. Beggs: Has the hon. Gentleman considered whether the Bill will comply with EEC regulations? Will consumers in the United Kingdom be equally well covered by the new legislation or disadvantaged by it in respect of present EEC regulations?

Mr. Stanbrook: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for raising that point. I will try to cover that point later. The significance of the Bill with regard to our duties under the treaty of Rome and to the whole policy of the European Community has not been appreciated adequately by the Bill's sponsors. I shall come to that later. There seems to be little choice between the two systems in regard to speed and to other aspects. The sponsors of the Bill are more concerned about costs, although a successful consumer in a private arbitration case usually gets his costs. The committee pointed out that under the Fair Trading Act 1973 the Director General of Fair Trading can stimulate codes of practice in any particular trade to safeguard the consumer.

It has been pointed out that the Director General does not endorse any code of practice that includes an arbitration clause that does not give the consumer the option of going to court. That suggests that it would be better not to put any legislative ban on it. The British Association of Removers and the Federation of Master Builders—the two trades most involved in that aspect of the Bill—are currently discussing their codes of practice with the Director of Fair Trading.

The committee noted:

"The Bill, as presently drafted, would affect contracts outside the mischief at which the Bill is aimed. This is because the scope of the Bill is determined, by the definition (taken from the Unfair Contract Terms Act 1977) of consumer. The proponents of the Bill say that this is consonant with their philosophy that arbitration clauses should be regarded in exactly the same way as clauses limiting or excluding liability covered by the 1977 Act."

My hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth sees the Bill as completing the gap in the consumer protection legislation that was left by the 1977 Act. The hon. Member for Great Grimsby made that point in his speech.

The committee report states that

"there is an important distinction between what this Bill seeks to do and what the 1977 Act does. Whilst it is recognised that the 1977 Act is concerned principally with the exclusion or restriction of substantive rights, there is considerable disagreement as to whether arbitration clauses can properly be said to be clauses excluding or restricting liability."

The committee, in its submission to the House, makes an interesting point that

"It was felt to be unnecessary for the Bill to extend to all consumer contracts because . . . the unfairness appears only by comparison with the Small Claims procedure where disputes are arbitrated at less expense and without the consumer being at risk as to costs. Cases over £500 in the County Court are not subject to the 'no costs' rule."

but cases below £500 are subject to that rule. The bigger the sum involved, the more likely it is that the consumer will pay for legal representation and the less significant will be the arbitrator's fees.

Sir John Farr: My hon. Friend surely misleads the House, when most members of the public will do anything to avoid the ever-rising expense of legal advice which is well beyond the average person, if my hon. Friend had listened more carefully to the initial speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth, he would have appreciated that point.

Mr. Stanbrook: I am not suggesting any change—I suggest that we should not change.

The bigger the contract, the more likely it is that the consumer will have considered its terms carefully before entering into it. It is not surprising that the departmental committee thought there might be a monetary limit on the application of the Bill. It could be £500. I understand that that figure might be extended to £1,000 if and when the small claims court procedure enables that upper limit to be realised.

The higher the figure, the more necessary will be a discretion on the part of the court to stay proceedings and allow arbitration to proceed. I am thinking of when, for example, there is a perfectly valid case for a matter to go to arbitration rather than to be continued in the court, such as when matters of technical complexity are involved and require a legally qualified person and someone who knows professionally about the product or problem about which there is a dispute.

We should bear in mind the opinions of another body which is interested in the Bill—the Official Referees Bar Association. It is the association of barristers who practise before the Official Referee. Its point of view is relevant and it makes an interesting point in the memorandum that it has submitted when it says:

"The principal purpose of the Bill is to enable consumer disputes that would be eligible for legal aid support to receive that support where such disputes would otherwise have to be arbitrated."

The association is asking for business and sees the Bill in that light. There will be more work in the courts of the Official Referee if people are prevented from proceeding to arbitration. That is a legitimate point of view although it is not one that many of us will share.

I have much else to say, but in deference to others who wish to speak, I shall abbreviate my speech. In most industries nowadays, there is a code of practice which is sponsored by the Office of Fair Trading and which

incorporates an arbitration scheme. They cover cars, motor cycles, holidays, household electrical appliances and much else. Progress along these lines, using arbitration when it is fair and convenient, seems to be the best hope for the future, but one must ask how the Bill squares with the law of the European Community.

We are almost alone in limiting the right of arbitration to such an extent. Most European states give greater effect to arbitration clauses and exclude the jurisdiction of the courts. That may be something to do with the difference between the common law system as we know it and the civil law system on the continent. We would be wise not to take a retrogressive line as regards arbitration as an alternative to litigation. We might be going in completely the wrong direction and suffer for it by, once again, being out of step with our neighbours and partners in the EC. The report of the departmental committee does not appear to take that factor into account, yet the Commission of the European Community was able to publish in 1985 a document entitled "Ten Years of Community Consumer Policy: A contribution to a People's Europe" — No. 339/24. It reveals that a consumer protection and information policy has been implemented and consistently applied in Europe and among the states of the European Community. One of its chief features is the encouragement of arbitration for the settlement of disputes. It starts with a Council resolution, dated 14 April 1975, on

"the preliminary programme of the European Economic Community for consumer information and protection",

and it goes on to embrace methods of enforcement of standards, and all the problems across which the Bill unilaterally cuts.

I could say many more things about the Bill; I have made a few valid criticisms of it. I conclude, like the departmental committee, that it is better to deal with the mischief to which the Bill is directed by getting the relevant trade associations to make arbitration optional in their trading and consumer agreements rather than to legislate against arbitration clauses. Arbitration is a consensual process, as the committee points out, and interfering with it, especially in relation to developments in Europe, is contrary to the current trend of arbitration law.

Mr. Dover: Can my hon. Friend clarify his thinking on the Government's possible attitude to the Bill, which has been mentioned in the debate? I would find that most helpful.

Mr. Stanbrook: I do not have the time. I am sure my hon. Friends who are still waiting to speak will not thank me if I spend any more time on this.

The Bill, unusually for one brought in by a Conservative Member, is a product of the nanny state and based on the assumption that private individuals are incapable of protecting their own interests, making their own bargains and living their own lives without the state legislating for every eventuality. It is therefore retrogressive and un-Conservative, and I for one do not support it.

1.53 pm

Mr. Pawsey: I shall be brief, as my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) wants to address the House on an important matter.

My hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) is very much his own man, never afraid to pursue an unpopular cause. It seemed that he was arguing that the pendulum had swung too far in favour of the consumer. That was a minority view in the House today.

I was pleased to hear the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) say that the Opposition support the Bill. He spoke in his own inimitable way, and we look forward to further contributions from him in due course.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden) made a remarkable speech. He was informed and helpful, and I was not surprised to discover, in the course of his remarks, that he is a lecturer in the law of contract —and, more than that, he is the distinguished author of "Bowden on Contracts". I am certain that we shall find that book in the House of Commons Library in the not too distant future.

I am pleased to confirm to my hon. Friend the Minister that I shall be moving amendments with certain provisos, as he mentioned.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Ordered, That the Bill be committed to a Committee of the whole House.—*[Mr. Pawsey.]*

Committee Friday 12 February.

Sunday Sports (No. 2) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

1.54 pm

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

First, I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) on such a successful passage of an important piece of legislation, and I wish him well in Committee and on the later stages of the Bill.

I acknowledge the help and assistance of many national bodies of sporting organisations in the preparation of my Bill, particularly my noble Friend Lord Wyatt, who has skilfully piloted a similar measure through the other place. I thank the Home Office for its courtesy and consideration in the preparation of this modest measure. I am pleased to say that the Bill commands all-party support, and I am grateful for the help of my fellow sponsors.

Every Sunday, sporting events take place at which the Sunday Observance Act 1780 is openly and flagrantly breached by charging for admission, whether for cash, for tickets sold in advance, for car parking or for other reasons.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Soames: No, I shall press on.

Last Sunday there was an excellent football match between Arsenal and Manchester United. It was watched by 29,202 people who paid to attend the match, and probably by some 6 million people who will have watched the game on television. That was an illegal gathering.

Mr. Beggs: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I know that the hon. Gentleman would not want to mislead the House, but he stated that his Bill had all-party support——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. That is a point of argument, not a point of order.

Mr. Soames: A large number of similar events, some even more important, are held on Sundays. They include the Wimbledon finals, the British Open Golf championships, the Littlewood cup final, the British grand prix, the Sunday cricket league, the International Polo championships, and the list goes on. In theory, all those events take place improperly, and their organisers are breaking the law when they charge for admission. In these cases the law is self-evidently an ass. This is a most unhappy, unsatisfactory state of affairs which cannot and must not be allowed to continue.

The laws of England have not been well served today by the procedural monkey business earlier, which has led to my private Member's Bill being led into this Chamber, as if it were some legislative abbatoir, to be hit on the head, when in fact it is important and necessary amending legislation. It should not be for the House to prevent the extension of facilities for the further enjoyment of leisure by millions of our constituents.

Sundays have indeed changed, and they have changed for the better. Sunday is becoming an even more special day. More and more opportunities are opening up for families to spend the day together at a wide variety of events, and rightly so. The leisure industry, which is one of our biggest and most important employers, is expanding all the time as demand grows. I have to say that those who oppose the Bill are, by and large, out of touch with the feelings and demands of family life in Britain today. They tend to use the word "family" as an entirely emotive red herring.

The Bill prevents no one from going to church. It does not make it compulsory to go to church and it does not stop people from staying at home if they want to. It enables people to go legally, with or without their family, to the sporting event of their choice and to have a bet, if they wish. It is hardly the personification of Sodom and Gomorrah.

These events are taking place entirely in contravention and breach of the Sunday Observance Act 1780, which describes such gatherings as "disorderly houses" or "disorderly places". That has surprised and shocked some of the eminent and important people who attend the Wimbledon finals and other great sporting occasions. The organisers of such events are liable to fines and, indeed, imprisonment. The law is still liable to pounce on Sunday sport, but it is largely unenforceable and unenforced. That is an unattractive and unwelcome state of affairs for any Government, of whatever persuasion.

Cricket, football and rugger matches at which admission is charged are held on Sundays as a matter of course. Some organisers, particularly of Sunday golf tournaments, try to get round the law by making spectators one-day club members. Sports venues such as Wembley have one free gate, which they hope no one will find. If it is found, there is room for only a couple of hundred people. Such transparent devices would rightly founder if tested in court. Some sporting organisations which do not have the muscle of the big sporting bodies are frightened to stage events on Sundays, although their members would very much like them to do so. This is further evidence of the highly discriminatory nature of the way in which the law has evolved.

My sponsors and I have had letters of support, from many organisations which do not want to risk going to court in connection with a breach of the Sunday Observance Act. They are respectable people who do not want to be known as keepers of disorderly houses or disorderly places. They wish to act entirely properly, within a proper framework of the law. The 14 governing bodies of sports such as cricket, football, motor racing, tennis and rugby have all assured me of that and have published their views in a letter to *The Times*.

My noble Friend Lord Wyatt, the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell) and I—and others—have consulted most of the sporting organisations. They strongly wish these matters to be cleared up so that they no longer have to resort to subterfuge and continued malpractice. Surely, when a law is so widely and frequently broken in the presence of so many millions of people, it must be right for the House to adjust it to remove the threat of penalties. That is what happened in 1932 when the Sunday Entertainments Act at last allowed admission to be charged for singing, musical and similar entertainments. Forty years later the Sunday Theatre Act made a similar provision, and Sunday cinema shows have gradually been made legal and become popular. But sport remains a major victim. Parliament should not be seen to be too lax or easy-going about such matters. Every Sunday the law of the land is being brought into grave disrepute.

May I say at once that the Bill has nothing to do with the Shops Bill. It is not a stalking-horse for Sunday trading. It would not allow a single extra retail shop to

open on Sunday or spoil the special nature of Sundays. Most fixtures take place on grounds away from major centres of population. Let us consider racing, which is gravely discriminated against. Racing is the favourite sport of millions of our fellow citizens. The racing industry is proud that it already provides marvellous entertainment for all the family. There is no sporting gathering at which the atmosphere is more friendly and welcoming than a gathering on a race course. A day at the races can be a proper, old-fashioned family day out in the open air, with the added prospect of superb spectator sport.

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): As a regular racegoer I wholeheartedly endorse the point that the hon. Gentleman makes and I have great sympathy with the argument for permitting racing on Sundays. However, will he address himself to a question that causes some difficulty for me and for a number of my hon. Friends: why on earth do we need to open betting shops in the high street to permit racing to take place on race courses? The revenue from the betting shops will not contribute in any way to the financing of the meeting and, if anything, the fact that they are open will detract from, rather than add to, the attendance at the races.

Mr. Soames: I intend to deal with that matter, which I know exercises many hon. Members' minds. I hope that I shall deal with it to the hon. Gentleman's satisfaction.

By their nature, most of the 59 race courses in this country are not in built-up areas. They are in rural areas. Their opening on Sunday would do no more to destroy the special nature of Sundays than the opening of historic houses, garden centres, safari parks and museums. We are the only major racing country, apart from New Zealand, which does not have Sunday racing. In France, more than three times as many people go racing on Sunday as the daily average for the rest of the week, including Saturday. The House should know that many more people go to church in France than do so in Britain.

As the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) said, there is a special factor connected with racing, and that is betting. Gambling on a Sunday has long been legal. Bingo halls and casinos are permitted to open on Sunday. Jackpot machines are allowed to operate, but not betting shops. Those interested in the outcome of racing in Ireland, France or Italy, or in any other Sunday sport taking place in Britain, can bet with complete legality on Sunday by telephone if they are grand enough and rich enough to have a credit account. But there is an idiotic restriction—I am glad to hear that my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) is against nannying restrictions, because if ever there was one this is it—that should be swept aside. It is directed mainly at the less rich sections of the community. Those people may not have easy access to a telephone or do not bet often enough to warrant having a credit account. They are not permitted to bet, because betting shops may not open.

Like so much similar legislation, the background to this law lay in the belief that what used to be called the working-class could not be trusted to behave with the same restraint and common sense as those who are better off. Seldom can there have been a more idiotic, patronising and offensive idea. The so-called working class would resent a bunch of beastly, middle-class moralists lecturing them on the dangers of betting on Sunday.

The Home Office, the Revenue and the Exchequer—I accept what they say—believe that if horse racing or greyhound racing took place on Sunday and betting was not allowed on course or in licensed betting offices there would be an upsurge in illegal betting. That is the critical point, and I endorse the Home Office view on the matter. I should be happy to discuss the matter with my hon. Friend the Minister if he believes that that might help.

There are fewer than 10,000 licensed betting offices in England and Wales. Nearly 105,000 public houses, restaurants and other premises that are open on Sundays employ enormous numbers of people and are licensed to sell drinks. There are many thousands more cafés, pizza parlours and eating places which do not sell drink but which are open on Sundays. I hear no clamour in the House that such places spoil the special nature of Sunday or ruin the lives of those who work in them. Indeed, their closure would destroy much of the Sunday that is loved and enjoyed by millions of people and their families.

Opening a few licensed betting offices would not detract one jot or tittle from the spirit of Sunday. Their positions are carefully regulated by magistrates and they are well apart from each other. They are not Hogarthian hell-holes — far from it. They are generally agreeable establishments, attracting many men and women who derive much innocent pleasure from having a flutter.

My Bill would not permit betting on the race course, nor cash betting off track to begin before 12 noon on a Sunday. My hon. Friend the Member for Orpington will be glad to hear that everyone would have time to attend church before betting began and after it ended. As in the rest of the leisure industry on Sundays, no one would be asked to work six or seven days a week. There would be shift systems, with compensatory payments for working on Sunday. I assure Opposition Members that if my Bill went into Committee I would try to incorporate the employment protection measures enshrined in the Bill promoted by my noble Friend Lord Wyatt. He tells me that the Tote credit service is frequently in action on Sundays and is manned entirely by volunteers. Indeed, it has three volunteers for each position available.

Legitimate concern has been expressed about stable lads who might have to do extra work on Sundays, although there is already a satisfactory system of alternative Sunday working. I, my sponsors, and everyone else in the business believe that the Bill would not pass into law unless decent and satisfactory arrangements were made for all those who work in this important business.

Mrs. Audrey Wise (Preston): In that case, why did the hon. Gentleman not incorporate such provisions in his Bill? I am becoming extremely tired of hon. Members who come to the House with Bills but say that it will be quite a different thing in Committee. The hon. Gentleman had the opportunity to put such provisions in his Bill, but he did not do so.

Mr. Soames: As so often, the hon. Lady is entirely incorrect. I did not have the opportunity of doing that, because my Bill was already at the printers when Lord Wyatt's Bill passed through its final stages in the House of Lords. As I said, I shall seek to incorporate the schedule if the Bill proceeds to Committee.

Jockeys are accustomed to ride on Sundays in France, Italy, Germany, Ireland and in other countries that are more enlightened than ours. Likewise, trainers are happy to take their horses anywhere on Sundays if they think there is a chance of winning. I am sure that the same

[Mr. Soames]

accommodation can be made with transport drivers, jockeys, valets and all the other heroes who work in the racing industry.

I urge those who oppose the Bill to understand that racing is not just about betting. For most people the heart and soul of racing is the splendid thoroughbred racehorse and the brilliance and the dash of the jockeys, who are truly the bravest, toughest and most resiliant sportsmen one could ever hope to see. In my view, racing is a great deal more of a family sport than, for example, football.

It is a tiny minority who seek to prevent Sunday racing by vociferous objections, based on an ill-founded view of the meaning of morality and religion. In so doing they are bringing the whole spirit of the law in this country into disrepute. I am sure that several hon. Members have received a copy of a letter from Dr. Marvin Shyster—*[Laughter.]*—Dr. Martin Shuster of the "Keep Sunday Special Campaign" in which he says that, regrettably, despite the voicing of their concerns and unwillingness to work with the sponsors of the Bill, they have been unwilling to compromise in any way. I must advise the House that that group has never approached me or any of my sponsors even to discuss the matter. Much of the opposition to the Bill, such as that of my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington is based on intolerance, bigotry and latent spoil-sportism.

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way and I am proud to be a sponsor of his Bill. He might like to know that those of us, especially on the Conservative Benches, who oppose Sunday trading, support his Bill because, as he rightly and eloquently told the House, there is much illegality at the moment. That is why so many people have ignored the advice that has been given by those who were perhaps our compatriots in the earlier days. I commend my hon. Friend's Bill and hope that the House will approve it.

Mr. Soames: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his help and support in the early stages of the Bill's preparation.

Is it right that the law should prohibit someone from having a bet on Sunday on a horse when it allows another man to gamble his money on the spin of a wheel or the turn of a card? The answer is no. The Bill should be given a chance to proceed. The legislation relating to Sunday sport must be taken out of the shifting sands of confusion and dishonesty and placed on the firm bedrock of reputable law.

2.13 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): It may be for the convenience of the House if I speak as briefly as possible now to explain the Government's view of the Bill.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) on getting such a high place in the ballot and on his speech, which was well-balanced, thought-provoking, passionate and amusing.

It will not surprise the House to learn that in the Government's view the Bill appears to deserve some encouragement, as we have taken exactly the same position in another place. We will be content to see the Bill make progress for four reasons. First, it does not seem unreasonable for the racing authorities to want to be able to hold race meetings on a day when already other major sporting events are held. In that sense, the Bill follows the lead taken by others and which has been established for some time, as my hon. Friend pointed out so clearly and fully in his speech.

Secondly, the character of racing is such that sensible provision for betting needs to be made for Sunday events. Not everyone who goes to race meetings bets. I go occasionally, although rarely so splendidly attired as my hon. Friend, and rarely do I bet—for the spectacle and the sport provided. If races were to be held on Sundays, it is the Government's firm view that, under the present law, they could not be accompanied by betting activity. Our policy is that betting should be conducted through the lawful and regulated betting industry. All right hon. and hon. Members would wish to see such betting as there is in the country conducted lawfully and in a well-regulated way.

It is established practice that betting takes place off-course and on-course. The Bill would allow both forms of betting in betting offices, such as there are, rather than in betting shops, and on racecourses. That is the right approach, so that Sunday racing should not be prey to illegal betting problems.

The third reason for regarding the Bill with some measure of favour is that it takes account of responses to the earlier Bill that was introduced in another place by my noble Friend Lord Wyatt. That Bill initially proposed that Sunday racing should be permitted only during the afternoon of that day. My hon. Friend's Bill contains that refinement, including the important refinement that betting offices should be open only in the afternoon. In addition, as I noted earlier, the intention will be to respond to Opposition Members' quite legitimate concerns about the position of established employees of the racing and betting industries by adding protective provisions against dismissal or other action for refusing Sunday work. I entirely agree. Most hon. Members would agree with that.

Fourthly, it seems to us that the Bill would benefit sporting events generally. It has a wide application to other sports. That will be provided by the explicit exemption of races, athletic or other sporting events from the full rigour of the Sunday Observance Act 1780. That Act has been amended before. As my hon. Friend pointed out, it has been amended to legitimate Sunday musical entertainments. Indeed, in 1972, it was amended to permit theatres to open on Sundays. In its present form, the 1780 Act casts some doubt over sports that are already being enjoyed on Sundays. It seems to us that it would be sensible and helpful to dispel doubt by disapplying the offences in the 1870 Act from sporting events.

I recognise, of course, that one measure of the Bill is the place that it would take in the balance of the House's expectations of Sunday as a whole. In no sense will the Bill amend in any way the provisions of the Shops Act 1950. As my hon. Friend explained, subject to trying to achieve its central purpose, the Bill will specifically respond to that in, for example, its restrictions on betting days and plans for the protection of employees' rights. They are sensible measures.

Some hon. Members are concerned that the opening of betting offices would have implications for controls on Sunday trading. They may see the Bill as objectionable on that ground alone. That is a misconceived view.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington) *rose*——

Mr. Patten: I wonder whether my hon. Friend will forgive me. I shall not give way. I have little time in which to make my speech.

Of course, the Government are fully alive to the views of those who wish to retain the present pattern of Sunday. The Government appreciate that there will be different views about the sort of day that Sunday should be. I make it absolutely clear that the Government and I understand and respect the views of those who, as a matter of conscientious conviction, wish to retain a particular form of Sunday. But the Bill will not amend the Shops Act. If the House prefers, it may be taken separately from Sunday trading issues.

Mr. Stanbrook *rose——*

Mr. Patten: I hope that my hon. Friend will forgive me if I do not give way on this occasion.

As hon. Members will be aware, many sporting events take place on a Sunday. There are many other activities on Sunday.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Patten: I wonder whether my hon. Friend will forgive me. For reasons relating to time, I am unable to give way.

Mr. Holt: As a sponsor of the Bill?

Mr. Patten: As my hon. Friend is a sponsor of the Bill, I shall give way.

Mr. Holt: On the international dimension, I wonder whether my hon. Friend was looking at the matter from the Government's point of view. Would he like to put on record the number of Americans who will watch the Superbowl next Sunday or the number of us who will watch the bicentenary test in Australia?

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) makes his point extremely well.

As I have said, concert halls, cinemas, theatres, leisure parks, sports centres, bingo halls and casinos are all able quite legitimately to provide recreation on Sundays. The Bill is very much aimed at allowing racing, particularly horse racing. There is no specific prohibition of horse racing on Sundays under the present law, but, because it stimulates betting, we should not be happy for it to take place unless betting could be engaged in lawfully both on and off-course.

I had hoped to speak for not more than 12 minutes, but I have managed to do it in 10. That leaves me a moment to give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook).

Mr. Stanbrook: For a moment, I thought that my hon. Friend's normal fairness and courtesy had deserted him. I would otherwise have said that he was one of those hon. Members who are always anxious to give way, and to do so to hon. Members on both sides of the House.

Is my hon. Friend—speaking for the Government—content that nowadays almost every shop should be prohibited from opening on Sundays; and does he at the same time want betting shops, as a total exception to that general rule, to be allowed to open? If so, is that not entirely inconsistent with the Government's present stance?

Mr. Patten: I welcome my hon. Friend's intervention, which the slow passing of time has allowed.

Mr. Holt *rose——*

Mr. Patten: I cannot give way during a response to an intervention to which I did not particularly want to give way earlier.

The Bill does not seek to amend the Shops Act 1950 in any way. In the Government's view, it seems to make sensible provision for betting offices — an entirely different matter — to open only for the period when Sunday racing is under way, after 12 noon.

This is not a Government Bill, and we have no plans at present for similar legislation. We shall listen with interest to what others have to say in the course of the Bill's progress, but we see no reason at present to stand in the way of the changes that it seeks to make.

I apologise to the House for the speed at which I have been compelled to speak. I have tried to explain why we are in general sympathy with the Bill's purpose and ready to see it progress, if the House agrees.

2.22 pm

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): I congratulate the hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) on his place in the Ballot, if not on his suit. *[Interruption.]* I borrowed mine from Derek Hatton.

The House is being asked two questions: do we want horse racing on some or all Sundays, and do we want off-course betting shops to open on a Sunday? Competing interests must be balanced in the arguments put forward. It must be acknowledged — I suspect there will be no argument about this — that those living in the areas where races are held are likely to be unenthusiastic about the proposal. It will mean extra traffic congestion, parking problems, noise and disturbance, on a day that the majority of the population regard, on religious and other grounds, as different and special.

Mr. Charles Morrison (Devizes) *rose——*

Mr. Corbett: I beg the hon. Gentleman's forgiveness; I really cannot give way.

The same can be said about a number of other Sunday leisure activities, but it is nevertheless a substantial argument. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell) will know, people whose homes are near Villa Park—which is on the edge of my constituency, and in that of my right hon. Friend —feel considerable annoyance when matches are played there. I admit that they are likely to be people who take no interest in football. Others, in spite of what the hon. Member for Crawley has said, will see the proposal as the thin end of the wedge leading to another bid for round-the-clock trading on Sundays. I shall not rehearse all those arguments, except to say that I think that we should be very cautious about requiring people to work on Sundays in non-essential capacities, because of the impact that that has on already fragile family life.

Clearly, the bookies expect this Bill, or one like it, to succeed. As I understand it, at least one of the big four bookies already requires new employees to sign contracts requiring them to work on a Sunday when called on to do so. From a personal point of view, I should be much happier about this measure if this multi-million pound industry were better run and better treated all those who work in it on and off the course.

Horse racing has a smutty image — *[Interruption.]* Listen. A former champion jockey is in goal after pleading

[Mr. Corbett]

to tax fraud and 30 other trainers and jockeys are said to be under investigation by the Inland Revenue. I accept that those activities touch only a handful of people in and around the industry, but they give horse racing an unfortunate face. Conditions at some of the 59 horse racing courses are bad, with poor or non-existent facilities for a decent overnight stay. Others have hostels which border on being unfit for human habitation. There are others where, because of shortage of accommodation, stables are used successively by different horses without any cleansing, running the risk of disease.

My impression is that the sport of horse racing is generally badly managed. The Jockey Club is far from being one of the world's noted democracies.

Mr. John Carlisle: That is why it is so successful.

Mr. Corbett: If that is the attitude behind the Bill, the hon. Gentleman should not be surprised if it does not see the light of day.

In any event, the Jockey Club seems unable to encourage and assist the investment in improvements which are needed in the industry. I am told that public safety, for example, at some tracks is even worse than that which appertained at the Bradford football club, with such tragic results.

The conditions of employees are often appalling. Those jockeys so properly praised by the hon. Member for Crawley work in an industry where there is no industry-wide compensation scheme and those who are injured in what must be regarded as a dangerous sport have to rely on what is essentially a grace-and-favour scheme operated by the Levy Board. That can be no substitute for an industry-wide scheme, properly financed and run by employers and employees.

The Transport and General Workers Union has told us that the national joint council for stable staff has made no progress on some proposals put by the TGWU for dealing with rates of pay should Sunday racing go ahead. The TGWU is willing to attend further talks with the employers, who have already flatly rejected the union's proposals. That is an unhappy position, and I hope that the employers will come to a sensible settlement.

This all adds up to the need for a thorough review of horse racing in all its aspects, including the desirability, or not, of Sunday racing. I tell the Minister now that Labour would welcome such an inquiry and accept its conclusions, and I invite him to do the same.

It has been said that there is no need for betting shops to open on a Sunday. There is a system in Ireland where runners are published on Fridays, bets laid on Saturdays and races run on Sundays. That system could operate here. Of course, if betting shops were to open, they would not simply take bets on the gee-gees. They would take bets on any sporting activity on a Sunday anywhere they chose to take that coverage. There are countries that hold general or presidential elections on a Sunday. There would be nothing to stop — indeed, there would be every encouragement — the betting shops confining their activities to horse racing.

The argument that there would be more illegal betting if the betting shops were not open is farcical. People might just as well argue that the town speed limit of 30 mph should be raised to 50 mph because so few people obey it.

I urge an inquiry into the horse racing industry and I believe that it is time for another Royal Commission on gambling. The last was in 1975 and it left many questions unanswered, especially those on gambling and its effects on society. We now have hundreds, perhaps thousands, of young people hooked on fruit machines. We need to stand back and decide whether the vast amounts of money spent on gambling are a sign of a healthy society.

My guess is that the big bookies are the sponsors and main supporters of the Bill. That is no good reason for going along with the hon. Gentleman's proposals without proper thought. Although I——

It being half-past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Debate to be resumed on Friday 5 February.

Private Members' Bills

ABORTION (TREATMENT OF NON-RESIDENT WOMEN) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Second Reading what day?

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): Friday 12 February.

HOUSING (WAITING LIST RESTRICTIONS) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day?

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): Friday 26 February.

NORTHERN REGIONAL ASSEMBLY BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day?

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): On behalf of my hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice), the Member in charge of the Bill, Friday 5 February.

Stoneyetts and Woodilee Hospitals

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

2.30 pm

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): I welcome the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, especially on a Friday afternoon, and I also welcome my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) the shadow Secretary of State for Social Services, who has a great interest in these matters.

I wish to draw attention to the problems of Stoneyetts and Woodilee psychiatric hospitals in my constituency. They are two separate hospitals, but they have a great deal in common—not least their geography. Woodilee is well over a hundred years old and Stoneyetts is post-Edwardian.

The most significant date in the history of Woodilee hospital was 13 March 1987. My constituents described that day as "Black Friday". As a result of structural faults, which we were told had been suddenly discovered, decanting of patients took place. There was a massive evacuation of hundreds of patients to hospitals all over Greater Glasgow. One reason why I am seeking this debate is that we have simply not recovered from that experience. The Minister will be aware that my hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith) and I met the chairman of the Greater Glasgow health board, Dr. Thompson, and some of his colleagues. There were also several ministerial meetings, including two meetings with the Minister's predecessor, Lord Glenarthur, and one meeting with the Minister.

I believe that the ministerial responsibility for such matters is important. In some ways I regret that Lord Glenarthur is not replying to the debate, because I believe that he has a major responsibility for some of the events that took place at that time. I put some questions to Lord Glenarthur at a famous—some might say infamous—meeting in Edinburgh. At that meeting he gave me the impression that he did not even think that I, as an elected Member, had the right to ask questions at all.

I found it astonishing, to say the least, that, when the avacuation was taking place, the Coathill hospital at Coatbridge had a ward, which had been modernised and refurbished at a cost of hundreds of thousands of pounds, lying empty 10 minutes away from where the drama was taking place. It is in the same parliamentary constituency as Woodilee, yet many patients were dispatched to parts of Greater Glasgow long distances away from Woodilee.

Lord Glenarthur gave me no reply on that occasion. He promised to contact me, but he has not done so. I hope that the Minister will remedy the matter.

The conditions of the hospitals to which many of these elderly, geriatric and psycho-geriatric patients have been sent leave a great deal to be desired. I know that this is a subject of controversy, but, if the Minister takes my advice, and listens to my remarks perhaps we can get unanimous agreement about the conditions. I speak with the full agreement of COHSE, NUPE and the Royal College of Nursing. Even the Prime Minister appears to pay some regard to the views of the latter. For example, in Leverndale we saw semi-derelict buildings being used. At Mearnskirk, pavilions erected during the second world war, and meant to be temporary, are still being used for these patients.

[Mr. Tom Clarke]

I saw the conditions. For example, at Mearnskirk, in units which had been closed for some time and suddenly reopened, I saw signs which stated, "Asbestos—keep out." Lord Glenarthur challenged me on my facts. He had to admit that he had not visited any of these places. Therefore, he should have been unable to give any opinion, other than that of the civil servants who feed him with his lines. I have not seen Gartloch, but I am told—I accept this because it is the view of the Royal College of Nursing and others—that there is a small ward with 15 patients. The conditions have been strongly criticised by the Mental Welfare Commission, because the patients are two floors up and have no other accommodation for leisure or medicinal purposes. I am told that that ward is the size of a double garage, and patients leave it only when they need food. As the Minister will know, the Royal College of Nursing has described the conditions at Ruchill as inadequate to house such heavily dependent patients.

The David Elder hospital was vacant for a long time and it is still being vandalised, because many youths believe that it is no longer used.

These conditions are appalling. It is a tragedy that the Minister and the Greater Glasgow health board are not addressing themselves to the potential for improvement at Woodilee and Stoneyetts. Stoneyetts received many of the evacuated patients from Woodilee. The board takes the view that there is not a great future for Stoneyetts. That is unfortunate because, as I saw on Sunday afternoon when I visited the hospital, a great deal of money has recently been spent there and in some parts the painting was very fresh. Many thousands of pounds have recently been spent in Stoneyetts, but the problems remain.

The problems are mainly those of patient care. For example, I saw in the same ward schizophrenics, new chronic sick, long-term geriatrics, and patients being prepared for rehabilitation. They ranged in age from 33 to 87. I saw the conditions in which the staff are expected to work. The Minister might be interested to know, for example, that this fragile paper towel is typical of those supplied to staff to deal with doubly incontinent patients. Clearly, this is absolutely disgraceful.

At Stoneyetts, nursing and ancillary vacancies are not being filled. The hospital is clearly understaffed. Such people as Willie Copeland, Jim McGeachey, Ricky McManus and Elizabeth McMullin, with whom I spoke, are dedicated to the hospital, have given years of service to it and know of its importance to the community. They are anxious about the approach of the health board, despite the publicity that these hospitals have received.

I return to the problem of Woodilee. We are entitled to ask what happened, and whose fault it was. It was a major happening in the lives of the patients and the personnel, from which they still have not recovered. I know that the Minister, to his credit, visited the hospital fairly recently, and I thank him for doing so. However, he left the impression that the problem was everybody else's fault rather than that of the Greater Glasgow health board and the Government. However, both the Government and the board were well and truly warned. *Hansard* will record that in March 1986, less than a year before "Black Friday", I spoke of the deteriorating conditions at the Woodilee hospital. I went on to say about the Secretary of State:

"nobody in my constituency will regard him as generous so long as those intolerable conditions remain".

The Secretary of State insisted:

"the resources that will be made available will be based on the formula, which the health boards as a whole see as a reasonable approach to the matter."—[*Official Report*, 26 March 1986; Vol. 94, c. 940.]

We know what has happened since then.

That is not all. Yesterday I sent the Minister a copy of the Woodilee file, prepared by the local COHSE branch before all this happened, and many of the points that it made are still relevant, given the conditions today. Perhaps most importantly of all, Mr. I. R. N. Crawford, the director of administrative services, expressed his concern on 25 November 1985 in a paper which he sent to the board, with a private copy to all interested parties, including the trade unions. In his covering note he said:

"The Unit Management Team has been very concerned for some time about the fabric of the building and a need to undertake urgent structural repairs, and as part of that process we have developed our ideas to the stage where the paper has been sent to the Board in the hope that it will open discussions in this area."

Nobody can genuinely say that they had not been warned and that what happened on 13 March 1987 was a great surprise.

Many of the features of which we were aware then still exist today in both hospitals, such as reductions in nursing staff, people working within a limited budget, reductions in domestic staff, lack of adequate repair and maintenance, and, most importantly—the view shared by many people, and one that I take—that consultation between the board and the staff is at a minimum, and consultation between the board and the patients is virtually non-existent. Patients are entitled to know what is going on.

It is surprising that, shortly after it was announced that this Adjournment debate would take place, the unions received a copy of a document headed:

"Timetable For Relocation of Displaced Woodilee Patients."

It was dated 18 November 1987, but was not sent to them until 22 January 1988, after it was made clear that I was to have an Adjournment debate. Some of the items within the schedule were due to take place last month but simply had not. It is no wonder that Donald Henderson, the secretary of the local branch of COHSE, recently wrote:

"Wards are consistently left short staffed and being faced with management stock answer of 'Living within the budget'.

The support services side is just as bad, with non-replacement of domestic staff leading to a lowering of hygiene standards, catering managers cutting back on shampoo, hospital roads with pot holes and once beautiful grounds now unkempt."

The Minister will also be aware that the food supply to Woodilee hospital is available exclusively from Stobhill hospital, which is many miles away. I shudder to think what would happen if we had a repetition of last year's dreadful January weather. Frankly, it would be impossible to ensure that Woodilee received its food.

I hope that the Minister will be convinced, and in due course will persuade the board, that there is still a need for both hospitals, a need to invest in those hospitals and a need to improve capital and revenue expenditure. Those hospitals are communities. However, they are part of a wider community. I know that the Minister may be influenced by Mr. Peterkin's paper entitled "Strategy Overview" or by the Scottish health authorities' priorities for the eighties proposals. However, those proposals have

been grossly underfunded, as the Minister must be aware. I do not share the board's view about the catchment areas. There are areas with large populations around Woodilee and Stoneyetts. The need for the services provided by those hospitals is self-evident in my constituency and in that of my hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden.

The debate and this whole sad saga is about people. It is about patients, their relatives and families. It is also about nurses who are being removed from nursing duties and given domestic duties and thereby reducing the time that they can give to patient care. It is also about the way in which we treat student nurses—and none of us can be proud about that. The debate is about people like Tom Smith, of the National Union of Public Employees, who is known to the Minister. It is also about Jim McGill of COHSE and David Rushent of the Royal College of Nursing who told me on Monday that some patients have been shunted about although they have been at the hospital since 1956.

Those union representatives and the people who have served the Health Service so admirably co-operated fully in the evacuation process. I must tell the Minister, with great regret, that they feel considerably let down and now have their doubts. They believe that the pledges that were given to them on behalf of the board have not been kept. So many months after the evacuation, they want to know just how temporary is temporary.

This debate is about people like Mary Dowell, who has been nursing for 35 years. She told me earlier this week that the morale in her profession is the lowest that she can recall. She said the same was true of the morale of the patients whom she seeks to serve. The debate is also about people like Mary Dowell's daughter, Anne McPhee, who was nursing at Woodilee for 13 years. She was sent suddenly to Leverndale many miles from Woodilee. She lives at Milton of Campsie. She found that her day on many occasions started at 8 am and finished after 10 pm. She did not speak to me about herself and her own conditions and worries, although it would have been understandable if she had done so. She spoke to me about the patients. She said that the patients are asking when they will return to Woodilee. They want to know when they will be going back home—and home for them is Woodilee.

Those people are now considering industrial action, in many cases for the first time. I did not ask their views about privatisation which I know is so close to the Minister's heart. However, I must tell him that time after time I received the unsolicited view that on top of the many problems that personnel are experiencing, the idea of the imposition of privatisation is unthinkable.

This debate refers to the future of Stoneyetts and Woodilee hospitals. I plead with the Minister to address himself to a future for both hospitals. The Minister should remember the need for investment on purpose-built psychiatric units, a better staff-patient ratio and a better environment based on patient care that is not anonymous and that will have response provided by smaller units when people know each other better.

I hope that the Minister will remove the impression that he left with some during his visit, that the money that must inevitably be found to remedy the problems might be taken from other aspects of patient care elsewhere in Greater Glasgow. The staff would welcome retraining and a redistribution of psychiatric in-patient facilities.

However, that is looking to the future. I do not believe that we can do justice to the problems unless we learn lessons from the past. It was a serious experience for the people involved. Therefore, I believe that whatever decisions the Minister takes—and I hope he will take them urgently, and likewise the Greater Glasgow health board—it is appropriate that there should be a proper public inquiry and that Lord Glenarthur, who is still a Minister and had responsibility for many of the decisions taken during that time, should be invited to give evidence at such an inquiry.

Those hospitals in my constituency serve an area whose industry has been utterly devastated. They live in the shadow of Gartcosh, Cardowan, and Buchanan's whisky plant. If the health board goes ahead with its proposals, more jobs will be lost and services will be even further from the communities that they seek to serve. That runs counter to the Minister's objectives—which he has stated on many occasions—regarding health care, community care and patient care. For those reasons I hope that he will take my arguments on board.

2.51 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Michael Forsyth): I congratulate the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) on raising the subject and I shall try to cover most of the points that he raised. I am aware of his long interest in the services provided for disadvantaged people and in the two hospitals he has spoken about this afternoon. The two hospitals invite the consideration of rather different questions and before addressing those particular questions perhaps I can begin by looking at the wider background to the issues raised by the hon. Gentleman.

Both Woodilee and Stoneyetts hospitals provide services for mentally ill people. In recent years much attention has been focused on the needs of that group, along with the elderly and the mentally and physically handicapped. The SHAPE report sets out the priorities for the years ahead. Between 1981-82 and 1985-86 the category A priority group indentified by the report has increased its share of hospital and community health expenditure from 37·2 per cent. to 38·6 per cent. That was against the background of a real increase of expenditure in the Health Service, and therefore represents a substantial real increase in the resources available. The same report pointed to the need to reduce the dependence on hospital provision for those groups. The Government have placed considerable emphasis in recent years on the need to achieve a gradual shift of care from an institutional setting to appropriate care in the community.

We have encouraged health boards and local authorities to give a high priority within the resources we have made available to them to the provision of community care facilities. We have made provision for local authority current expenditure on social work services in 1988-89 of some £39·9 million—36 per cent. greater in real terms than that for 1979-80, and 5·5 per cent. above the authorities' present budget. We recognise the vital importance of ensuring that adequate provision is made in the community before patients are transferred. Of course we accept that for some patients, hospitals continue to provide the most appropriate form of care.

Sir Roy Griffiths is currently undertaking a review of the organisation and funding of community care. Although it does not apply to Scotland, we have kept in

[Mr. Michael Forsyth]

close contact with him about it. We shall study his report, which will be subject to collective consideration by Ministers.

I am sure that the hon. Gentleman and I could debate community care all afternoon, but he might be interested to hear more about the Greater Glasgow health board. It published a consultative document on its mental illness strategy in November last year, and it is still collecting comments on it. No doubt what the hon. Gentleman has said today will be noted.

The paper says that the board's expenditure on services for the mentally ill has not reflected its category A SHAPE priority, contrary to the national trend. The board proposed to redress that by budgeting for real revenue growth of approximately 12 per cent. in the development of services for the mentally ill. The hon. Gentleman made some tepid remarks about the benefits of competitive tendering. I must draw his attention to the fact that the board expects to fund that growth in services through internal efficiency savings.

It is in everybody's interests, including those of staff at the hospitals which the hon. Gentleman has mentioned, that we should get value for money in the Health Service and that the Greater Glasgow health board should be supported in its efforts to achieve that.

I took the opportunity this afternoon to read the minutes of the meeting which the hon. Gentleman had with my noble Friend Lord Glenarthur. My noble Friend gave an undertaking that he would draw the Greater Glasgow health board's attention to the position at Coathill hospital. He did just that. Woodilee and Stoneyetts hospitals lie in the northern division of Greater Glasgow. Woodilee has 892 beds and Stoneyetts has 240. There are 77 psychiatric beds at Stobhill, which is a general and acute hospital in the same division.

The population of the northern division is projected to fall to 175,000 by 1992. On that basis, the board estimates that 497 beds will be required and that, ultimately, only 394 will be required—324 of them can be provided at Woodilee hospital, the remaining 70 being at Stobhill. Given the need to provide a more geographically balanced service, the board considers it appropriate to provide the remaining 103 beds at Ruchill and Stobhill hospitals. It does not consider that there is a long-term future for Stoneyetts hospital.

In the consultative paper, the board explains that, apart from demographic factors, the hospital suffers from an isolated setting and poor conditions. It is not conveniently situated for the bulk of the population it serves. Its closure will not occur until the board is satisfied that the programme of rehabilitation and community care is successful and that the proposed revisions in bed numbers have been shown to be justified. The board will have to go through the usual consultative process for hospital closures and refer any proposals to my right hon. and learned Friend.

The hon. Gentleman talked about the evacuation of Woodilee. It has been a major complication of the implementation of the board's strategy in the short term. The evacuation of the 413 patients in March was due to the dangerous state of the main block. I do not think that it is necessary to spell out the problems which affected the block—they did not occur overnight. The fabric of this Victorian building has been deteriorating for a long time.

I accept, as the hon. Gentleman said, that it seems that the board did not do enough to identify and tackle the deterioration, but that is no longer the case. I applaud the prompt and effective action that the board took to deal with the immediate problems. I also acknowledge the co-operation of the unions and the inconvenience caused to hospital staff who have had to travel to various sites throughout the city——

The motion having been made at half-past Two o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 1 February 1988

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Imprisonment of Member

Mr. Speaker: I have received letters from the resident magistrate at the Belfast petty sessions informing me that Mr. William McCrea, the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster, and Rev. Ian Paisley, the hon. Member for Antrim, North, have been sentenced to periods of imprisonment of seven days. I shall cause the texts of those letters to be published in Votes and Proceedings and in the *Official Report*.

Following are the letters:

Dear Mr. Speaker,
William Robert Thomas McCrea, Member of Parliament for Mid-Ulster, was convicted by me at Belfast Petty Sessions on 11 December 1987, of taking part in a public procession, contrary to Article 3 of the Public Order (Northern Ireland) Order 1987. I fined him £20.00, to be paid within 28 days.
As that fine has not been paid Mr. McCrea was today committed to Prison for a period of 7 days.
Yours faithfully
C P McRandal
Resident Magistrate

Dear Mr. Speaker
Ian Richard Kyle Paisley, Member of Parliament for North Antrim, was convicted by me at Belfast Petty Sessions on 11 December 1987, of taking part in a public procession, contrary to Article 3 of the Public Order (Northern Ireland) Order 1987. I fined him £20.00, to be paid within 28 days.
As that fine has not been paid Mr. Paisley was today committed to Prison for a period of 7 days.
Yours faithfully
C P McRandal
Resident Magistrate

Petty Sessions Office,
Courthouse,
Albert Place
Ballymena,
BT43 5BS.
27th January 1988.

Dear Sir,

I have to advise you that the Rev. Ian R. K. Paisley, MP, of North Antrim was convicted at Ballymena Petty Sessions on 11th November 1987 of the undernoted offence:

That he on the 11th April 1987 at Ballymena, in the said District and County Court Division, took part in a public procession in respect of which the requirements of Article 3 of the Public Order (Northern Ireland) Order 1987 as to notice had not been satisfied, contrary to Article 3(5) (*a*) of the Public Order (Northern Ireland) Order 1987.

The Rev. Ian Paisley was fined £15 which was not paid.

On the 23rd December 1987 a Warrant of Default was issued and was executed this afternoon. The Rev. Ian Paisley was lodged in Her Majesty's Prison, Crumlin Road, Belfast, for seven days for non-payment of the said fine.

Yours faithfully,
A. E. Wright,
Clerk of Petty Sessions.

PRIVATE BUSINESS

HASTINGS BOROUGH COUNCIL BILL

Ordered,

That notwithstanding that the Hastings Borough Council Bill was taken into consideration by the Committee on the Bill in the last Session of Parliament before a report from the Attorney General on the Bill had been presented to the House pursuant to paragraph (1) of Standing Order 158 (Bills affecting charities or educational foundations) the proceedings of the Committee be deemed to have been taken in compliance with that Standing Order. — *[The Second Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Oral Answers to Questions

TRANSPORT

Drink-Driving

1. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what evidence he has of the effectiveness of the Government's Christmas and new year anti-drinking and driving campaign.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Peter Bottomley): Preliminary police figures indicate an encouraging 16 per cent. reduction in injury accidents during the holiday period. Full figures are expected later this year.

Mr. Smith: Is my hon. Friend aware that, contrary to recent suggestins on the programme "That's Life", no hon. Member can be in any doubt about my hon. Friend's commitment to tackling the problem of drinking and driving? Does he agree that rather than introduce random breath testing, which would have a disastrous effect on relations between the police and the public, the right way is to influence public attitude and public behaviour? The figures that my hon. Friend has just given show that that policy is proving effective in practice.

Mr. Bottomley: The police have very wide powers. I wish that all the media covering the issue would emphasise those powers. Indeed, 8,000 to 10,000 motorists are caught driving above the legal limit every month, 4,000 of them with twice the legal limit and 20 times more likely to cause accidents. More publicity should be given to the dramatic reductions in injuries. For example, in Gwent the number of fatalities more than halved last year because of co-operative local effort.

Mr. Boyes: I welcome the reduction in accidents, but does the Minister agree that there were far too many accidents at Christmas? Does he also agree with 81 per cent. of the British public who believe that the best solution to the problem is to introduce random breath tests? I hope that 81 per cent. of the British public will sharpen his mind.

Mr. Bottomley: I welcome the hon. Gentleman's sustained interest in combating drinking and driving. The big issue is not whether to introduce random breath testing, but whether we, as drivers, stop drinking and driving; whether we, as hosts, stop encouraging drivers to take alcohol, and whether we, as passengers, decline to be driven by someone who has been drinking.

Mr. Higgins: The large number of drivers injured or killed who are found to have been over the limit suggests that there may be a case for random breath testing. Does my hon. Friend agree that the present situation is unsatisfactory? The House has not voted on random breath testing, yet police officers are using their powers to stop vehicles for no reason and testing drivers who they think may have been drinking. In effect, we have random breath testing now. The House should reconsider this matter and correct that apparent anomaly.

Mr. Bottomley: Although it is not a matter for me, I am sure that many hon. Members would welcome the opportunity for a debate. Perhaps the Opposition will provide the opportunity for a debate on road safety issues to show that no party politics are involved in trying to cut the appalling casualty toll on the roads?

Mr. Tony Lloyd: I welcome the Minister's suggestion that the Opposition should be doing the Government's job, but the truth is that the overwhelming majority of the public believe that random breath testing is the right way to control the abuse of drinking and driving by a small minority. If the Minister does not accept that, will he at least tell us that the advertising campaign carried out before Christmas will be continued throughout the year? The Minister is right. It is important to get across to the public the real damage done by those who drink and drive.

Mr. Bottomley: It would be a mistake to look on bribes to the media, by way of paid advertising, as the only way of raising public awareness. Drinking and driving should be covered as news and current affairs. For example, Scottish Television broadcast five or six half-hour programmes. More of the English and Welsh regions should copy that approach.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Will my hon. Friend take steps to see that when the breathalyser breaks down, as it did in several instances involving some of my constituents, the back-up system is better than it was in those cases? People who were kept at police stations for five or six hours for blood tests were, quite rightly, cross about that.

Mr. Bottomley: That is probably more a matter for the police and the Home Office. It is important to ensure that the victims receive just as much consideration as those who may or may not be offenders.

London City Airport

2. **Mr. Leighton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to receive a report from the Civil Aviation Authority on the future of the London city airport.

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Paul Channon): I am not expecting any such report.

Mr. Leighton: The Secretary of State will be aware of the troubles of the London City airport and of the resentment of many local people to its intrusion and noise. He will also know that an assurance was given that jets would not use the airport. Indeed, that was a condition of planning permission. Is he aware that the operators have already applied for an extension of the runway and are hell-bent on introducing jets? What assurances can he give to the people of Newham that that danger will not be inflicted upon them?

Mr. Channon: If there were any proposal to have jets at London City airport, that would first be a matter for the airport owners. It would involve an entirely new planning application, and no such application has been made.

Mr. Colvin: Will my right hon. Friend acknowledge that some jets flying today are quieter than the turbo-props in operation? As we have a unique facility in the City's STOLport, and a unique aircraft in the British Aerospace 146 that could use it, it seems daft to build a suspension bridge directly under the flight path. I understand that my right hon. Friend has conducted an

inquiry into the construction of that suspension bridge. Will he say when the House may expect to hear the results of that inquiry?

Mr. Channon: I note what my hon. Friend says. I have just received the inspector's report. It will take some time to consider, but we will try to be as speedy as we can. To re-emphasise what I said to the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton), if there were a proposal for these new types of aircraft to use the London City airport, there would have to be a further planning inquiry.

Mr. Spearing: As my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) has pointed out, jets would be unwelcome at the airport. Whether or not jets are used, is the Secretary of State aware that the London docklands railway extension, which will be discussed in Committee shortly, does not go to the airport at all? Is that not an example of the haphazard way in which strategic planning matters are now being dealt with? Does he agree that it would have been better if there had been a strategic planning authority for London, so that problems such as that would not occur?

Mr. Channon: No, Sir. I do not think that there is any evidence that a strategic planning authority, as the hon. Gentleman describes it, would have done any differently. It is true that the railway extension does not go exactly to the airport, but it will be extremely convenient for the airport and it will be widely welcomed by airport users.

Channel Tunnel

3. **Mr. Adley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to have completed his review of Channel tunnel rail infrastructure investment; and if he will make a statement, relating particularly to electrification of the Redhill to Reading line.

Mr. Channon: I assume that my hon. Friend is referring to British Rail's study of the possible need for additional rail capacity to cope with traffic growth after the tunnel opens. I have asked for a report by June. Possible additional use of the Redhill to Reading line is being looked at during the study.

Mr. Adley: I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply. Does he agree that if the regions of this country are to obtain the maximum benefit from the tunnel, we need to be able to get rail traffic round rather than through London? Does he recall that the South-Eastern Railway built the Tonbridge-Redhill-Reading line for the very purpose of a future Channel tunnel more than 100 years ago, that it was kept open by the Beeching proposals against the day when the tunnel would be built, but that so far the Government have refused to sanction the investment in the line for British Rail, so that all the trains will be pushed through central London? Does my right hon. Friend also agree that, compared with what the French are doing, we are in danger of having a penny-pinching railway system and a penny-farthing railway to go with it?

Mr. Channon: I cannot quite agree with my hon. Friend. We have in general terms authorised investment by British Rail in the Channel tunnel project up to about £550 million. British Rail will now have to put detailed appraisals forward for each investment proposal. We are studying what my hon. Friend said about the Redhill-Reading line. Obviously his views will be taken into account, but there may well be better ways of doing it than the Redhill-Reading line. Just because it was suitable in the middle of the 19th century does not mean that it will be the best proposal at this stage. However, I do not rule it out. We will study it during the next few months.

Mrs. Ray Mitchie: Will the review of rail infrastructure include consideration of the reopening of Freightliner depots, particularly the three that were closed in Scotland fairly recently?

Mr. Channon: The question whether such a depot should be opened depends on whether it would be commercially worth while and whether British Rail could show that it would provide a reasonable return. I do not think that the study will specifically include that subject, but I shall write to the hon. Lady.

Mr. Simon Coombs: Will my right hon. Friend remind the House of the number of jobs so far created as a result of the Channel tunnel project? Will he also remind himself from time to time of the advantages of the Reading to Redhill link for the western region, while remembering at the same time the difficulty of the connection between electrification and the diesel operation of the western region?

Mr. Channon: My hon. Friend raises a very important point. If we electrify the Redhill to Reading line, we have to decide what happens beyond Reading — *[Interruption.]* The connecting lines beyond Reading are not electrified either. The matter is more complicated than it might seem, although we are certainly examining it.

A reasonable estimate is that about 3,000 jobs will be involved in the building of the tunnel. Furthermore, there will be an enormous spin-off of prosperity and jobs when the Channel tunnel is the great success that I am sure it will be.

Mr. Barry Jones: If the Channel tunnel is to provide a great stimulus to the rail industry, may I ask whether the right hon. Gentleman has any plans for electrifying the Crewe to Holyhead rail line? Does he understand that our unemployment problems would be greatly assisted by such investment?

Mr. Channon: I admire the hon. Gentleman's ingenuity. However, we are not planning a tunnel under the Irish sea as yet; perhaps that will come. I do not think that British Rail has proposed what the hon. Gentleman has in mind, but the Government have never turned down any worthwhile investment proposal put forward by British Rail.

Mr. Sackville: Will my right hon. Friend remember that many of us have supported the Channel tunnel principle on the assumption that his Department will do everything possible to ensure that the benefits accrue not only to the south-east but to the whole of Britain? Will he therefore ensure that there is a proper through rail link between the north of England and our major European markets?

Mr. Channon: I entirely understand my hon. Friend's view, and I agree with him. I am convinced, as are the majority of hon. Members, that there will be considerable benefits to all parts of the country. Indeed, that applies to what is already happening. Materials are coming from firms in the north-east and Scotland, and that is important

in itself. British Rail is required by the Channel Tunnel Bill to prepare a plan setting out its service proposals, including proposals for through services to all other parts of the country. It is too early to say what the pattern of services will be. Widespread consultation will have to take place in the preparation of the plan, but my hon. Friend has made an extremely important point.

Bus Deregulation

4. **Mr. Hood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what new funds have been made available to local authorities as compensation for the extra expenditure caused by bus deregulation; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. David Mitchell): Deregulation has resulted in a substantial overall reduction in expenditure, so there is no need for extra funds.

Mr. Hood: Is the Minister aware that since deregulation the elderly and disabled in rural communities have become virtual prisoners? Is he further aware that, as a result of the Government's obsession with selling off transport to the quick buck merchants, our rural communities are being caused much stress and concern? Does he understand that, by refusing to give proper financial assistance to local authorities, the Government are compounding a great crisis in our rural communities?

Mr. Mitchell: If the hon. Gentleman considers the facts, he will find that the position is somewhat different. Local authorities are responsible for providing services for the disabled. Questions about bus services in Scotland should, of course, be directed to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland. However, I understand that, following deregulation, the need for bus subsidies in Scotland has fallen by more than £10 million, and that should provide ample funds for the services required.

Mr. Butler: Is my hon. Friend aware that ratepayers in Cheshire have been saved £2 million a year? Should we not be praising bus deregulation and the savings achieved all over the country?

Mr. Mitchell: My hon. Friend is undoubtedly correct in what he says about Cheshire. The House may be interested to know that across the country as a whole the saving is about £40 million a year for hard-pressed ratepayers and taxpayers. If one includes the savings from precept control, the figure is somewhat in excess of £100 million.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Will the Minister study the evidence produced by Grampian regional council, which is typical for authorities throughout the country? In eight months last year there were 300 different service changes. The service to rural areas is crumbling rapidly and the director of finance has forecast a crisis unless the Government assist with finance to the area. Is that not the pattern throughout the whole country? Will the Minister publish the evidence instead of relying on homilies on anecdotal evidence, which he appears to repeat from time to time?

Mr. Mitchell: There is nothing anecdotal about the savings which I have just reported to the House and which in Scotland amount to more than £10 million. That provides the local authorities concerned with the resources to provide services in rural areas as may be required. If there are changes in the pattern of services, it may be that the services are more closely resembling what people want rather than simply being what they were before.

Mr. Holt: Will my hon. Friend note that the county of Cleveland now has improved services and a £4 million reduction in the money taken from ratepayer's pockets before deregulation? In view of the announcement by Cleveland county council of a 30p increase in rates this year, which is scandalous, I hope that my hon. Friend can find something else to deregulate.

Mr. Mitchell: I do not have power to control what happens in Cleveland, but well over 60 per cent. of the money previously spent on providing subsidies for bus services in the county has now been saved.

Section 8 Grants

5. **Mr. Murphy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he is satisfied with the operation of the section 8 grant system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Murphy: Does the Secretary of State agree that the total expenditure on section 8 grants in declining? As a result of that, will he agree to initiate an inquiry into the system, bearing in mind the need to liberalise the provisions and the great exuberance that we have heard this afternoon about the possibility of the Channel tunnel?

Mr. Channon: I see no evidence for an inquiry. Since 1979, 126 grants have been awarded, amounting to £47 million. About 35 million tonnes of freight are removed from the roads each year by the scheme. Naturally, we continue to see whether there are ways of speeding up the process or of simplifying the administration of the grants, but I see no reason for an inquiry. The system is working well.

M25 Motorway

6. **Sir John Biggs-Davison:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measurements have been taken to assess the overall noise rise (L10 and L90) that has occurred on the M25; when and where they were taken; and what further measurements are proposed in the vicinity of the Theydon Garnon interchange.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Noise levels near the M25 were calculated by the prediction method set out in the Department of the Environment's publication, "Calculation of Road Traffic Noise". Additional noise surveys were carried out in 1985 on the A10-M11 section, in my hon. Friend's constituency, and in 1986 on the Wisley to Reigate section. No further measurements are planned at the M11-M25 Theydon Garnon interchange.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: Have not the predicted noise levels been exceeded, to the distress of my constituents? May fresh consideration be given in the Department to an acoustic barrier, a noise resistant road surface and the planting of more trees?

Mr. Bottomley: I should like to continue to consider some of those matters, but I do not think that the expensive work can be agreed to. Perhaps I can write to my hon. Friend.

Mr. McCrindle: To endorse the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Sir J. Biggs-Davison), will my hon. Friend the Minister pay particular attention to the noise emitting from motorway surfaces? I do not know whether that is peculiar to this stretch of motorway, but there is no doubt that that seems to contribute, perhaps disappropriately, to the trouble suffered by his constituents and mine.

Mr. Bottomley: I understand these genuine anxieties. I am advised that any given level of skid resistance, which is important on motorways — concrete and bitumen surfaces have the same noise characteristics — is undergoing further research.

East Coast Main Line

7. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he next expects to discuss east coast main line services with the chairman of British Rail.

Mr. David Mitchell: My right hon. Friend plans to meet the chairman on 11 February and discuss a wide range of issues.

Mr. Beith: Now that it has become clear that it would be possible, after electrification, to run overnight and sleeper services to Tyneside and the Borders without deficit, and that it may be possible to devise a much cheaper compromise even before then, will the Secretary of State use his good offices to encourage the chairman of British Rail to seek a compromise on this matter?

Mr. Mitchell: The hon. Gentleman knows that these are commercial decisions for British Rail. I have already asked the chairman for his view on the points that the hon. Gentleman has raised with me in recent correspondence. Custom has fallen away and, at Berwick-upon-Tweed—I think the hon. Gentleman's station—on average, only two passengers a night in each direction use the service. The hon. Gentleman may be one of them. Keeping the service going for another three years would lose British Rail about £1 million.

Dr. Thomas: I welcome the investment on the east coast line. Will the Minister consider the impact of improvements of the east coast service on the west coast service from Scotland and on the Holyhead connection? Will he give an assurance that, at some stage, electrification of that service will be planned as well?

Mr. Mitchell: I have received no proposal from British Rail for electrification to Holyhead. Several west coast services will be improved as a result of changes that British Rail is introducing.

Mr. Snape: Does the Minister feel that deficiencies in the east coast service are behind the latest criticism of British Rail from those Left-wing malcontents in the City of London who are complaining that those deficiencies are having an adverse effect on the balance of payments? Would it not be a good idea if, instead of reading a brief prepared by civil servants every three weeks, the Minister and the Secretary of State left their chauffeur-driven cars at home for one week and suffered the same misery as everyone else?

Mr. Mitchell: I have to inform the hon. Gentleman that both the Secretary of State and I are frequent users of the railway system. Moreover, we are considering the City group's report. Ministers have approved substantial investment by British Rail and London Underground Ltd. to improve services and relieve overcrowding. For example, nearly £60 million was approved for new rolling stock for the Great Eastern lines, nearly £18 million was approved for the Bedford to St. Pancras line and £75 million was approved for the tube. It is for British Rail to propose investments. We have approved all investments that it has put before us. I shall be very happy to have my in-tray filled again.

Drink-Driving

8. **Mr. Robert B. Jones** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on reductions in drinking and driving since 1978.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Responses to surveys indicate a substantial reduction in the number of people who risk drinking and driving, possibly as much as 50 per cent. between 1978 and 1986. The figures show a downward trend in drink-drive injury accidents, from 20,352 in 1978 to 18,254 in 1986.

The General Accident Gallup survey of 18 December 1987 indicated that the proportion of male drivers prepared to risk drink driving over the limit halved between 1986 and 1987.

Mr. Jones: Although those figures are welcome, they show that many people are still drinking and driving, so there is much still to do.

May I make two suggestions? First, many of my constituents complain to me that non-alcoholic beer is still not available in many pubs. Will my hon. Friend suggest to the breweries, when he meets them concerning these matters, that they should be more co-operative?

Secondly, does my hon. Friend think that it is wrong that the 10-year rule should apply to people who have more than one conviction for drunken driving? It is a serious offence, so should they not automatically have a major disqualification on the second conviction, even if it is more than 10 years after the first one?

Mr. Bottomley: The brewers are doing a great deal to promote drivers drinking non-alcoholic drinks or to encourage people to make other transport arrangements after drinking alcohol. I encourage more people to join The Brewers Society's "Wheelwatch" campaign and to copy a good brewery, Charles Wells of Bedford, which has made non-alcoholic beer available on draught.

My hon. Friend's second point would tempt me to get back into my quotations from "The Mikado", which tend to get me into trouble.

Mr. Tony Banks: Has the Minister tasted the non-alcoholic wine available in the House? I can assure him that it is absolutely disgusting and is no disincentive to take alcohol. Will he say whether there has been a correlation in London between the fall in drinking and driving offences and free transport on London Regional Transport? Would it not be a good thing to have free transport throughout the country and throughout the year, so that we could do away with the problem of drinking and driving?

Mr. Bottomley: It is worth noting that almost 500 people a year die on the roads in London. Obviously, the more journeys that can be made on public transport, which is dramatically safer than using the roads, the better.

That is why the great increase in passenger journeys on London Regional Transport, since it was taken away from the hon. Gentleman, is to be welcomed.

Non-alcoholic drinks can improve, but there are the traditional soft drinks, as well as the new non-alcoholic and very low-alcohol drinks.

Mr. David Martin: Bearing in mind that a reduction in drinking and driving offences is particularly sought at Christmas and over the new year, and that public transport increases the opportunities for not driving, will my hon. Friend, if he speaks to British Rail about commercial matters, raise the matter of the advisability of services being restored to Boxing day this year and in future years?

Mr. Bottomley: I am sure that British Rail will bear in mind my hon. Friend's comments when making commercial decisions. It is important to make all forms of transport as reasonably safe as possible. Although I am occasionally willing to wear sackcloth and ashes for appearing to be hysterical, I am sure that most hon. Members support the drop in drinking and driving casualties from 1,500 eight years ago to under 1,000 now. We hope that they will drop to virtually zero.

Dial-A-Ride

9. **Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he plans to increase funding for Dial-a-Ride services.

Mr. David Mitchell: How much to spend on this or other forms of transport for disabled people is a matter for the local authority in the area concerned.

Mr. Morley: Does the Minister support the extension of dial-a-ride schemes to other parts of the country, particularly rural areas? Does he also accept that it should be the objective of such schemes to give the people involved a journey at least once a week? How do the Government justify the freezing of the present grant to the London dial-a-ride schemes?

Mr. Mitchell: Provision for the disabled in Scunthorpe is provided by the Age Concern minibus and the social service car scheme. The introduction of a dial-a-ride scheme in the area is a matter for the local authority. In many parts of the country local authorities have made such enormous savings, following bus deregulation, that they have the resources to spend on that particular form of service for the disabled, if they want to. The London figure for this year has been increased by the level of inflation, but we believe that much more can be secured by better use of resources.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: Bearing in mind my hon. Friend's comment that existing resources can be better used, does he accept that many people are not yet able to use dial-a-ride because they simply cannot get through to it and that, therefore, we do not know how many people are still trapped in their own homes? Will my hon. Friend consider sympathetically other earmarked requests—for instance, for a new telephone exchange for London dial-a-ride, which would do a substantial amount to promote better use of the facilities?

Mr. Mitchell: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for drawing attention to the difficulty that some people have in making contact with the dial-a-ride services in London, and I shall consider his point about the telephone.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Will the Minister take account of the powerful alliance of the two Robert Hugheses in the House on Dial-a-Ride? Does he accept the effectiveness of Dial-a-Ride and the benefit that it provides to disabled people, especially elderly women? Does he agree that we should aim for one trip a week for those who need the services, not one trip in 11 weeks, and will he use every effort, including the provision of money, and his considerable influence to increase and improve Dial-a-Ride schemes throughout Britain?

Mr. Mitchell: The dial-a-ride services that are currently available are insufficient to meet all the transport needs of those who depend upon them. Neither the costs nor the assumptions that underlie the one trip a week campaign are entirely accurate or realistic. But I am not unsympathetic to the alliance across the House, which wishes adequate resources to be given to the scheme, and I want to see the good use of those resources.

Greater Manchester Light Rapid Transport System

10. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent representations he has received on the proposed Greater Manchester light rapid transport system.

Mr. David Mitchell: I have received several representations in favour of the proposed Greater Manchester light rapid transit system, and about the desirability of bringing in private finance. I made an announcement about the Government's position on 18 January.

Mr. Favell: Will my hon. Friend ensure that the private sector has majority control of the operating company? Attractive though the scheme may be, it is important to ensure that it does not become a drain on Greater Manchester ratepayers and on the public purse as a whole.

Mr. Mitchell: I can reassure my hon. Friend. Private sector participation should mean rapid construction of the system, and since the private sector will be operating it, we can reasonably expect it to be operated efficiently.

Mr. Litherland: Does the Minister agree that had it not been for obstruction by the hon. Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell), this marvellous initiative from a Labour-controlled authority would have come to fruition much earlier, to the benefit of millions in the region?

Mr. Mitchell: In historical fact, the hon. Gentleman is wrong. I understand that my hon. Friend the Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell) was anxious that there should be a private sector contribution and that the entire burden should not be borne by ratepayers. That is what is proposed in the scheme that will go forward with the approval of the passenger transport authority.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: Is my hon. Friend aware that that decision was widely welcomed in Greater Manchester? Does he agree that it will mean a big improvement in public transport in Greater Manchester, especially when taken in conjunction with the announcement last year on the Windsor link? Does he have more good news for Greater Manchester?

Mr. Mitchell: We always keep an eye on the needs of Greater Manchester and the north-west in general. My hon. Friend is right to call the scheme a big potential improvement. Last Saturday in Manchester I spoke to

several people who were pleased that the scheme was coming, and I have no doubt that when I visit Manchester next Friday for the Transport 2000 conference I shall hear the same thing.

British Rail Engineering Ltd.

11. **Mrs. Dunwoody:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has held with the chairman of British Rail about the future size of the work force in British Rail Engineering Ltd.

14. **Mr. Anderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has held with the chairman of British Rail about the future size of the work force in British Rail Engineering Ltd.

Mr. David Mitchell: My right hon. Friend discussed BREL's future with the British Rail chairman last November. He then made a statement to the House announcing approval for British Rail to offer the company for sale. Employment at BREL is a management matter for the company and, until it is sold, for the British Railways Board.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Did the Minister accept that part of the British Rail corporate plan which said that the work force of BREL should be reduced to 4,000? If he did, does he intend that the privatised units will have the full right to tender for any work that is handed out by British Rail, or was it just a way of scrapping thousands of engineering jobs, with complete disregard for the interests of people such as my constituents?

Mr. Mitchell: British Rail Engineering Ltd. has no plans for more major redundancies before the sale takes place, which will confine the loss of jobs to the 3,000 redundancies announced last September. As for the second part of the hon. Lady's question, the purchasers of the company will decide for which contracts to tender.

Mr. Anderson: Will the Minister confirm that, in spite of grossly overcrowded trains and frequent cancellations due to defective stock, he and his colleagues see no future for BREL? Will he take on board the fact that up to 3,500 jobs could be created over a two-year period in BREL merely by putting one extra carriage on each commuter train leaving the London termini at peak hours? Is he concerned about the prospect of positive job creation through BREL?

Mr. Mitchell: There are certain practical difficulties about adding an extra coach to all the trains, as the platforms would have to be lengthened, too. British Rail is responsible for its own investment proposals, which it puts to Ministers. Ministers have approved all proposals that have come forward from British Rail, and the reductions in the labour force at BREL are a result of a fall in repair and maintenance work, much of which is a result of new investment in rolling stock, leading to fewer repair requirements.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Security

74. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will provide a further update of the costs so far incurred in the "Spycatcher" case, and in all other cases in which Her Majesty's Government are a party, and which involve the restraint of publication of security-related information.

The Attorney-General (Sir Patrick Mayhew): In the "Spycatcher" litigation the total amount of costs expended to date by the Government is about £575,000. The total expenditure to date on other current cases relating to the duty of confidentiality is about £9,000.

Mr. Winnick: It is all a waste of money. Will the Attorney-General state whether in any of these cases it was the Government's position that members of the security service could carry out criminal activities without any action being taken against them? Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman aware that the lack of any effective parliamentary scrutiny of the security service is not only wrong in itself, but is undoubtedly a blot on our democracy?

The Attorney-General: The contention in the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question was never put forward on behalf of the Government. I might remind the House usefully of what was said by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary in a written answer the other day:

"At no time have the Government asserted that any of the alleged actions which have featured in recent newspaper articles could lawfully be done under the prerogative when they would otherwise be criminal offences." — [*Official Report*, 29 January 1988; Vol. 126, c. 397.]

The second part of the hon. Gentleman's question is not a matter for me.

Mr. Warren: How is it that people such as Wright and Cavendish can flout our law and apparently publish what they want with no action taken against them? Is there no jurisdiction over them?

The Attorney-General: Mr. Wright and Mr. Cavendish are rather separate considerations. Mr. Wright is outside the jurisdiction, but action has been taken in the courts in Australia. In the case of Mr. Cavendish, civil proceedings have been taken in England and Scotland.

Mr. Beith: When will the "Spycatcher" farce end? As the Government's actions seem to have led to the enrichment of Mr. Wright, how does it uphold the confidentiality of members of the security services to continue them? As the information contained in his book is now widely available throughout the world, is not the effect to keep from the British people information that they can obtain only with adverse consequences for our balance of payments?

The Attorney-General: My answer to the last part of the question must be the same as it has been for many months. It is important to uphold the duty of confidentiality—that has now become common ground in the litigation. Mr. Justice Scott in his judgment at first instance on the question whether the injunction should be made permanent said:

"Mr. Wright was in flagrant breach of the lifelong duty of confidence owed to the Crown."

We must consider whether we should stand back and allow someone in that position to publish in this country, which must be the most profitable market, with all the consequences for the liaison security services of our allies that would follow.

It is not right to describe all this as a farce. It is a matter of serious import, and it is still before the Court of Appeal.

Mr. Stokes: Would it be possible for my right hon. and learned Gentleman to provide a further update of the costs so far incurred in the "Spycatcher" case by unnecessary and tedious questions from Members of Her Majesty's Opposition, and in particular from the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick)?

The Attorney-General: I never complain that the questions are asked, but I sometimes complain about the reception that the answers receive.

Mr. John Morris: May I ask the Attorney-General whether the Treasury has suggested that there should be a cash limit to this worldwide litigious rampage by the Government? Since there is considerable anxiety that the present Legal Aid Bill will result in furthering a second-class service for ordinary litigants, will the right hon. Gentleman publish a table of the fees paid in this case and compare it with legal aid fees so that we shall have an idea of what constitutes fair remuneration?

The Attorney-General: The last time that I was asked about costs I said that I thought the money was well spent. I remain of that view. Of course the Treasury will welcome it if the Government's litigation is ultimately successful. For example, the Government's claim for an account of the profits would substantially reduce the net outlay. The right hon. and learned Gentleman asked a rather omnibus question about legal aid. As he knows, that is a matter for the Lord chancellor. It is not my practice to publish fees that are paid to individual members of the Bar or to solicitors.

Jurors and Witnesses (Costs)

75. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Attorney-General what plans he has to review the maximum expenses and loss of earnings claimable by *(a)* jurors and *(b)* witnesses.

The Solicitor-General (Sir Nicholas Lyell): The maximum limits on expenses and compensation for loss of earnings reimbursed to jurors and witnesses are reviewed annually in accordance with Treasury guidelines. The maximum compensation for loss of earnings was increased from £25·40 to £27·50 per day in October 1987 for witnesses and in November 1987 for jurors. The levels of other expenses, including, for example, subsistence payments, were also increased at various times during 1987.

Mr. Bowis: At the time of the next review, will my hon. and learned Friend pay particular attention to the burden on the self-employed and on the agency or temporary worker of performing this community service as a witness or juror?

The Solicitor-General: No distinction is made between those who are employed and those who are self-employed. Increases are made by reference to increases in national average earnings.

Director of Public Prosecutions

76. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Attorney-General when he last met the Director of Public Prosecutions; and what subjects were discussed.

The Attorney-General: I last met the director on Friday 29 January. We discussed matters relating to the Crown Prosecution Service.

Mr. Janner: Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman expect to discuss with the director that peculiarly offensive and evil document known as *Holocaust News?* In particular, has he considered counsel's opinion that the perpetrators of this document are in breach of the law and should be prosecuted? Can we expect action from the Attorney or the director, or from both, and if not, why not?

The Attorney-General: It so happens that that extremely unpleasant publication to which the hon. and learned Gentleman refers was among the subjects that I discussed with the director on Friday. He and I have both considered the opinions of Mr. Beloff QC, and also of first senior prosecuting counsel to the Treasury. The director and I remain of the view that there should be no prosecution.

Mr. Aitken: When my right hon. and learned Friend advises the Director of Public Prosecutions that a prosecution is not in the public interest, what, precisely, are the criteria on which he bases his advice? May I ask him to expand on his statement to the House on Monday by saying how he decides on priority between, say, the public interest in maintaining the operational secrets of MI5, the public interest in avoiding a breakdown in Anglo-Irish relations and the public interest in upholding the rule of law? How and why does he choose?

The Attorney-General: I shall answer in general terms the question about my general criteria, but I do not think that the question about *Holocaust News* relates to Ireland. Having satisfied myself that the evidence is sufficient to justify proceedings, I then consider whether in any particular cases the public interest requires a prosecution. Each case is judged on its own facts and with special regard to the circumstances, both of the alleged offence and of the alleged offender, and to any other considerations affecting public policy. This is simply an application of long-established principles previously endorsed by the Attorney-General's guidelines on the criteria for prosecution now reproduced in the code for Crown prosecutors issued pursuant to the Prosecution of Offences Act 1985.

Mr. John Morris: Will the Attorney-General clarify the statement that he made last Monday concerning the responsibility for the decision on whether it is in the national interest to prosecute? Will he confirm that that decision is for him alone, and that if, in his view, it is not in the national interest to prosecute, that is the end of the matter and the DPP has no role other than to implement his decision?

The Attorney-General: The right hon. and learned Gentleman knows very well that that is not the case. If he has studied the code for Crown prosecutors, he will know that, in every prosecution decision, it must be asked whether the public interest requires a prosecution, even if the evidence is sufficient and the other criteria are met. In cases in which the DPP is the prosecuting authority, and does not seek the consent of the Attorney-General, that process must be carried through by the DPP. In a case in which I must give my consent—for example, under the Race Relations Act 1976—the responsibility is mine. The hon. and learned Gentleman will remember that the matter was fully dealt with by my predecessor in a written answer a year or two ago.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Aid Budget

80. **Miss Mowlam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the value in current prices of official aid flows by Her Majesty's Government in 1979 and for the latest available year.

The Minister for Overseas Development (Mr. Chris Patten): In 1986 prices, gross public expenditure on overseas aid was £1,623 million in 1979 and £1,358 million in 1986.

Miss Mowlam: In view of the poor record that the Minister has reported to the House, does he accept that there is a case for raising the total level of aid, particularly in view of the billions locked up in the Treasury, which his Government are unprepared to spend elsewhere—even on the National Health Service?

Mr. Patten: As for our record, as the hon. Lady will know, the Labour Government left a number of public expenditure programmes in 1979 which they could not conceivably have sustained at the then current levels. If the hon. Lady does not believe that, perhaps she should read the autobiography of the former Chief Secretary to the Treasury.

As for the future, I am sure that the hon. Lady will be pleased to know that our aid programme is set to grow in real terms over the next three years.

Mr. Jack: Will my hon. Friend tell us whether any of the flows of aid finance went to Panama in respect of programmes to counter international concern that the destruction of the country's rain forests may be affecting the future of the Panama canal?

Mr. Patten: That is the first question that I have ever been asked about Panama. I am delighted to say that we have been able to make contributions towards the protection of rain forests in other countries. I do not believe that we have yet done anything in Panama, but I shall look up the details for my hon. Friend. We do a fair amount in Central America through the European Community programmes.

Sir Russell Johnston: The Minister is continually defending the Government's record on aid. Surely, however, a proper criterion is comparison with other countries. Is it not a matter of some concern to the Minister that the recent OECD figures demonstrate that the Soviet Union has now passed us in the proportion of its national income that is spent on aid?

Mr. Patten: I have not always been as convinced by the figures produced by the Soviet Union as the hon. Gentleman clearly is.

Miss Mowlam: Look at the OECD figures. The Government usually accept them as a correct record.

Mr. Patten: According to the OECD figures—which greatly impressed me, and I am sure that the hon. Member for Redcar (Miss Mowlam) will be impressed as well—whereas about 60 per cent. of the money provided by other donors goes to the poorest countries, the United Kingdom figure is 75 per cent.

Mr. Soames: I congratulate my hon. Friend on the handsome progress that he has made on the aid budget. Will he tell the House what steps he and his Department are taking to discourage some of the countries to which we give large amounts of aid from some of their more lunatic financial excesses?

Mr. Patten: As my hon. Friend may know, we have given increasing amounts of support to the structural adjustment programmes being pursued by a number of African and other countries. We have also made a substantial contribution to the enhanced structural adjustment facility, which will encourage developing countries to follow sensible policies.

Ms. Lestor: May I refer back to the answer that the Minister gave my hon. Friend the Member for Redcar (Miss Mowlam) on the level of aid? The Minister has suggested that the Labour Government, had they continued in office, would not have been able to sustain the plans that they had in the coffers. Bearing that in mind—and in view of the Bill proposed by my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) stressing the need for a timetable to reach the United Nations target of 0·7 per cent. of gross national product for aid, and the various calls on the aid budget—will the hon. Gentleman put pressure on the Foreign Secretary to have an open debate in the House of Commons, in Government time, to discuss the aid budget and future Government allocations to it?

Mr. Patten: That sort of question is more normally put on Thursday afternoons, but I shall always be more than happy to have a debate on our overseas aid programme, during which I can tell the House about several matters, for example, the Chancellor's debt initiative.

Sugar Producers

81. **Mr. Barnes** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any further plans to increase aid to Third world nations who depend on sugar production for their livelihood to enable them to diversify and increase their food production; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: I am always ready to consider proposals from sugar-producing countries to use the aid available to them to help diversify their economies and increase efficient domestic food production. We already provide that kind of help.

Mr. Barnes: Is the Minister aware that the EEC is dumping sugar on world markets and that that has a catastrophic effect on sugar production in the Third world? The World Development Movement estimates that 12 million workers are dependent upon sugar for their livelihood. Wages in the Philippines are only 35p a day for sugar workers, and great disruption is being caused by EEC policies. In addition to working for a new international sugar agreement, will the Minister consult the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, with a view to bringing about a change in EEC beet production policy so that dumping on world markets will not continue?

Mr. Patten: I have read the interesting literature produced by the World Development Movement. Of course, extra sugar production is not a unique European Community problem. In recognition of that fact, the Community has tabled proposals in the GATT Uruguay

round for urgent measures to improve the world sugar market, including a reduction in the amounts that are placed on the market by major exporters.

Mr. Wells: Is it true also that it is important to maintain the support price for 1·4 million tonnes of sugar imported into the country and that, indeed, there is now an opportunity to increase imports to Europe at the support price by increasing the amount that Portugal accepts from ACP countries? Will my hon. Friend support such a move?

Mr. Patten: We shall have several opportunities to discuss the issues as we start on the next round of negotiations under Lomé. The Government remain fully committed to the maintenance of guaranteed access for ACP sugar under the Lomé convention.

Mr. Spearing: Does the Minister agree that access alone is not enough and that the price referred to by the hon. Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) is important? Does he agree also that if the EEC is to discharge its moral responsibilities to ACP states, price and refiners' margins are equally important, and that we should reduce the surpluses to which my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) referred?

Mr. Patten: The hon. Gentleman will have several opportunities to ask that question of the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Food Aid Programme

82. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs if he will raise at the next meeting of the EEC Council of Ministers the report of the Court of Auditors on the operation of the food aid programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Council's working group on food aid has discussed the report. It agreed that the new procedures that were introduced in 1987 should help the European Community in future to avoid many of the serious problems listed by the Court of Auditors.

Mr. Taylor: Does my hon. Friend agree that the report showed that there was massive waste and corruption, that aid for starving people was arriving a year late, and that some food was rotten and inedible and, in one case radioactive? Does he believe that the best way of stopping taxpayers' money being wasted in such an appalling way is to say on 12 February that there will be no additional funds to the Common Market until such scandalous waste at the expense of starving people is stopped?

Mr. Patten: I am sure my hon. Friend recognises that the report to which he referred concerned the management of food aid that went on before we helped to secure the reform of the regulations during our presidency of the Development Council. The auditors' report confirmed the good sense of the reforms that we pushed through the Development Council.

Tanzania

83. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to make further aid available to Tanzania.

Mr. Chris Patten: I have just returned from Tanzania, where I announced a new pledge of £20 million of fast-spending balance of payments support. This will be part of the World Bank's new initiative for co-ordinating such aid for poor, debt-distressed countries in sub-Saharan Africa that are following adjustment programmes. It brings our pledges in support of Tanzania's economic recovery programme since August 1986, when it reached an agreement with the IMF, to over £70 million.

Mr. Greenway: I congratulate my hon. Friend on our aid to Third world countries. Will he take account of the figures given last week that there will be 1 million AIDS sufferers worldwide by 1990, a substantial number of whom will come from Tanzania and elsewhere in Africa? They are posing a threat not only to the continent of Africa but to Britain and Europe. What will his Department do to alleviate this problem?

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the importance of this issue. While I was in Tanzania, I announced a contribution of £1·5 million, to be made through the World Health Organisation, to help with the Tanzanian AIDS control programme.

Ethiopia

84. **Mr. Barron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further consideration has been given to the appeal by United Nations agencies for emergency aid for Ethiopia; and what response has been made.

Mr. Chris Patten: As I have already informed the House, we are providing £2 million in response to the United Nations disaster relief co-ordinator's request for assistance with an emergency food airlift in Ethiopia.

I have also now decided to provide £600,000 to the United Nations Children's Fund Ethiopia appeal.

Mr. Barron: I congratulate the Minister on responding to the United Nations Children's Fund. On 30 November I asked him to do so and he said he would consider the matter. He has taken a long time. Is he satisfied that the grant is enough, given the difficult position of children in Ethiopia?

Mr. Patten: I thought that it was important to see the position in Ethiopia for myself, which I have now done twice, the second time briefly. Our contribution to the UNICEF appeal is the joint third equal of other national donors. The hon. Gentleman should recognise that that contribution should be added to the £35 million that we have made available so far for humanitarian assistance with the consequences of the present drought.

Britoil

3.31 pm

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East): *(by private notice)*: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if, following the acquisition by BP of the majority shareholding in Britoil, he will make a statement on how he proposes to use the special share to preserve the independence of the company.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Nigel Lawson): The Atlantic Richfield Company, Arco, has now formally agreed to sell its 24 per cent. holding in Britoil to BP. Taken with its existing holding of 29·8 per cent., this would give BP nearly 54 per cent.of Britoil's ordinary shares. How many more shares it acquires depends on the response to its increased offer.

In the circumstances which have now arisen, the Government will be discussing the situation with BP and with Britoil. These discussions will, of course, be without prejudice to the decision by my right hon. and noble Friend, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, in the light of advice to him from the Director General of Fair Trading, on whether the acquisition should be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

The House will understand that in advance of these discussions it would not be sensible for me to give details of the outcome which I have in mind. But I can reaffirm that the powers of the special share will be used for so long as it is in the national interest to do so. We shall, of course, take fully into account what is best for Scotland and for the development of the North sea.

Mr. Smith: Is it not clear to everyone that BP now has effective control of Britoil, and that unless the Government use the special share Britoil will cease to be an independent company?

Does the Chancellor recollect, when he was Secretary of State for Energy, saying:

"The very existence of these powers"—

the special share—

"will act as the most formidable deterrent to anyone who tries to take over control of the board, of the company or of the majority of its shares, and who the Government consider to be unacceptable." [*Official Report*, 31 March 1982; Vol. 21, c. 334.]

Will the Chancellor describe how BP was affected by that "formidable deterrent", as, in pursuit of Britoil, it has acted as if the Chancellor's specially devised protection simply did not exist?

Will the right hon. Gentleman give a straight answer to the question: is BP acceptable or unacceptable to the Government? Does he recollect another assurance that was given to the House by the then Minister of State, now Lord Gray of Contin, who said:

"The articles will contain effective safeguards for Britoil's independence and the safeguards will be triggered if there is an attempt to take over voting control of the company or to control the Britoil board or its composition." — [*Official Report*, 1 April 1982; Vol. 21, c. 450.]

In the light of those assurances given by and on behalf of the Chancellor, what will he now do to honour them? Surely his only course is to say now, emphatically, that he will use his special share to maintain Britoil as a wholly independent company, as independent in every way as it was before the BP bid was lodged. If the right hon. Gentleman does not do that, but produces some cobbled-together deal garlanded with more assurances, he will have engaged in a dishonourable retreat from specific guarantees given to the House. If that happens, will it not prove that, once again, privatisation leads to the bolstering of monopoly?

Does the right hon. Gentleman appreciate that this company is the largest publicly quoted company in Scotland and that the obliteration of its independence would be a severe blow to the west of Scotland and to the dispersal of corporate headquarters throughout the country? Is it not time that the Chancellor cleared the whole matter up and made it crystal clear that the special share will be used to achieve the national objectives which he advertised some years ago?

Mr. Lawson: I have made the position crystal clear. I am glad that the right hon. and learned Gentleman has quoted from what I said nearly six years ago on Report on the Oil and Gas (Enterprise) Bill, and I am especially glad that he quoted column 334. I point out that Britoil has enjoyed complete independence for some five years since it was privatised.

I shall again read—the House should pay attention—the quotation from *Hansard*, accurately read by the right hon. and learned Gentleman, when I said:

"The very existence of these powers will act as the most formidable deterrent to anyone who tries to take over control of the board, of the company or of the majority of its shares, and who the Government consider to be unacceptable."

I shall read two further quotations, since the right hon. and learned Gentleman is interested. I said:

"We wanted to create effective safeguards which would enable the Government to prevent any unacceptable change in the future control of the company".

I said:

"We have given, as has BNOC and its advisers, considerable thought to the articles to ensure that they are an effective means of protecting Britoil's independence against unacceptable changes in control." — [*Official Report*, 31 March 1982; Vol. 21, c. 333-4.]

It was quite clear from the beginning that the possibility of an acceptable change in control existed.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman asked me whether control by BP would be acceptable. That depends on the outcome of the discussions which we shall have. That is precisely what they are about.

It is strange to have the right hon. and learned Gentleman treating BP as though it were some kind of pariah. I should like to read what he said in the House on 29 October 1987, barely three months ago, about the share offer and BP. The right hon. and learned Gentleman said:

"Is it not the case that the first victim will be BP, Britain's largest company? . . . Is it not clear that BP will suffer . . . I regard it as a matter of grave seriousness for BP and this country.

The interests of BP have been cast aside". — [*Official Report*, 29 October 1983; Vol. 121, c. 541.]

The right hon. and learned Gentleman's schizophrenia is such as to make his remarks today totally valueless.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Tell us about the Kuwaitis' nationalisation.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member must not keep interrupting from a sedentary position.

Sir Michael Shaw (Scarborough): Is not the outcome, so far, of this affair entirely satisfactory? The foreign bidder has been deterred and Britoil remains British. Is that not the object of the exercise?

Mr. Lawson: My hon. Friend makes a very important and pertinent point.

Mr. Bruce Millan (Glasgow, Govan): Why can we not have straight answers to our questions? Is BP unacceptable, or not? It is certainly wholly unacceptable to the staff and management of Britoil. Why does not the Chancellor say that, as part of his objectives in any discussions—about which we are suspicious—that he may have with BP, at the very least he wants Britoil to remain an independently managed company and the head office and corporate functions to remain in Scotland, in Glasgow?

Mr. Lawson: I am very conscious, as I mentioned in my earlier answer, of the Scottish dimension. It is important to consider the best interests of Scotland in all this.

The right hon. Gentleman may not find BP an acceptable company, but the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) showed the greatest solicitude for BP's welfare some three months ago, so he clearly regards it as an acceptable company. Whether the change of control to BP will be acceptable will depend on the outcome of the discussions which will be taking place, as I informed the House.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the original objective of the special share was to deter a foreign takeover rather than to protect the independence of Britoil in perpetuity? As that is now not contemplated, surely there is no need to use the special share?

Mr. Lawson: I have listened carefully to what my hon. Friend has said. I know—I recall well—that at the time of the debates that we had in 1982 the concern of the Opposition was that there might be a foreign takeover of Britoil. That was their concern, and nothing else. However, I do not think that it is right now to give up the special share. It is necessary to maintain the special share to ensure a satisfactory outcome and to ensure that whatever is agreed is adhered to.

Mr. Malcom Bruce (Gordon): Will the Chancellor acknowledge that BP's takeover of Britoil is its revenge on the Government for the Government going ahead with the sale of shares last November, and that BP is now in direct confrontation with the Government's interests on this matter? Will he not accept that the existence of Britoil as an independent company is vitally necessary, not just for Scotland, but for the healthy development of exploration activity in the North sea, and that in those circumstances, the loss of Britoil's corporate headquarters from Scotland, and the loss of Britoil as an independent company, would set that course back? Does he not acknowledge that BP is transferring people from Aberdeen to London? How does that square with it keeping its corporate headquarters in Scotland?

Mr. Lawson: If the hon. Gentleman is bidding for the leadership of the new party, he will have to do a little bit better than that.

I specifically mentioned the best interests of the development of the North sea, and especially Britoil's assets in the North sea, in my reply. As for the hon. Gentleman's suggestion that there is any difference between BP and myself over the question whether the BP share issue should go ahead, which the hon. Gentleman has alleged and which was alleged earlier by the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), that, of course, is totally untrue.

I should like to read briefly from what the chairman of BP, Sir Peter Walters, said at the annual BP press lunch a fortnight ago. He said:

"The outcome was in my view the right one; the sale should have gone ahead. I was very pleased though that there was this temporary lifeboat represented by the Bank of England offer to buy back the partly paid which has now expired and which, as you see, almost no one took advantage of. There was no disagreement between myself and the Chancellor as to whether the sale should go ahead or not."

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Does my right hon. Friend accept that many of us believed that it was right for there to be a big foreign interest in the North sea but that no one in this House contemplated the chance of virtually the whole of our oil industry in the North sea being controlled by foreign interests? Is he aware that many of us think that the wisest decision that the Government made was to keep a golden share and keep some control in our hands? Is he also aware that Nomura Securities of Japan is bigger than all our banks put together and that it could take over Prudential Assurance and have that as only petty cash? Is it not right that we must make it clear what we wish to control and what we are willing to sell out to other people?

Mr. Lawson: I note very carefully what my hon. Friend, who is an expert in all these matters, has said. Of course, it is not a matter for me, but I would have thought that if there were—I realise that this is purely hypothetical—to be a bid by Nomura Securities for the Prudential, there must be a strong chance that that would be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): Does the Chancellor recall that, as Liberal First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill took control of the Anglo-Persian oil company which became BP, in 1914, because oil was so important to the British Navy and to Britain; that the establishment of BNOC gave us further control; that Britoil also gave us control and that when Burmah Oil company went bust, BP acquired its shares to strengthen British control and influence? Does he also realise that, both as Secretary of State for Energy and as Chancellor, he will be the man who threw away our control of the oil resources and the revenues accruing from them?

Mr. Lawson: I have answered that question many times before at greater length than I propose to do now, although it is always good to see one of my predecessors as Secretary of State for Energy in his place when we discuss these matters. The plain fact is that times have changed. It is no longer necessary for the British Government to own shares in BP and, indeed, BP believes, that it is far better off without the British Government. Furthermore, I must remind the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) that he presided over the first sale of BP shares.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Since it was the primary purpose of the special share to prevent the unacceptable takeover of Britoil, will my right hon. Friend confirm that the indignation—however synthetic—of the Opposition would be much more justified if there had been an unacceptable acquisition?

Mr. Lawson: I suspect that my hon. Friend, as usual, is correct. Certainly, although the special share was put in, as I said at the time, to prevent any unacceptable change of control, I remember very clearly the debates that we had

at that time. All the Opposition were talking about was the risk of the foreign takeover of Britoil. That was all that they were concerned about.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): The right hon. Gentleman is remembering the numerous debates that we had on those issues. Does he remember the numerous times that he said that the whole point and purpose of privatisation and the creation of Britoil was to create a bright, independent British oil company in the North Sea? What price now that independence? Is it not the case that BP's interests now appear bigger than the national interest and bigger than the Government's wishes?

Mr. Lawson: I remain anxious to have the best possible development of the United Kingdom continental shelf and I know that that concern is shared by the hon. Gentleman. However, I do not believe that it necessarily follows that that has to be secured by Britoil remaining unconnected with BP. We shall have to see what can result from the discussions that we shall have with BP.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): Does my right hon. Friend envisage that the Government's forthcoming discussions with BP will be in the nature of a vigorous wrestling match, or tea and sympathy? I urge my right hon. Friend to adopt the friendly approach, which I believe is suggested by his tone this afternoon. Unless the Government are suddenly adopting the blinkers of Scottish nationalism, surely it is inconceivable that BP's ownership would be contrary to the national interest.

Mr. Lawson: I believe that discussions will take the form of hard negotiations conducted in an amicable atmosphere.

Mr. George Galloway (Glasgow, Hillhead): The Chancellor of the Exchequer has brought weasel words to the House this afternoon. The golden share was to be a shield to protect the independence of the independent oil-producing and oil-exploring sector, but it has proved to be no more formidable than a piece of silver paper.

Much has been made by the Chancellor of the unacceptability issue. The board and the staff of Britoil —highly skilled staff at the top of their profession—to a man and woman find the BP takeover proposals completely unacceptable. One of the things that has been said concerns the Britishness of BP. How British is BP? Will BP be BP with a billion shares owned by the Kuwaiti Government through the Kuwaiti Investment Office? Unless the Government stiffen their back and offer some resistance to the proposals, this will represent another well-heeled kick in the face of Scotland and the oil-producing sector.

Mr. Lawson: BP is most certainly British and will remain so. The acceptability issue is extremely important. As the hon. Gentleman reminds the House, and as I did earlier, we specifically took the power to prevent any unacceptable change of control. [HON. MEMBERS: "Independence."] The whole thing must be read in context. I said that on no fewer than three occasions in that one column of *Hansard* alone. That is what is at issue now. The discussions are designed to ensure that if there is to be —I said if—any change of control, it will take place in an acceptable manner. It is the responsibility of the Government, acting in the national interest, to decide what is acceptable.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the House that this is an extension of Question Time.

Northern Ireland (Stalker-Sampson Inquiry)

3.50 pm

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, Under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the need for urgent action by Her Majesty's Government in the light of new information concerning the conduct of the Stalker-Sampson investigations in Northern Ireland."

The issue is important because it concerns the basis of the rule of law, whether it applies to the police and Ministers, whether they are above the law and what considerations were given under the Official Secrets Act to the publication of Mr. Stalker's memoirs, compared with the considerations given to Mr. Cavendish.

It is urgent because tomorrow there is a meeting of the Anglo-Irish secretariat at which the Secretary of State will be seeking to explain away the Attorney-General's mind-boggling decision and the disciplinary measures he is proposing to take against a number of officers in the Royal Ulster Constabulary. It is important that we should know whether the Chief Constable of the RUC, who originally asked Stalker to undertake this investigation but who later wrote a letter denying him information because it was classified as grade A by the Special Branch, is among those to be disciplined.

It is important to know whether the assistant chief constable, Mr. Forbes, who refused to give Mr. Stalker access to the file of a possible agent provocateur unless ordered by the Chief Constable and would not forward Mr. Stalker's request to the Chief Constable, is also to be disciplined.

It is important to know whether the officer who denied the existence of a file for three months, thus causing extra work for six officers, and who handed over the file only when he was cautioned that he was a criminal suspect, is to be disciplined.

It is important to know whether tomorrow the Secretary of State will confirm the existence or otherwise of a tape recording of the events in the hayshed where Tighe died, which was not available when the case was tried by Lord Justice Kelly.

We also need to know whether the conclusion of the Director of Public Prosecutions not to proceed with shoot-to-kill allegations of 11 and 24 November and 12 December 1982 was supported by Mr. Stalker and Mr. Sampson, whether Mr. Sampson heard the tape, whether it was handed over and whether it is still in existence.

Those are important matters. They go to the root of our relationship with the Republic of Ireland, our allies in the most important fight against terrorism in these islands. The House should debate these things before the Secretary of State goes to his meeting tomorrow, where the reputation, honour and honesty of this country, the rule of law and the integrity of Ministers and the police are at stake.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"The need for urgent action by Her Majesty's Government in the light of new information regarding the conduct of the Stalker-Sampson investigations in Northern Ireland."

I have listened with great care to what the hon. Gentleman has said. As he knows, my sole duty in considering an application under Standing Order No. 20 is to decide whether it should be given priority over the business set down for today or tomorrow.

I regret that I cannot find that the matter the hon. Gentleman has raised meets the criteria laid down under Standing Order No. 20, and I therefore cannot submit his application to the House.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am about to call the right hon. Gentleman to move his own application under Standing Order No. 20.

Mr. Benn: May I——

Mr. Speaker: No. I have dealt with that matter.

Industrial Disputes

3.54 pm

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the direct responsibility of the Government for provoking the industrial dispute in the mining industry and for the proposed strike action by nurses and others, who are being forced to take action to protect the National Health Service."

Every time that a Standing Order No. 20 application is made, hon. Members are asking you, Mr. Speaker, who have discretion, to give us the right to talk about matters of immediate concern. It is now four years since the miners' strike, and the evidence of the memoirs and other papers that have been published make it absolutely clear that the Government and Mr. MacGregor provoked the miners' strike deliberately for their own purposes.

Four years later, the National Association of Colliery Overmen, Deputies and Shotfirers finds that British Coal will not negotiate with it, and is therefore unilaterally in breach of the long-standing contract arrangements dealing with the conditions of NACODS members. That is the first issue. Today most of the pits are closed—I think that only two are open—and industrial action by means of an overtime ban will have a grave effect.

My second point concerns the National Health Service. After the exchanges across the Floor of the House, I do not have to emphasise the importance of the action to be taken by nurses in the Health Service on Tuesday and Wednesday. However, it is important that everyone should have the opportunity to discuss the situation before it occurs. The other day, my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) made an old point of mine: before something happens, it is hypothetical; when it happens, it is too delicate; and after it has happened it is too late. If Parliament cannot discuss matters of concern to the citizens of this country, people will not look to this House to articulate their anxieties.

The National Health Service strike on Wednesday is solely and simply the responsibility of the Government. Hon. Members who take this view should be able to express it and Ministers should be answerable for their responsibility in these matters.

Mr. Speaker: The right hon. Gentleman asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the direct responsibility of the Government for provoking the industrial dispute in the mining industry and for the proposed strike action by nurses and others, who are being forced to take action to protect the National Health Service."

I have listened with great care to what the right hon. Gentleman said. I have to repeat what I said to his hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara). I have to have regard to the criteria laid down in the Standing Orders and I regret that I cannot submit his application to the House.

Birmingham Pub Bombings

3.57 pm

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the refusal by the Home Secretary to recommend the exercise of the royal prerogative of mercy in the case of the six innocent men still standing convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings."

I do so not because these men seek mercy, but because they seek justice. There is widespread concern about the case in many parts of the world and on both sides of the House. It does not matter whether one is Left or Right, Unionist or Republican; one merely has to have an elementary ability to distinguish between right and wrong.

My case is that these people are entirely innocent, that they were not involved in those or any other bombings and that they were not members of the IRA. If I thought otherwise, I should not have wasted one moment of my time pursuing this case over the past two years.

As you will know, Mr. Speaker, you ruled this case sub judice in January 1987. We were therefore not able to discuss it for 13 months. There is the possibility of an appeal to the House of Lords in the next few days and you may rule—I hope that you will not—that we then cannot discuss it until the House of Lords has dealt with it. That would mean—this is the nub of the case for allowing the House to discuss it now—that a period of two years could elapse in which we have not been able to discuss a matter that it has been open to the rest of the nation and the rest of the world to discuss over a long period. It would be quite wrong for the House to be denied the opportunity to discuss this subject.

Let me list the relevant issues. Such a debate would provide hon. Members with an opportunity to test my assertion—which I repeat—that the men responsible for these bombings are alive and well and living in Ireland. [HON. MEMBERS: "Who are they?"] Let us discuss that when we get to the debate. It would enable us to discuss the state of the forensic service in the light of the relevation that the main prosecution witness in this case took early retirement at the grand old age of 51 on the grounds of limited effectiveness.

It would enable us to discuss why none of the proposals of a Select Committee on miscarriages of justice, which reported to this House some years ago, have been implemented; to discuss why convictions based on uncorroborated confessions are still permitted; and to discuss the extreme difficulty of persuading British judges to admit to a mistake.

This case will not go away; it will haunt our judges and politicians until they face the fact that a tragic mistake has been made. I appeal to you, Mr. Speaker, to give the House the opportunity to debate this matter.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter which he believes should have urgent consideration, namely.

"the refusal by the Home Secretary to allow the exercise of the royal prerogative of mercy in the case of the six men still standing convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings".

[Mr. Speaker]

Again, I have listened with care to what the hon. Member has said, but I regret that I do not consider the matter which he has raised to be appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 20, so I cannot submit his application to the House.

School Closures (Scotland)

4 pm

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): I, too, wish to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter which should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the intervention by the Prime Minister to change the legal process being followed by Strathclyde regional council in relation to school closures, thereby putting at risk the future of other schools within my constituency."

Last week we were all surprised when, in the late afternoon, regulations were tabled after the Prime Minister had first informed the headmaster of a school about them. In a letter to the headmaster of Paisley grammar school, the Prime Minister said:

"Thank you for your letter of 21 January."

I emphasise the date of 21 January because I want to demonstrate that there was a sequence of events which I believe were illegally conducted, illegal in their intention and illegal in their effect, about that date. The letter was not written out of the blue by the rector, but solicited from the rector by the Prime Minister herself.

We are now told—we did not know this last week—in the words of *The Sunday Times*, of which the editor is Andrew Neil, a former pupil of Paisley grammar school —*[Interruption.]* No, this time, it was not reported by Gerry Malone; it was only in the Scottish edition—that on 21 January a meeting took place between Andrew Neil and a senior adviser at No. 10. That is corroborated by his interview in the *Paisley Daily Express* under the heading, "How I tapped Maggie".

Mr. Neil states:

"'I was at a . . . lunch with a senior Downing Street figure . . . and he brought up the subject.

I said something should be done.'"

Mr. Neil contacted the headmaster, who wrote to the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister, in the words of *The Sunday Times*, "fired off" a letter to the Secretary of State who was resisting the proposals to change the regulations, presumably on the same grounds as mine, which were that it was restrospective action when a legal process was three quarters of the way through under one set of laws brought into being and carried out by the Government. The Secretary of State was resisting, so was called in on 22 January when the Prime Minister reinforced her feelings sharply to him. Rifkind got the message.

This is a gross, arbitrary, ministerial intervention in a law which was being carried out——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member has had his time. He must bring his application to a conclusion.

Mr. Buchan: I shall conclude in one sentence, Mr. Speaker, perhaps with a minor subordinate clause. The intervention affected every other school in Strathclyde. For those reasons the matter is urgent and important, and was illegal.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter which he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the intervention by the Prime Minister to change the legal process being followed by Strathclyde regional council in respect of school closures, thereby putting at risk the future of schools within the Paisley, South constituency."

Again, I have listened with care to what the hon. Member has said, but I do not consider that the matter which he has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 20, so I cannot submit his application to the House.

Points of Order

4.4 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. On Friday 29 January, the Government tabled three pages of wide-ranging, controversial, important amendments to the Local Government Bill currently under consideration in another place. The Bill was in Committee in this House from July until December, but we were not given any indication that amendments would be tabled in this way——

Mr. Speaker: Is the Bill in Committee, because if it is——

Dr. Cunningham: No, in the Lords.

Mr. Speaker: If the Bill is in the Lords, it is not a matter for me.

Dr. Cunningham: If I could pursue the matter for a moment, Mr. Speaker. The amendments give increased powers to auditors over elected councillors, so are of great importance. They could, and should, more properly——

Mr. Speaker: Order. If a Bill is in the Lords, it is not a matter for me and I cannot comment or rule on it.

Dr. Cunningham: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. We have a Local Government Finance Bill before the Commons now. The Government have tabled in the Lords amendments to the Local Government Bill, which are about the administration of local government finance. Why have the Government chosen to proceed in this way? In doing so they are preventing the House of Commons from scrutinising the proposals properly. The House is entitled to an explanation why that has been done and——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must stop the hon. Member there. If the Lords amend the Bill, it will have to come back to the House of Commons with Lords amendments, and that will be the appropriate moment to discuss it. I am sorry, but I cannot rule on this now because it is not a matter for me.

Dr. Cunningham: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I hope that you will agree that I rarely take the time of the House to raise points of order. Two questions arise from this. First, in proceeding in this way the Government are depriving the Commons of proper time to scrutinise these matters, so surely there must be a point of protection of hon. Members somewhere. Secondly, even setting that aside, surely it is proper for the Leader of the House — I am grateful for his presence — to give an assurance now that additional time will be provided in the Commons for the proper consideration of these matters. That is a perfectly reasonable request.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): These are matters for the usual channels at the right time.

Sir John Farr (Harborough): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wonder whether you could possibly help some hon. Members on both sides of the House. A few years ago a Select Committee, chaired by one of my former hon. Friends who is now in the other place, made recommendations on Appeal Court decisions. It made several recommendations on the improvement in dealing with procedures where appeals had been rejected by the Court of Appeal and on how more effective justice could be brought about.

[Sir John Farr]

I am raising this matter because we have a narrow window in time between the decision on the Birmingham Six on Thursday and a possible appeal to the House of Lords next Monday. I hope that you may be able to help the House by thinking about this because that would enable the House, if it felt so inclined, to improve the way in which decisions are reached and to have a discussion, bearing in mind all the relevant facts from the Birmingham Six case which would otherwise be declared, properly, to be sub judice.

Mr. Speaker: Select Committees frequently make recommendations that are not debated by the House. It is a pity that they are not debated, but there has been no change in our Standing Orders in that regard.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) begged to ask leave to adjourn the House under Standing Order No. 20 to discuss the case of the six men who were found guilty, by a jury, of the bombings in Birmingham. Page 361 of "Erskine May" deals with matters to be dealt with by a substantive motion. I understand that certain matters cannot be debated save upon a substantive motion, and that they include the behaviour or actions of judges of superior courts. The hon. Member, maybe inadvertently, said that judges were unable to own up to their mistakes, or words to that effect. I imagine that that is in direct contravention of the provisions set out in "Erskine May". If that is the case, can we have your advice on the matter?

Mr. Speaker: I did not interrupt the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) in the three minutes available to him, but I have ruled that I do not think that it was an appropriate matter for discussion under Standing Order No. 20.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Recently, and at my request, you kindly furnished me with some details of rowdyism in the House of Commons to show that rowdyism in today's Parliament is considerably less than it has been in previous ones. One of the things which became clear to me when reading that information was that the House, certainly the Opposition, tend to get more rowdy when confronted by a Government who are bloated with arrogance, as they say, who fail to——

Mr. Speaker: Order. It would be unfair to discuss across the Floor of the House what the hon. Gentleman and I may have discussed in private.

Mr. Banks: I merely wished to say that there is potential for further rowdyism this afternoon, it would seem, because we have heard and read in the media recently a lot about a possible proposal to abolish the Inner London education authority. The Secretary of State has not seen fit to make a statement, and it is about time that we had one.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman may have an opportunity to debate this matter in the business upon which we are about to embark.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I do not wish to challenge your ruling, Mr. Speaker, but, further to the point of order, the motion that we are to debate is not about ILEA. It is about a timetable motion for the Education Reform Bill. Thousands of my constituents were alarmed at the news of the potential break-up of ILEA and the enormously increased costs that that would impose on them. Surely it is incumbent on the Government to make a clear statement to the House about the future of ILEA before we debate the timetable motion, which has nothing to do with ILEA.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. We are today being invited to vote for a motion which would curtail debate on the Education Reform Bill, one of the provisions of which would allow what Conservative Members call the opting out of London boroughs from ILEA. That is an important matter, but it is relatively small compared with the possibility of abolition of ILEA. Opposition Members and, I am sure, parents in inner London believe that if it is proposed to abolish ILEA, doing it as a side-show through this Bill after a timetable motion has been passed by the House would be utterly unacceptable. We would like a statement from the Secretary of State outlining what he proposes to do.

Mr. Speaker: I do not know whether ILEA is to be abolished. I accept that we are about to debate a timetable motion which is based on the fact that ILEA is not to be abolished. No doubt if anything of that kind were to occur, it would be a matter to bring to the Leader of the House for further discussions on the timetable.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I have listened carefully to what my hon. Friends have said about this matter. The Secretary of State, who is promoting the Education Reform Bill—GERBIL, as it is known—will change the very nature of the Bill if these proposals go through. It seems to me that the motion which suggests that we get rid of ILEA, which has been signed by more than 100 Tory Members, headed by the right hon. Members for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) and for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit), is not just about the Education Reform Bill, but about the successor to the Prime Minister. In those circumstances, the Secretary of State should make a statement and——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I cannot answer questions such as that which the hon. Gentleman is about to ask.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You may not be aware of this but, during the weekend, a matter relating to the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) was widely reported in the Scottish press, but that is incidental. Some of his suits were destroyed in his flat. The hon. and learned Gentleman was reported as saying:

"One of the suits was made by Mr. Speaker's firm at a cost of £1,500 plus VAT."

The hon. and learned Gentleman continued:

"You cannot just go up to the Speaker and ask him to make a suit for a couple of hundred pounds."

Before other hon. Members start receiving letters from constituents, can you make it clear that not all of us get such favours?

Mr. Speaker: I have nothing to do with my family business these days and I have no idea what they charge, but if what the hon. Gentleman says is correct, I shall have seriously to consider taking a second part-time job.

Education Reform Bill (Allocation of Time)

Mr. Speaker: I must tell the hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) that I have not selected his amendment.

4.18 pm

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I would not for a moment question your right to select or not select any amendment. However, the timetable motion was tabled at 9 am on Friday. Hon. Members therefore had five and a half hours in which to table their own amendments. As there were not necessarily many hon. Members here on Friday, we are in some difficulty.

Can the intentions of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House, which were expressed last Thursday, be instilled into the motion? Whatever the intent may be, unless the House give, an instruction in the motion, there is no assurance that the intent will be carried out. The intent may be the wish of a whole host of hon. Members, but unless there is an instruction, the Business Sub-Committee could take whatever action it wanted. Would you therefore accept a manuscript amendment which would ensure that the intent of the Leader of the House is not an intent but an instruction?

Mr. Speaker: I have no authority to accept manuscript instructions. They must go down on the Order Paper by way of a motion.

Sir Peter Emery: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I think you know me well enough to know that I would never suggest that you should accept a manuscript instruction. I hoped that you would accept a manuscript amendment stating that an instruction be given to the Chairman of the Standing Committee that is considering the Education Reform Bill——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is just what I have said the hon. Gentleman cannot do. I cannot comment upon a manuscript amendment until I have seen it, and I have not seen this one. But the hon. Gentleman cannot move an instruction by way of a manuscript amendment. That must be by a motion on the Order Paper.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Could you assist the House, as Speakers sometimes do, by making it clear whether you have not chosen this amendment for debate because it is out of order or because you have exercised your discretion as to whether to accept the amendment, although it is in order? Members of the former Procedure Committee, under the distinguished chairmanship of my hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery), are very concerned that their recommendation should apply in this case, if it is in order.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman, is a great expert on procedure and he well knows that Mr. Speaker is never required to give reasons for his selection or non-selection of amendments. Since he has asked, however, I can tell the hon. Gentleman that the amendment is in order and it will be perfectly in order for the hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) to canvass the contents of it during the debate.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. This is a very important matter, and I am sure that the hon. Members for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) and for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) will wish to discuss it with you after the debate. Are we not again in the difficulty with which we have been faced repeatedly in the past few months? A report of a Select Committee of the House—in this case, the Procedure Committee—has not been debated and the matters contained in it, which would ultimately have been transformed into resolutions of the House, have not been discussed. Therefore, you are placed in a difficult position.

The Procedure Committee is in a special position. Its reports should be debated immediately they have been published. If they are not, you will have exactly the same problems in the future.

Mr. Speaker: I have already told the hon. Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) that I regret that the reports of the Select Committees are not debated, but until the House agrees a change in the Standing Orders, I am bound by the present Standing Orders. I have no discretion in that respect.

Sir Peter Emery: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Will you cast your mind back—not as long as I can, but you can go back some time—to previous timetable motions on the Order Paper in which the exact division of times was stated? We decided that it should be left to a Sub-Committee of the Standing Committee to decide the division of time because it was better that that should be done by the people dealing with the Bill than by an instruction of the House. It used to be common for the House to give an instruction to the Business Sub-Committee. I simply wait you to accept, as an amendment to the motion, a proposal for which there has been good precedent: that an instruction be given to the Committee——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have just told the hon. Gentleman, who was Chairman of the Procedure Committee during the previous Parliaments, that the Standing Orders do not allow me to accept an amendment based upon an instruction. I have not yet seen his manuscript amendment. Will he please bring it to me?

4.24 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): I beg to move, That the following provisions shall apply to the remaining proceedings on the Bill:

Committee

1.—(1) The Standing Committee to which the Bill is allocated shall report the Bill to the House on or before 3rd March 1988.

(2) Proceedings on the Bill at a sitting of the Standing Committee on the said 3rd March may continue until Eleven p.m., whether or not the House is adjourned before that time, and if the House is adjourned before those proceedings have been brought to a conclusion the Standing Committee shall report the Bill to the House on 4th March.

Report and Third Reading

2.—(1) The proceedings on Consideration and Third Reading of the Bill shall be completed in three allotted days and shall be brought to a conclusion at Ten o'clock on the last of those days; and for the purposes of Standing Order No. 80 (Business Committee) this Order shall be taken to allot to the proceedings on Consideration such part of those days as the Resolution of the Business Committee may determine.

(2) The Business Committee shall report to the House its Resolution as to the proceedings on Consideration of the Bill, and as to the allocation of time between those proceedings and proceedings on Third Reading, not later than

[Mr. John Wakeham]

the fourth day on which the House sits after the day on which the Chairman of the Standing Committee reports the Bill to the House.

(3) The Resolutions in any Report made under Standing Order No. 80 may be varied by a further Report so made, whether or not within the time specified in sub-paragraph (2) above, and whether or not the Resolutions have been agreed to by the House.

(4) The Resolutions of the Business Committee may include alterations in the order in which proceedings on Consideration of the Bill are taken.

Procedure in Standing Committee

3.—(1) At a sitting of the Standing Committee at which any proceedings on the Bill are to be brought to a conclusion under a Resolution of the Business Sub-Committee the Chairman shall not adjourn the Committee under any Order relating to the sittings of the Committee until the proceedings have been brought to a conclusion.

(2) No Motion shall be made in the Standing Committee relating to the sitting of the Committee except by a member of the Government, and the Chairman shall permit a brief explanatory statement from the Member who makes, and from a Member who opposes, the Motion, and shall then put the Question thereon.

4. No Motion shall be made to alter the order in which Clauses, Schedules, new Clauses and new Schedules are taken in the Standing Committee but the Resolutions of the Business Sub-Committee may include alterations in that order.

Conclusion of proceedings in Committee

5. On the conclusion of the proceedings in any Committee on the Bill the Chairman shall report the Bill to the House without putting any Question.

Dilatory Motions

6. No dilatory Motion with respect to, or in the course of, proceedings on the Bill shall be made in the Standing Committee or on an allotted day except by a member of the Government, and the Question on any such Motion shall be put forthwith.

Motion under Standing Order No. 20: extra time

7. If an allotted day is one to which a Motion for the adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 stands over from an earlier day, paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to the proceedings on the Bill for a period of time equal to the duration of the proceedings upon that Motion.

Private business

8. Any private business which has been set down for consideration at Seven o'clock on an allotted day shall, instead of being considered as provided by Standing Orders, be considered at the conclusion of the proceedings on the Bill on that day, and paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to the private business for a period of three hours from the conclusion of the proceedings on the Bill or, if those proceedings are concluded before Ten o'clock, for a period equal to the time elapsing between Seven o'clock and the conclusion of those proceedings.

Conclusion of proceedings

9.—(1) For the purpose of bringing to a conclusion any proceedings which are to be brought to a conclusion at a time appointed by this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee or the Business Sub-Committee and which have not previously been brought to a conclusion, the Chairman or Mr. Speaker shall forthwith put the following Questions (but no others)—

(*a*) any Question already proposed from the Chair;

(*b*) any Question necessary to bring to a decision a Question so proposed (including, in the case of a new Clause or new Schedule which has been read a second time, the Question that the Clause or Schedule be added to the Bill);

(*c*) the Question on any amendment or Motion standing on the Order Paper in the name of any Member, if that amendment is moved or Motion is made by a Member of the Government;

(*d*) any other Question necessary for the disposal of the business to be concluded;

and on a Motion so made for a new Clause or a new Schedule, the Chairman or Mr. Speaker shall put only the Question that the Clause or Schedule be added to the Bill.

(2) Proceedings under sub-paragraph (1) above shall not be interrupted under any Standing Order relating to the sittings of the House.

(3) If an allotted day is one on which a Motion for the adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration) would, apart from this Order, stand over to Seven o'clock—

(*a*) that Motion shall stand over until the conclusion of any proceedings on the Bill which, under this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee, are to be brought to a conclusion at or before that time;

(*b*) the bringing to a conclusion of any proceedings on the Bill which, under this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee, are to be brought to a conclusion after that time shall be postponed for a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on that Motion.

(4) If an allotted day is one to which a Motion for the adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 stands over from an earlier day, the bringing to a conclusion of any proceedings on the Bill which, under this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee, are to be brought to a conclusion on that day shall be postponed for a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on that Motion.

Supplemental orders

10.—(1) The proceedings on any Motion moved in the House by a member of the Government for varying or supplementing the provisions of this Order (including anything which might have been the subject of a report of the Business Committee or Business Sub-Committee) shall, if not previously concluded, be brought to a conclusion one hour after they have been commenced, and paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to the proceedings.

(2) If on an allotted day on which any proceedings on the Bill are to be brought to a conclusion at a time appointed by this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee the House is adjourned, or the sitting is suspended, before that time no notice shall be required of a Motion moved at the next sitting by a member of the Government for varying or supplementing the provisions of this Order.

Saving

11. Nothing in this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee or Business Sub-Committee shall—

(*a*) prevent any proceedings to which the Order or Resolution applies from being taken or completed earlier than is required by the Order or Resolution, or

(*b*) prevent any business (whether on the Bill or not) from being proceeded with on any day after the completion of all such proceedings on the Bill as are to be taken on that day.

Recommittal

12.—(1) References in this Order to proceedings on Consideration or proceedings on Third Reading include references to proceedings, at those stages respectively, for, on or in consequence of re-committal.

(2) On an allotted day no debate shall be permitted on any Motion to re-commit the Bill (whether as a whole or otherwise), and Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith any Question necessary to dispose of the Motion, including the Question on any amendment moved to the Question.

Interpretation

13. In this Order—

"allotted day" means any day (other than a Friday) on which the Bill is put down as first Government Order of the Day provided that a Motion for allotting time to the proceedings on the Bill to be taken on that day either has been agreed on a previous day or is set down for consideration on that day;

"the Bill" means the Education Reform Bill;

"Resolution of the Business Sub-Committee" means a Resolution of the Business Sub-Committee as agreed to by the Standing Committee;

"Resolution of the Business Committee" means a Resolution of the Business Committee as agreed to by the House.

This is the first timetable motion that I have moved, but I am pleased to say that it is also the most generous motion for 20 years.

The House will need no reminding of the importance of the Education Reform Bill, to which the motion would apply a timetable. The Bill represents the most far-reaching reform and improvement of our education system since the Education Act 1944. For schools, it contains provision for a national core curriculum, the control of budgets by governing bodies and head teachers, an increase in parental choice and the opportunity for state schools to opt out of local education authority control.

For higher and further education, the Bill implements proposals in the higher education White Paper by setting up a new Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council and establishing a Universities Funding Council, both independent of central Government. The provisions relating to the future of the Inner London education authority take account of the special position of London.

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): What time was devoted in the House to discussion of the 1944 Act and at what stage was a guillotine imposed?

Mr. Wakeham: The answer is 60 hours, which is way less than half, but no guillotine motion was moved.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Does it not worry the right hon. Gentleman, as Leader of the House of Commons, that the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals has been reduced to saying, in relation to clause 94, that it pins its hopes on the House of Lords? Is it not deeply unsatisfactory from the point of view of the House of Commons that that committe should believe that its only hope is in the House of Lords rather than in the guillotined set-up of this House?

Mr. Wakeham: We are moving the timetable motion now to ensure that those important matters are properly discussed in Committee. They are relevant matters and they will be discussed.

The Bill will benefit pupils, parents, teachers, head teachers, governors and those working in higher education. We believe that it will help to provide higher standards in academic and technical subjects, greater freedom for schools and colleges to be run by those who know and use them and greater choice for all in the education system. It is a demonstration of our positive and comprehensive approach in this area.

Of course, our proposals have been known for some time. Our 1987 manifesto, published in May last year, said:

"the time has now come for school reform"

and set out the policies that I have just outlined.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I am grateful to the Leader of the House for reminding us of what was in the Conservative party manifesto. What it did not mention was the abolition of the Inner London education authority. Since the Opposition attitude to the guillotine motion will be very much influenced by the future, or non-future, of ILEA, will the right hon. Gentleman tell us now whether the Government will table an amendment in Committee to abolish ILEA?

Mr. Wakeham: No decision has been taken on a change of policy on ILEA, so that is a hypothetical question. If such a decision was made, I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State would make a statement to the House. As for the guillotine motion, if a new factor of major importance arose, it could be discussed through the usual channels. I give that undertaking now.

The Government made it clear during and after the election campaign that we intended to consult widely on the proposed reforms.

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): The Leader of the House said that a statement on ILEA would be made to the House. For how long must London's children and parents wait? Will there be a statement this week, or will this vacillation continue week after week?

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot give an undertaking that there will be a statement. I said that there will be a statement if there is a change in policy. Until there is a change in policy, the question of a statement is hypothetical.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science has issued no fewer than 13 consultation papers, distributing 10,000 copies to interested bodies and sending out more than 100,000 further copies on request.

It has been suggested that insufficient time was allowed for consultation. Nevertheless, about 17,000 responses were received and considered before the Bill was introduced on 20 November last year, and we have made it clear that that was only the initial phase of consultation. The thousands of responses that have come in since the Bill started its passage have in no way missed the opportunity to influence our thinking.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the contents of the Bill were widely debated during last year's general election, and that there could be no broader consultation than that?

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend makes his point well.

My right hon. Friend and his colleagues are holding a number of discussions with organisations wishing to make representations.

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): Will the Leader of the House give an assurance that the consultations and representations that have been received since the last given date will be published and made available for us to read in the Library?

Mr. Wakeham: I shall have to ask my right hon. Friend to deal with the detail of that when he comes to wind up.

These discussions and consultations are part of a continuing process that began more than nine months ago.

In addition to the great debate in the country at large, the proposals are subject to detailed scrutiny inside Parliament. Consideration of the Bill so far in Standing Committee is evidence of that. More than 88 hours of Committee have so far been devoted to the first 43 clauses, and another 104 clauses are yet to be considered.

I welcome the careful attention that the Bill has received so far, but I am concerned that sufficient consideration be given to all parts of this large and wide-ranging Bill. For the moment, the Standing Committee is still debating part I of the Bill; parts II and III, however, contain provisions for higher and further education, and on ILEA, which I believe the House would wish to be considered no less carefully than our proposals on the national curriculum, the delegation of responsibility and the establishment of grant-maintained schools. But that consideration must be balanced against our commitment to ensure that the legislation is enacted this session.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Would the Leader of the House agree that this Bill is the same size as three normal Bills? I believe the right hon. Gentleman said that 40 clauses had been debated in 88 hours; is not a rate of two hours per clause pretty good going?

Mr. Wakeham: I am not complaining about the rate of progress; I am endeavouring to ensure that the Bill is properly discussed right the way through in Committee.

This is a classic example of the need for a constructive timetable——

Mr. Straw: I am pleased to hear that the Leader of the House is not complaining about the rate of progress. Usually, the only reason for a guillotine is complaints about the rate of progress. Now that we have cleared away any suggestion of filibustering by the Opposition, can the right hon. Gentleman explain why, at no stage, Government Whips came to the Opposition to discuss arrangements for the Bill to be discussed without the need for a guillotine?

Mr. Wakeham: I am not suggesting that there has been any filibustering. The purpose of my speech is to explain why I believe that a constructive timetable motion is necessary. I brought it forward, not to prevent filibustering in Committee—I am not accusing anyone of that—but to ensure proper, measured discussion of all parts of a complex and important Bill.

In devising the motion, I have in mind also the views of my hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) and his colleagues on the Procedure Committee in the last Parliament: that the introduction of a timetable motion too late in the Committee stage can lead to inadequate consideration of a Bill's later clauses. Although you, Mr. Speaker, have not selected the amendment of my hon. Friend the Member for Honiton, I recognise the concerns behind it, which is why the motion has been proposed now rather than later and is so generous in its provisions for further debate.

If the Committee continues to sit each week for 18 hours, which is about the number of hours that it has done so far, there is a prospect of another 90 hours. Of course, it could sit for longer if it wished. I am sure that, in the spirit of my hon. Friend's amendment, the Business Sub-Committee will be concerned to allocate time in such a way as to ensure adequate scrutiny of all the remaining parts of the Bill. As many of the provisions in the remaining clauses are consequential or supplementary, I believe that the Business Sub-Committee will have considerable scope for manoeuvre. In addition, there will be three days of debate on the Floor of the House on Report and Third Reading.

It is perhaps worth pausing here to reflect that the time devoted to this Bill is more than double that for the Education Bill which became the 1944 Act. The Committee stage of that Bill discussed about 122 clauses and six lengthy schedules, and was conducted in only 14 sittings, lasting about 60 hours in total. In an interesting passage from his memoirs Lord Butler said:

"the beauty of the 1944 Bill was that it would keep the parliamentary troops thoroughly occupied, providing endless opportunity for debate, without any fear of breaking up the Government."

So those who cavil at the time provided for this Bill by the motion should bear in mind that the 1944 Bill was considered in full in less than half the time that this one will be—by a House that was deliberately being kept occupied by the Government of the day.

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): Does the Leader of the House agree that the fundamental difference between this Bill and the 1944 Act is that there was agreement on both sides about the main principles of that measure, whereas there a fundamental disagreement about the way in which this Bill will split our education service?

Mr. Wakeham: I think the hon. Gentleman's memory of history is shaky. He may not have been alive in 1944, but if I recall aright, the 1944 Act's religious clauses, in particular, were controversial. In any case, there is a fundamental difference, in that this timetable motion allocates twice as much time as before——

Ms. Armstrong: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that, not only were the divisions about the religious parts of the Bill not across party lines, but there were two full years of consultation before the 1944 Bill was written and presented? This Bill has had such short consultation that, day by day in Committee, the Minister has to change what is on the face of it because it has not been properly thought through.

Mr. Wakeham: The Bill is controversial, but so was the 1944 Bill; indeed, so was the 1976 Education Bill, when the distinguished father of the hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong) was at the Dispatch Box moving the guillotine motion. The amount of time that the motion makes available for the Committee stage, together with the Report stage and Third Reading, shows that it is not our intention to cut short debate on this matter. Rather, our purpose is to meet the anxiety expressed by my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) that another place might have the opportunity to say that major issues had not been fully debated in the House.

To ensure that all parts of the Bill receive parliamentary scrutiny, the motion—like previous timetable motions—includes provision for allocating the time in Standing Committee and on the Floor of the House for Report and Third Reading by reference to a Business Sub-Committee and a Business Committee. That seems to me the key to the sensibly weighted consideration of the rest of the Bill, giving the chance for those who are experienced in these matters and, in the case of the Sub-Committee, for those who are most closely acquainted with the Bill's provisions, to discuss the timing and divide the available time appropriately between clauses.

I commend the motion to the House, in the belief that it represents a realistic way to debate the Education Reform Bill, a measure keenly awaited by pupils and parents alike. Although the House may be sharply divided on its substance, I hope that we can agree on the arrangements to give proper time for discussing all the Bill's provisions. I suggest consideration of the words a Labour Back Bencher in the debate on the timetable motions in 1976:

"Everybody in the House wants to elevate standards . . . But doing better does not necessarily mean talking and sitting longer".—[*Official Report*, 20 July 1976; Vol. 915, c. 1640.]

That Back Bencher is now the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock), the Leader of the Opposition. I share those views, and I hope that his party does, too.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Does the Leader of the House accept that the main effect of a timetable motion is the protection of Ministers? It enables them not fully to reply to debates because they can play for time when they know that a timetable motion applies. The right hon. Gentleman will have read our proceedings in Committee. Does he not accept that Ministers were repeatedly under pressure before the guillotine came down? In future they can simply wait until the guillotine drops, and not reply to the difficult issues in the debate.

Mr. Wakeham: When I read through proceedings in Committee, I found examples of Opposition amendments that were withdrawn when the position was explained by Ministers. I believe that we have allocated the right amount of time.

4.39 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): If one forgot that the Leader of the House is a former Tory Chief Whip, one might almost be convinced by his pleas that this timetable motion is intended to slow down the precipitate progress of the Bill in Committee. That was the impression that he tried to create.

The guillotine has a long and not-too-good history for those who invented it. Its inventor had his head cut off by his own infernal machine. It is worth remembering that from a legislative point of view there was a little of that effect the last time the House considered a guillotine motion. The last such motion was to shorten debate on the Scottish poll tax Bill. I do not know how to express in a semi-Latinate phrase the effect of losing one's seat. It is clearly not decapitation, but whatever it is, that was the fate that befell many of the right hon. Gentleman's friends in Scotland as a result of the previous guillotine.

We should not blame the Leader of the House for the motion, because the person to be blamed is the Secretary of State for Education and Science. His dreadful Bill and his dreadful way of dealing with it have led to the timetable motion. I have observed since I have been in the House the progress of the Secretary of State. It seems that he has got on largely by fawning and flattery. He fawns upon the Prime Minister and flatters himself. Not content with flattering himself, he also gets no fewer than 38 press officers in his Department to flatter him if he is feeling a bit down.

The Secretary of State flatters himself most when he asks us to compare his Bill with the Education Act 1944. Such a comparison is not valid. The 1944 Act was the product of lengthy consultation, widespread public and professional if not religious agreement, idealism, experience and hope. The present Bill is the product of consultation so short and secretive as not to be worthy of the name. Far from commanding public and professional agreement, it is opposed in whole or in part by practically everyone who has expressed a point of view. It springs from cynicism and malice towards the public education system by Ministers who underfund it, abuse it and scarcely ever use it.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): There is one other outstanding difference between the 1944 Act and the Bill. It is that the Bill fundamentally destroys the 1944 Act and destroys many other things.

Mr. Dobson: I am sure that we all recognise the difference between a positive and a negative measure.

After considerable progress in Committee and no attempt to reach an agreed timetable for the Bill's further progress, and when a major departure from the Tory election manifesto over the Inner London education authority is daily rumoured, we are asked to accept a guillotine to shorten proper consideration. The future of our children's education deserves such further consideration even if the Bill scarcely does.

If, in his self-flattering mood, the Secretary of State craves a comparison with the 1944 Act, let us compare the time and effort given to the progress of that Act through the House. The House will not need reminding that in 1944 our country was involved in a united struggle to survive and then to overthrow the racist, murdering regime of Adolf Hitler. One might think that that was no time for modest stillness and humility.

However, in 1944 the Commons found time, even in the weeks leading up to the Normandy landings, to devote no less than 19 whole days on the Floor of the House to the Education Bill. It received two days on Second Reading —the period that we asked for on this Bill and which the Government refused. It received 14 full days in Committee on the Floor of the House, one and a half days on Report and a further one and a half days on Third Reading, plus a day in Committee upstairs on the issue of recruitment.

How different that is from the legislative life of our own dear Secretary of State. In this as in every other aspect, the present Secretary of State compares unfavourably with his Tory predecessors.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): I should like to put the historical record straight. In 1944, the Labour party supported the Butler Act. All that legislative time was necessary to appease the Tory Right, which wanted fees, and the churches. The Opposition view now is a tremendous change of scene.

Mr. Dobson: The hon. Gentleman has demonstrated the difference between the proposition that was before the House in 1944 and the one that is before the House now. The 1944 Bill commanded the general assent of the people and the politicians. The one before the House today does not.

If we compare the Secretary of State with his predecessors, we find that even Sir Keith Joseph and the Prime Minister occasionally allowed educational considerations rather than party prejudice to influence their judgment. That is not the case with the present Secretary of State. Ambitious and spiteful, he uses his high office to pursue his personal ambition to be the next Tory party leader and to commit vindictive acts against those who run our schools.

The reasons to reject the guillotine motion are many and powerful and have a direct bearing on the schooling of children all over Britain. My hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) will deal with those matters in his usual cogent and trenchant manner. The refusal by the Secretary of State to make clear what he intends to do about the future of ILEA is itself sufficient reason to throw out the motion.

As it stands, the Bill proposes —I quote from the 1987 Tory election manifesto, that sacred text—

"In the area covered by the ILEA where entire borough councils wish to become independent of the LEA"—

that is a spelling mistake—

[Mr. Dobson]

"they will be able to submit proposals to the Secretary of State requesting permission to take over provision of education within their boundaries".

As I shall explain, that is bad enough, but in the past few weeks we have had much publicised statements by the right hon. Members for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) and for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) advocating the abolition of ILEA. More recently we have heard leaks, either from the Secretary of State or from some of his 38 press advisers, to the effect that the Government have capitulated to pressure.

Whatever the arguments for or against that course, the abolition of ILEA would be in scale and complexity one of the greatest educational reorganisations since the second world war. It would involve the dismemberment of a unitary authority providing for 280,000 children, 170,000 college students and more than 250,000 people in adult education. To break ILEA into 13 constituent parts, each supposed to be capable of providing an education service partly within its own boundaries and partly through arrangements with its neighbours, would be a task of the utmost complexity, requiring careful thought and massive preparation. It cannot possibly be done by a few amendments to the Bill in Committee. Any attempt to do so would be an insult to parents in inner London and a deliberate blow to the educational opportunities of their children. For us, it would be a legislative nightmare.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): I shall recall for the hon. Gentleman, in case he cannot recall, that remarks similar to his were made when the abolition of the Greater London council was being debated in the House. As everybody knows, the GLC is not now missed at all. The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) said that the GLC was as full of bureaucracy and more difficult to break into than the Kremlin. Surely ILEA cannot be described in any lesser terms.

Mr. Dobson: I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman is inventing quotations. He ought to check, and if he does he will find that I was quoting my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone), and that what I said he said was not what the hon. Gentleman said I said.

The present arrangements for ILEA became — *[Interruption.]* I said that the housing department of the GLC — under the Tories, I might point out — was the slowest bureaucracy this side of the Kremlin, and I was quoting my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East.

The present arrangements for ILEA became law in the Local Government Act 1985. The system that the Secretary of State now proposes to change is the very one that he steered through the House. Why, then, has he changed his mind? Setting aside such base considerations as the salary, status and chauffeur-driven car that go with continuing to be Secretary of State, it may be because, despite all the Tory gerrymandering in the ILEA elections in 1986, Labour won control in a landslide, with the Tories receiving less that one third of the votes.

Over the whole period of the present Government, ILEA has been subjected to carping criticism, constant interference, threats, intimidation and, above all, cuts in Government grants. For the past eight years, ILEA has not received a penny piece from central Government towards the cost of running its schools. I challenge the Government's right to abolish ILEA, or even to change it. They do not pay anything towards it; they do not send their children to its schools; they know little or nothing about it; and they have no mandate from the people of inner London who would be affected.

No one can claim a mandate for the abolition of ILEA, because no one has put the proposition in an election. Certainly, as far as I know, no such proposition has featured in the election addresses of the right hon. Members for Henley and for Chingford, the Dastardly and Muttley of the present campaign.

As I have explained, the official manifesto of the Tory party spoke of individuals being allowed to opt out if their councils unanimously decided on that option. At the last general election, faced with that proposition, only 36 per cent. of inner Londoners voted Tory, while 41 per cent. voted Labour and 22 per cent. voted for the rest. More than six out of every 10 inner Londoners rejected any interference with the ILEA.

Mr. Norman Tebbit (Chingford): Is the hon. Gentleman putting it forward as a general proposition that no Government should bring forward a measure which was not in their election manifesto? If so, I think that he had better look back at his own record on some of the measures that he supported under the last Labour Government.

Mr. Dobson: There is a pathetic shortage of accuracy on the Conservative Benches. I have never sat in the House in government, so I can accept no responsibility for anything that has gone before. But for the chairman of the Tory party — who masterminded the last election campaign, and sat at press conferences saying there would only opting out of London borough. — to lead a campaign to destroy ILEA seven or eight months later is the wildest humbug. No doubt we can expect more from the right hon. Gentleman. I understand, Madam Deputy Speaker, that "hypocrisy" is out of order.

The Government talk about giving power to parents, but that is the last thing that they intend to do in inner London. I do not have a lot of time for opinion polls— *[Interruption.]* I say the same when the polls are favourable. All the opinion polls, including those commissioned by the Tory boroughs, show ILEA to be popular with the people of inner London, and even more popular with the parents. It is more popular with the people who know most about it, and who entrust their children's education to it.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dobson: No, I shall not. I do not think that hon. Members representing the far west of Wales should intervene on a matter relating to inner London. They can do their voting.

It is worth noting that, of six representatives on ILEA from the Tory boroughs which want to opt out, half are Labour. There has not even been a vote of confidence there. The three Tory boroughs — Westminster, Kensington and Wandsworth — which say that they want to opt out never put that option in their borough election manifestos, so they have no endorsement either.

In September last year, Wandsworth council held a poll. To its discomfiture, the poll showed that more than three quarters of parents who sent their children to ILEA schools were satisfied, and that, among secondary school

parents, satisfaction was higher than the national average. If the Tories want to talk about parental choice, they should perhaps remember that, despite all the bad publicity, more children from outer London are sent by their parents to ILEA schools than go the other way.

Let us take Barnet, part of which is represented by the Prime Minister. Parents of no fewer than 780 children from Barnet so recognised the superiority of the education provided by ILEA that they sent their children from Barnet to ILEA schools. Even if we allow for children going from the ILEA area to Barnet schools, the net flow into ILEA was 332 children. Parents are voting with their feet.

What, then, is this education authority of which parents approve and the Tories do not? It has a duty to provide an education service for inner London. It faces enormous problems. It contains several of the most deprived local authority areas in England. If we take the Department of the Environment's own measures of deprivation, the average level of deprivation for the ILEA area as a whole, even including such places as Hampstead, Dulwich, Chelsea and Blackheath, is worse than that of any other education authority. Rather like the Metropolitan police, ILEA faces extra problems, incurs extra costs and, on crude calculations of performance, appears to compare unfavourably with other authorities in other parts of the country.

Mr. Tracey: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I wonder if you could guide the House on whether the material that the hon. Gentleman is using is strictly relevant to the timetable motion? Surely he is making the speech that he might make on Report or Third Reading.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): The hon. Gentleman's material is perfectly relevant to this wide debate.

Mr. Dobson: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Apparently we have another volunteer for the Chair.

Madam Deputy Speaker: There is no vacancy.

Mr. Dobson: Good. We are all delighted to hear it.

Even the Government ought to recognise that, when they made ILEA the subject of a special report by Her Majesty's inspectors of schools, the inspectors' conclusion was, roughly speaking, that it faced major difficulties, but —all things considered— was coping reasonably well. When Tories talk of concern about ILEA's cost and standards, they are usually repeating what some other Tories have said. When the Tory yobboes attack ILEA, it is perhaps understandable that they should know so little that they can only repeat one another's propaganda. But that is no excuse for a Secretary of State.

As the right hon. Gentleman's predecessors have recognised, ILEA has responded to its problems and challenges with a series of initiatives that have been commended by Tory Ministers, and recommended by them to other education authorities. Those initiatives include the appointment of parent governors; delegating some financial responsibility to governing bodies; the London record of achievement, providing all school leavers with a folder of work and achievements to show to employers; the SMILE mathematics scheme, which enables children to progress at different speeds according to their ability—and, at the same time, helps to monitor the performance and progress of every pupil; the extension of work experience arrangements with employers; and, most recently, the London Compact with major firms in an effort to guarantee jobs to school leavers. The Hargreaves, Thomas and Fish reports, analysing other problems and recommending further initiatives, have generated interest and acclaim far beyond the boundaries of inner London.

The authority, to its eternal credit, has taken steps to counter racism and sexism in its schools and colleges. Those initiatives have been mocked and vilified by people who either deny that racism and sexism exist or, worse still, recognise that they exist, but are not prepared to do anything about them. Such initiatives should have been welcomed by the Secretary of State, because they are vital if we are to achieve a fair and decent society. They are rational efforts by the authority to address real problems faced by real children and young people in inner London. They should not be dismissed in the way in which they have been.

Of course there are problems in ILEA schools. Of course improvements are needed. As a parent of children who have all gone to ILEA schools, I do not need any Tory Members to tell me that. Least of all do I need to be told of ILEA's problems by Tory Members who send their children to private schools.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. We are discussing a timetable motion. The normal debate for a timetable motion concerns why and whether there should be a timetable. It is not to debate a single issue within the education sphere within or without the Bill. Surely it is whether or not we should have a timetable. The single issue is not even in the Bill.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The House and the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) do not need any instruction from any other hon. Member. The hon. Member should be allowed to get on with his speech.

Mr. Dobson: No doubt the hon. Gentleman would be another applicant for the Chair, should a vacancy ever arise.

I certainly do not want to hear that the Inner London education authority, which spends around £2,000 a year on each secondary school pupil, is overspending. I do not want to hear that charge from rich existing or former Cabinet Ministers who send their children to private schools and spend up to three times as much on their children. Between them, Cabinet Ministers have more than 50 children over 11 years of age, and only two of them did not go to fee-paying schools.

Tory Members' ignorance of the Inner London education authority shows in practically their every utterance. Not long before the 1987 election, the then junior Education Minister, the hon. Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden), visited a primary school in Euston in my constituency. When the staff referred to hotel children, he thought that they meant children whose parents owned and ran hotels. He did not know of the squalid bed-and-breakfast hotels into which his Government had forced the homeless and their children.

Such children are numbered in thousands. The main parental choice that their parents would like is a home of

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their own. They are denied that choice by a Government whose latest White Paper on housing did not even mention the word "homeless".

Mr. George Walden (Buckingham): In the light of the hon. Gentleman's remark, the intervention that was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) was well justified. If the hon. Gentleman is reduced to retailing such inaccurate and absurd tittle tattle, he should sit down now.

Mr. Dobson: It is absurd, but I have no reason to believe that it is inaccurate. I know the veracity of the people who told me.

Another charge that is made against ILEA is that it is over-bureaucratic. There is some truth in that statement, but if its administration is so bad, why has the Secretary of State given a new top job to Mr. William Stubbs, the man who heads the bureaucracy? It was recently described by the right hon. Member for Chingford as an overgrown, overpriced underperforming monster. Surely the chief custodian of such a monster would be unfit for an important job that was newly created by his right hon. Friend.

Why is it that the right hon. Member for Chingford and his former arch-enemy in the Cabinet — so we understand — the right hon. Member for Henley, have launched a compaign to abolish ILEA? It is partly because it provides a defenceless whipping boy on whom they can demonstrate their Tory credentials to a waiting world.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dobson: No, I shall not give way. I have given way several times.

Mr. Greenway: This relates to a school in the hon. Gentleman's constituency.

Mr. Dobson: All right, I shall give way.

Mr. Greenway: Perhaps the hon Gentleman will concede that I have some knowledge of ILEA, having been deputy head of a comprehensive school in his constituency, having taught in ILEA for 23 years, and having sent three children to ILEA schools. Is the hon. Gentleman aware that Williams Stubbs has regularly written about the level of administration within ILEA? He has been concerned about getting resources into teaching spheres and about administration. Is it not unfair for the hon. Gentleman to make such remarks about the retiring education officer?

Mr. Dobson: I have made no criticism whatever of Mr. Stubbs. The hon. Gentleman should have noticed that. It is possible to mention people without criticising them. If people can understand them, my criticisms were directed at the Secretary of State. No doubt they will be directed by the right hon. Member for Chingford at the Secretary of State if he has appointed the person who looks after that monster to a job which, on the standards set by the right hon. Gentleman, he does not seem up to. But that is not my view of Mr. Stubbs. *[Interruption.]*

The interventions by the right hon. Members for Chingford and for Henley cannot really be the result of pressure or, indeed, interest from their local electors in Henley or Chingford. There is another reason. They have realised that the election commitment to let boroughs opt out is a stupid, ill-thought-out, costly blunder. Even the three Tory boroughs that have said that they want to opt out have now asked for outright abolition. If they had confidence in their abilities, one would have thought that they would rather like ILEA to remain in existence so that, by comparison, they could demonstrate the superiority of their new service. They have now looked in detail at the consequences of opting out and have realised that it would be an educational, organisational and financial nightmare.

What is the reaction of the educational vandals who, seven months ago, said that opting out was a great idea? When the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State said that it was a good idea, the right hon. Member for Chingford did not intervene or demur in any way. What did the Government do? They now say, "We were wrong. We got it wrong." Do they abandon it? Not they. Their scheme will not work. Now, to cover their embarrassment, the education of all our children in inner London must be put in turmoil. That is not right, and they know it.

If the Government really want to help the children of inner London, they should drop the current clauses in the Bill and abandon any idea of abolishing ILEA. They should abandon any further threats to its future. They should let it have the resources that it needs to provide a decent education for all our children in inner London, despite the poverty, homelessness, language difficulties, overcrowding and unemployment that beset and threaten so many of them and their parents. If the Government were sincere in their claims to be interested, that is what they would do.

Mr. Michael Heseltine (Henley): I appreciate the trouble to which the hon. Gentleman has gone to make a speech that is related not to the Bill but to his assumption about what the Secretary of State may or may not decide to do. Having listened to all that the hon. Gentleman has said, my right hon. Friend will now be wholly convinced.

Mr. Dobson: If the former Secretary of State for the Environment and for Defence thinks that the fate of 280,000 children in inner London should depend on a flippant remark by him or a speech by me, he is treating them with even more contempt than I thought.

If we listen to Tories who talk about reorganisation, we should remember their track record. Look at what they did to the National Health Service, with its never-ending reorganisations. As Conservatives used to know, changes consume vast amounts of resources in ways that do not benefit patients or pupils. Instead of being able to get on with their jobs, staff at all levels must spend time protecting their jobs or even having to reapply for the jobs that they already have.

That will happen if ILEA is broken up. Where is the evidence that 13 separate administrations, each with elaborate bureaucracies to cope with cross-borough issues, will be simpler and cheaper than one authority? I suppose that it might seem so in Kensington, which has only one secondary school. But what sort of parental choice is that?

The Inner London education authority and its future deserve to be dealt with properly, carefully and fairly, with proper consideration by all hon. Members, if they could possibly turn their minds to doing so.

The law permits the Secretary of State to conduct a public and open review of the functions of ILEA and then determine its future. We believe that it would be wholly

wrong for the future of ILEA to be determined either by the opt-out clauses of the Bill or by late amendments by the Secretary of State to abolish it altogether. We believe that it will be inappropriate to support the motion unless we know what the Secretary of State's intentions are. Is he suggesting, on the basis of the motion, that he can come forward with a proposition by way of an amendment, which would receive one and a half days' attention, and that the future of the education authority should be determined in that short period? We believe that that would be wrong and wicked, which is why we urge the House to reject the motion.

5.10 pm

Mr. John Biffen (Shropshire, North): You, Madam Deputy Speaker, reminded the House that this is a wide debate. I hasten to assure you that my speech will be short.

A few months ago, I was flushed out of the usual channels. Since then, I have acquired all the innocence of a born-again Back Bencher. It is in that spirit that I approach the motion.

I wish my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State well with the Bill. It will be a landmark in Tory education policy and he will follow the traditions of the late Lord Butler. He will be well equipped to counter the partisan remarks of the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), which were made none the more agreeable by their length.

The Bill is a most ambitious piece of legislation. My right hon. Friend the Leader of the House was most amiable in saying that he was not chiding the Standing Committee with lethargy and that its progress has been quite reasonable. On any rational basis, there was no way in which the balance of the Bill could be secured without a timetable. He assured us that it was the most generous timetable for 20 years. My right hon. Friend looked across the Chamber and saw the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot), who in one day produced more timetables than most of us dreamed possible. My right hon. Friend said that he was moving in the direction of my hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery), and I hope that that is so. I shall say a few words about that in due course.

Although we go through something of a ritual when we produce timetables, we know perfectly well that for every timetable that we have in this Chamber about legislation within our control, we give some moral authority to the other place to partake in the legislative process. I have never been an ardent unicameralist. I have been happy to tolerate another Chamber, as long as it could in no way compete in the national affections with what we do here. We always do the other place well when we assert our primacy and its relative role.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), observed, calling in aid the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals, that there was anxiety that legislation could be properly considered in the other place only on the basis of this timetable. I hope that closer examination will persuade the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals to move a little nearer to what my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House said.

This is not the only occasion that we shall be having a timetable in this Parliament. Very often, consideration of a timetable is related to the known issues and contentions, with which we are well equipped and well informed. However, there is one more recent development that is impelling the direction to timetables — the fragility of legislation when confronted by judicial review. Every Government Department, to some extent or another, is anxious about this issue. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has a bold and friendly exterior. I am sure that he never gives a moment's thought to the Bill being mauled in the courts. I do not think that my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Social Services will be quite so heroic about these matters.

We know prefectly well that the Committee stage is no adequate means of making legislation proof against judicial review. If that is to be undertaken, it must be done with the skill and pervasiveness with which the legislation is treated in the Department concerned. That is why the legislative process, in respect of certain aspects of legislation, means that more time will be taken before legislation is produced.

Mr. Dalyell *rose*——

Mr. Biffen: I think that that is a fairly innocuous observation. I see that the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown), the next leader of the as yet unnamed—I am sorry — the Social and Liberal Democratic party, is acquiescing, which encourages me. The hon. Member for Linlithgow should not spoil it.

Given the almost universal political pressures to produce a programme that is politically acceptable, there will be pressures on the work that the House will do in dealing with Bills if they have to be better prepared before they receive their First Reading.

That is why I welcome very much the gesture initiated by my hon. Friend the Member for Honiton. He did so in an amiable way, but discovered that the wicket is rather like a Pakistani one. He came expecting to play and found that, on the whole, it was better to retire not out. However, I hope that my hon. Friend will persevere.

I hope that every time we have a guillotine motion the House will use the occasion to talk about guillotines. Much as I have an interest in ILEA, which has burgeoned in the past 90 minutes, I am still concerned about the procedures of the House. I am concerned about the means of reconciling the interests of the House with those of the Executive within our procedures, knowing that they are far from perfect and knowing that recommendations of the Select Committee on Procedure have not received the warm embrace that it might have hoped for from previous Leaders of the House.

When my right hon. Friend replies to the debate I hope that he will give a welcome to the initiative shown by my hon. Friend the Member for Honiton and I hope that this debate will run and run.

5.17 pm

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): It is a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen), who made some points that I hope others will study and read with interest, and with which I fully associate myself in terms of the need to reform the procedures for introducing legislation and then dealing with it. He made those points more elegantly and perhaps with more force than most, if not all, other hon. Members.

I certainly agree with the right hon. Gentleman that the reliance that is being placed on judicial review as the mechanism by which mistakes can be corrected is

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dangerous for the House and damaging to the process of our democracy. That, allied with the secrecy that now operates and surrounds government, makes it very difficult for the ordinary people of this country, who will be affected by this legislation, effectively to exercise that option.

The second point that the right hon. Gentleman made concerned the more careful preparation of our legislation. There is a serious case, with complicated legislation which will have a considerable impact, for a procedure that will build a sense of consensus of the sort that was built for the 1944 Education Act, although in different circumstances and perhaps with a different intention. If that were the case, the process of the Committee stage would be more effective.

It has been a pleasure to serve on the Committee. Although our debates have been strenuous and tough, the sense of good humour and accommodation has been a revelation and joy to us all.

There is a danger that the motion will devolve into a debate on ILEA, for reasons that we can all understand. Therefore, I shall say a word or two about the guillotine. It is natural and proper that there is a sense of outrage whenever a guillotine is introduced. That is not surprising, because it is the procedures of the House and the role that we play that are being guillotined. It is proper that the Opposition should feel outraged. Inevitably, that outrage will be synthetic to a degree. All Oppositions rage about guillotines; all Governments use them, whether or not they were previously in opposition. We must remember that, in one day in 1976, the Labour party introduced no fewer than five guillotines.

There is genuine concern about the Bill, for several reasons. Through the Bill, we place in the hands of the Secretary of State a range of powers—182 in all—that are devastating in their effect. I do not share the overheated phraseology used by the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) about this Secretary of State. I do not believe that the right hon. Gentleman will use most of those powers that the Bill will give him——

Mr. Dobson: Why take them?

Mr. Ashdown: We shall argue about that later.

I do not think that the Secretary of State will use all those powers in the ways about which we are naturally suspicious, but there can be no doubt that our job is to look at legislation in terms not of the present incumbent but of potential powers for people to use in the future. The powers granted in the Bill are draconian in extent. Who is to say that they will not be used by those who follow this Secretary of State, whether of the Conservative party or of another?

I do not understand why Conservative Members cannot see that the very precedents which they establish in this Bill and in others—they could be used by a Labour Government or a Government of my persuasion, should one follow this Conservative Government — are the mechanisms which would so turn education and so corrupt the education process that they would squeal, justifiably, about the effect. A decent Opposition must look to the potential of the powers that are concealed as well as to the person who will exercise them.

We must be relatively grateful for small mercies. Although I object to the timetable, it is relatively generous. How much better would it be if we dealt with these matters on a more structural basis and if there were timetabling of serious and important Bills such as this from the start? I do not say that because I think that hon. Members intend to filibuster. It is difficult at the start of consideration of 140-odd clauses in Committee to place an appropriate emphasis on the issues that should be taken up. Inevitably, more weight will be placed on the early clauses than should be placed, thereby perhaps neglecting later clauses.

Perhaps there is a case, in the absence of the type of reforms mentioned by the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North, for the House to consider timetabling and structuring from the beginning of debates on Bills such as this.

Mr. Spearing: There is a Select Committee report which advocates some of the hon. Gentleman's points. Is the hon. Gentleman aware that any such proposal would entirely change the polarities in Committee relating to length of speeches and who speaks and that the Minister's attitude and attention would be revolutionised because he would know that he needed only to get the touch and he would get away? In Committee after Committee, the uncertainty in the Minister's private office and in the Department has exercised its own democratic strengths. Surely that is something to which the Select Committee on Procedure and the hon. Gentleman have not paid sufficient attention.

Mr. Ashdown: I agree with the hon. Gentleman's point and am grateful to him for raising it, but that is the downside of the issue which we have discussed. It would not be beyond the wit of the House to find a suitable mechanism—*[Interruption.]* The right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) shakes his head. If he does, I must pay attention, because he is well respected for his opinions and ability in this respect.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): He was the author of the five guillotines.

Mr. Ashdown: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for reminding me that the right hon. Gentleman was the author of the five guillotines mentioned previously. This serious issue needs to be addressed. I am grateful that it has been given serious thought.

The guillotine is of considerable and special concern in relation to this legislation, for several reasons. There has been no attempt to filibuster, and I am grateful to the Leader of the House for admitting that. The issues have been toughly debated and the speeches interesting and worth while. On an issue of this importance, surely we ought to let the Bill run its course more evidently than is allowed by the Government's move.

I hope that the Leader of the House will recognise that several times, when Opposition Members and I have approached the Government and said, "Can we structure the debate?", there has been the chilling response, "It does not really matter what clause is reached. We shall stack in the hours as hard as we can and then move the guillotine." It is not appropriate in those circumstances to move as fast as we have.

There is no doubt that, contrary to the experience of the Education Act 1944, this is one of the most dangerous pieces of legislation brought forward by any Government

for the past 50 years, not even excluding the poll tax legislation. The impact will be felt for decades. What we are doing to our education system is not just a passing injustice, which will be felt for one, two, five or 10 years, when the provisions can then be repealed. It undermines the education process in a way that will be felt by the nation into the next century, until some of the worst effects can be assuaged.

I say that this is a contentious Bill not just because that is my view and that of the Opposition but because it is the view of all those who carry any weight—both producers and consumers—in education. There is not a respectable body — not even the Government's union, the Professional Association of Teachers—that supports the Bill in its entirety and does not see in it sinister and damaging proposals to which it is profoundly opposed. It is not supported even by the parents in whose names it is done, by the National Confederation of Parent-Teacher Associations and many other parent voices — *[Interruption.]* I shall give way to any Conservative Member who can name a parents' organisation that agrees with the Bill.

Mr. Tracey *rose——*

Mr. Ashdown: A national parents' organisation? I am certain that an occasional school here and there, with selfish interests of its own—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Let me be clear. Some schools with selfish interests of their own may well be in favour of certain proposals in the Bill, but the payment will be made by the education process in the community to which they belong. One can always find selfish people who want to support legislation from which they will benefit, but is it for the benefit of the nation or of the community?

Mr. Tracey: The hon. Gentleman is almost reducing the definition to fit in with the Association of Liberal Councils. I can name an organisation, which I believe will grow and grow — the Campaign Urging Better Education. It was launched last week in Wandsworth— *[Interruption.]*—with a fine speech by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, with wholesale agreement by all parents.

Mr. Straw: The hon. Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey) makes the hon. Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) look like a giant.

Mr. Ashdown: The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) says that the hon. Gentleman makes the hon. Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) look like a giant. The hon. Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey) mentioned the Association of Liberal Councils. I do not claim that it is a national body which has an impact on the nation's affairs, but how much less does that apply to some organisation in Wandsworth, for goodness' sake? Let us see how this develops. We shall watch the hon. Gentleman's space with some interest.

Not a single body supports the Bill, which is deeply contentious and contains some deeply contentious items that have yet to be discussed. We are halfway through discussing opting out. As we go on, we must discuss first, for example, the city technology colleges. In a single clause, we shall discuss that proposal, which many of us regard as deeply divisive. I do not say for one second that there is not a case for considering the provision of education outside the monopoly provision of local education authorities. There may well be a case for other bodies to think about establishing schools, provided that they fit within the admissions policy and the general education policies of the local education authority for the area, which serves the community as a whole. I do not object to that as a concept; it is well worth considering. However, the CTCs are a bird of a totally different feather. They will be damaging, and it would be inadequate to deal with that matter in such a short time.

Secondly, there is also the question of the Inner London education authority. Again, I do not pretend for a moment that there is not a serious level of concern about the operation of ILEA, nor do I pretend for a second that there is not a need for a fundamental programme of reform or that in some areas ILEA may fail and fall short of what it should be doing. Indeed, that is hardly surprising with an organisation of that size.

However, the idea that we should abolish it by stealth, which is what the Bill will do—or, as the right hon. Members for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) and for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) would suggest, abolish it by statute—is to my mind wholly unsupportable, because ILEA is a strategic education body that looks after the City of London and the education of 1·25 million of its pupils. The truth of the matter is that both those proposals come from the same stable and are informed by the same motive—political spite. Their suggestion has nothing to do with the education of 1·25 million children in London.

If the proposals were subsequent to a review or study of the operation of ILEA and about ways in which it might be reformed, perhaps one could understand it, but they are not. Frankly, the proposals of those two right hon. Gentlemen, who are not in the Chamber, are a more stark, open and naked option of the sort that the Secretary of State wishes to put forward by stealth. The truth is that those proposals are informed by spite and represent ideological vandalism.

Mr. John Maples (Lewisham, West): If the desire of the boroughs to opt out is motivated by political spite, why does Tower Hamlets number itself among those boroughs?

Mr. Ashdown: The hon. Gentleman has raised a fair point and I am grateful to him for giving me the opportunity to put the matter on the record. What he says cannot be surprising. The Liberal administration of Tower Hamlets has made it clear that it is in favour of ILEA and wishes it to continue. However, if ILEA is not to continue because of the Government's ideological spite and if the rich boroughs then opt out, surely the hon. Gentleman realises that it would be foolish for anybody to be left in there as a rump organisation. Tower Hamlets is following that procedure simply because it has no other option. Indeed, we now understand that that applies to one or two of the Labour-controlled authorities also.

There can be no doubt that those authorities believe, as I believe, that the destruction of ILEA is motivated much more by politics than by the best interests of the pupils of London. If that were not the case, why is it that all the reforms which the Secretary of State said that he would like to see in ILEA are in his power to deliver? Indeed, the succeeding Education Acts that he has introduced have given him the reforms with which to move into Brent, Hackney and the other areas which we now hear played up as the whipping boys for the Government's intentions, but the Secretary of State has not made one move. He has

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not used any of those powers to reform the education of London because he wishes to have a reason for doing what he now seeks to do out of political motivation.

Briefly and finally, the third of the proposals is, in a sense, almost the most damaging of them all, with the possible exception of opting out. The proposals for higher and further education will give the Government a direct capacity to control what goes on in our universities and higher education institutions. I suspect that the Government will hear a lot more about that. The Government's control of higher and further education strikes not just at the heart of the nature of our education system but at the nature of our democracy and of the pluralism within our system. That matter should not be discussed under the control of the guillotine.

Therefore, for those reasons, we shall certainly vote against the guillotine tonight. We believe that this legislation will be damaging, divisive, and destructive and that its effect will be felt for decades to come. Therefore, it must have proper consideration and not one which, as the guillotine will propose, will be timetabled, curtailed and far too short.

5.34 pm

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): I am delighted that part of the tradition of the House, to debate with a previous speaker, can be followed in my instance. I take up what the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) said when he mentioned that, on the introduction of the guillotine, there must be a sense of outrage. That sense of outrage is not shown much by the number of hon. Members attending the debate or in the structure between the usual channels. I take the hon. Gentleman back 20 years, or perhaps more, because, whenever a guillotine motion was introduced in the House then, there really was outrage. The debate was not only for half a day; it was for a whole day and the House was full. Indeed, the relationship between the usual channels was often put considerably at risk. Therefore, the outrage today is immensely synthetic compared with the past.

I was delighted to hear the hon. Gentleman go on to talk more about the Procedure Committee than about the guillotine. I ask the hon. Gentleman to take up House of Commons Paper No. 324 of the 1985-86 Session, which contains recommendations for timetabling after 12½ hours of debate, with the timetabling in the hands of the members of the Committee so that they could inherently decide.

I refer in passing to the intervention of the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), who suggested that the effect of the threat of delay and the worry of the private office has considerable effect. I advise the hon. Gentleman that the Procedure Committee considered that fully. Our judgment was that in every Bill, in the long run, the Government have always got what they wanted. In our view it is a fallacy to think that what is said has a major effect on whether the Government give way.

Mr. Spearing *rose*——

Sir Peter Emery: I shall just finish my sentence.

I advise the hon. Gentleman that Governments give way on matters about which they do not really care. Governments are happy to show some movement on such things, but on the things that they are determined to do and on the dates when they want their Bills out of Committee, every Government, of any party, have always had their way during the past 20 years.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way on this point. I do not argue with it as a general proposition, but surely the question is how difficult it is for the Government to get their own way and whether timetabling, as his Committee suggested, would make that harder or easier. I suggest that it would not only be easier to some extent, but that it would be more predictable. Those facts combined mean that the Opposition would, by definition, lose certain powers. That applies to any Government of any political complexion and would therefore be bad for the House of Commons.

Sir Peter Emery: I have heard that argument, and I have no doubt that it will be mounted again, but I counter it by suggesting that what I wish to ensure, and what the Procedure Committee wishes to ensure, is the totality of a Bill and that all of it will be debated. That is of greater importance than nearly anything else in the consideration of this Bill and of what happens in Standing Committee.

One real worry would be the type of guillotine before us today if we did not have the assurance that has been given by the Leader of the House. Of the 104 clauses that remain to be discussed in Committee, there would be a considerable chance that between 50 and 60 of those clauses would never be debated in Committee; that we would come to the Floor of the House and they would not be debated fully here; that the Bill would then go to another place and that another place would have the right to begin saying, "We must interfere in that legislation because it has not been dealt with by the House of Commons."

Dr. Hampson: I wholeheartedly endorse what my hon. Friend says. The outrage about higher education is synthetic. There is no question but that, on a Bill of this length, the crucial higher education clauses, and especially the issue of academic freedom, would not have been reached unless my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House had brought forward a speedy guillotine. I agree that such big Bills, which all Governments produce, should be formally timetabled so that the discipline of Opposition can be brought to bear on all contentious issues and Ministers cannot escape on any area.

Sir Peter Emery: I am delighted to have the support of my hon. Friend.

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): I assure the hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) that the clauses on education would have been debated because that is in the interests of the Opposition. We were keen to make progress. The Leader of the House has already said that there was no evidence of filibustering on the part of the Opposition parties. We were keen to make progress and would have continued to do so.

Sir Peter Emery: I appreciate that, but with a guillotine it is possible for the Government to stop such filibustering by organising the way in which the time is allocated afterwards. The lack of time may not be the fault of the Opposition, but the way in which the Government engineer that time. For that reason, the Procedure Committee was concerned that the allocation of time

should be settled to a greater extent by the Committee than by anybody else. That is a major factor in the presentation of the guillotine to the House.

When dealing with future guillotines, I hope that this debate will represent a move in the direction that the Government intend to continue. An amendment in the names of a number of right hon. and hon. Members much more distinguished than myself was not seen fit to be accepted by the Chair. But the wish expressed by the Leader of the House when he answered my question last Thursday was:

"I intend to see that every clause of the Bill is debated in Standing Committee."—[*Official Report*, 28 January 1988; Vol. 126, c. 489.]

Our amendment did not go as far as that major statement. Given the number of clauses, the Procedure Committee was particularly intent to ensure that all parts of the Bill could be adequately scrutinised and that every substantive proposal could be considered. The amendment that is not before the House contained direct quotations from the Procedure Committee report. There is a lot of difference between consideration of every clause and consideration of every major matter within a Bill.

I welcome what the Leader of the House has done today. We are moving towards the general consideration backed by the two reports of the Procedure Committee. That consideration was backed by a vast number of hon. Members. However, the first report was voted down by the largest turnout of Secretaries of State, Ministers, Parliamentary Under-Secretaries and Parliamentary Private Secretaries ever assembled for any vote of the last Session of Parliament, and despite the fact that that vote was on a one-line Whip. That vote represented a great achievement and was to the credit or discredit of the present President of the Council who organised it. However, we are now moving towards some degree of flexibility. Indeed, it was the flexibility of the Committee's previous report that was unacceptable to the then Government Chief Whip.

When my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State replies, I urge him to follow up the undertaking given by the Leader of the House, that every major contention—not every clause—will be debated in Committee before the Bill is reported. If that means that the Committee must sit on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, or even Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, so be it. In that way, everything could be covered. No one here would suggest that the Education Bill is not of major contention, whatever one's views. With a Bill of such importance, it would be criminally wrong of us to send part of it to their Lordships' Chamber without it having been debated in Committee in the House of Commons. I ask the Secretary of State for an assurance that would reinforce that given by the Leader of the House.

I hope that this small movement to improve the procedures of the House will be acted upon. It may not be necessary to have 80 hours—it could be less—to ensure that the whole time is reasonably organised so that we can get over the problem whereby legislation leaves this place without due and proper consideration in Committee. If this debate marks the first stage in that achievement, it will be much more important than anything to do with outrage or with most of the votes and debates on guillotine motions than we have witnessed in the past 10 or 15 years. If we move in that direction, it will be a major achievement.

5.46 pm

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): I believe that we have before us the first guillotine presented to the House in this Session. This timetable motion represents an attempt to deceive the House. The Bill contains nothing less than a syllabus of deceit of parents. They are being given the impression that the Bill, when enacted, will afford them greater choice for the education of their children, more power over the schools that their children attend and higher standards of education.

However, in effect, the Bill will give a little more choice to a few parents, and in many cases, will lead to less choice for virtually all parents. In no case will it give parents any power over the boards of governors, because parents will be in a permanent minority. Because of the divisive opting-out proposals, it will be much more difficult for local education authorities to deliver higher standards of education. However, we are now being asked to limit the amount of time that we can spend debating the Bill in Committee.

As a new Member, I have found it something of a revelation to watch what happens in Committee. I have been amazed at the way in which some Conservative Members have introduced amendments, for which they have spoken most eloquently, but have then either withdrawn them, on the most feeble assurances from the Minister, or voted against the said amendments. I find that a most amazing occurrence, and I am still awaiting a reasonable explanation for it, especially as some of those hon. Members have been paid consultancy fees by organisations that have promoted those amendments.

Mr. Christopher Hawkins (High Peak): I am not paid a consultancy fee, but there is a sensible explanation for such procedures. If someone has got an assurance from a Minister that something they have asked for on an amendment may be delivered on Report, it is naive to put that amendment to the vote, because that means it may not be called on Report. If a vote is not taken in Committee, Mr. Speaker will assume that the issue should be debated on Report, especially if the Minister has given such an assurance.

Mr. Griffiths: If the hon. Member for High Peak (Mr. Hawkins) was right every time that has happened, I would not have bothered to mention it. However, on some occasions, Ministers have denied any possibility of an amendment being considered; at other times, they have presented 20 arguments as to why they should not consider it, and then have decided to look at it again. Hon. Members have, on occasions, been in the feeble position of voting against their own amendments.

I turn to other things that happened in Committee. One afternoon we were to debate the proposals on testing and assessment. That same afternoon, a substantial report by the task group on assessment and testing—the TGAT report—came out. We barely had the chance to look at it. We were promised a debate on testing and assessment later. However, today we know that the Bill will be guillotined. We are in the shadow of the guillotine and the time that can be given to a debate on testing and assessment must be limited. It is questionable whether we will have sufficient time to examine the report — of several hundred pages — which, in many respects, contains proposals with which the Prime Minister would not agree.

[Mr. Griffiths]

Currently, we are discussing the opting-out proposals. We have spent some time on what must be regarded as the most divisive and dangerous part of the Bill. We could spend some time on it if we were not subject to the threat of a guillotine.

It has been interesting to note how Ministers have changed their stance under questioning. I shall cite one incident in Committee that shows that it is important for us to have time to tease out of Ministers what they really mean. The Minister of State, Department of Education and Science said that the fees—perhaps I should say the voluntary contributions that parents in opted-out schools will be encouraged to pay—will not be used to pay for the staff at the school. However, after half a dozen questions we were told that if the school governors so decided, they would be able to use those voluntary contributions to finance the staff. It took some time to get a complete volte-face from the Minister. Under the pressure of a guillotine, there will not always be time to probe Ministers. They will know that they can be saved by the guillotine.

However, there are many important topics that we have not yet touched upon, such as higher and further education. My hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) has already dwelt on the real future of ILEA, and he has explained at some length that, while we are under a guillotine, we cannot be sure which clauses and which amendments on the future of ILEA will be debated.

The Government have introduced a large number of amendments to tidy up the Bill as originally drafted. That is another important factor in our belief that there should not be a guillotine and that the measure should be debated in full, unencumbered by Government threats of a time limit.

I shall refer briefly to two parts of the explanatory and financial memorandum—the financial effects of the Bill and the effects on public service manpower—which arise in many other parts of the Bill. The Government show a lack of knowledge about what will really happen if the Bill is put into effect in its current form. The statement on the financial effects of the Bill says that some of the testing and assessment proposals will cost £33 million, but that for the rest of the Bill the financial effects will be broadly neutral, especially in regard to financial delegation. It says that, because there will be a change in administrative responsibility, any extra costs incurred in the schools will be saved within the local education authority.

Anyone who knows what happens when an organisation is attacked in such a way will realise that it is not easy to make strict comparisons of savings and losses. The Coopers and Lybrand report, sponsored by the Government, was quick to point out that it should not be imagined that financial delegation to schools will save any money. Again, we are threatened with the possibility of having insufficient time to find out exactly what will be the financial effects of the Bill.

Finally, I should like to raise the issue of public service manpower. The effects of the Bill on manpower—or perhaps it should be called personnel, as more than half the manpower is women—states:

"The implementation of the national curriculum and new admission arrangements for schools may require some redeployment within planned overall teacher numbers."

That is an example of the certainty and depth of knowledge with which the Government have applied themselves to constructing the massive Education Reform Bill. The Opposition are certain that it will have significant effects. At one time, the Government gave us some assurances about the Bill's effects on personnel. We are still waiting for an answer. The probing questions asked in Committee received no answers from the Government.

Despite the fact that the Bill has been before the Committee, there is probably a myriad of civil servants in the Department of Education and Science trying to find out what will be the exact effects of the Bill. It is a disgrace that the Bill is to be guillotined when the Government have no confidence that they will be able to answer questions on so many aspects of the Bill regarding the future of the education service.

5.58 pm

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): I know that I am not alone in speaking as a parent. It is right and proper that the voices of parents should be raised in the House about the urgency of their children's education. There is a real danger that, in regard to education in Britain we, as politicians, could be criticised for fiddling while Rome burned.

We must remember that 10 years ago Lord Callaghan began the great debate on education. His Government did very little about it. Quite a bit has been done by my Government since that time. The Labour party's efforts during those years were criticised, rightly, by Mr. John Lloyd, the editor of the *New Statesman*, who could hardly be described as a Conservative, when he said on 16 October:

"The Left did not face up to failures, and to the manifest alarm of the mass of parents."

That is precisely what the Government are facing up to and that is why we consider that it is urgent that the reforms in the Bill should be debated and implemented as swiftly as possible.

Mr. Flannery: The hon. Gentleman said that he is a parent and that there are many other parents in the House. However, does he send his children to schools within the state system of education? As my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) said, our experience is that the people who are out to destroy the existing system of education, just as in the National Health Service, do not use it. They are paternalising and lecturing to us about our children's education while sending their children to private schools.

Mr. Tracey: I am grateful for that intervention. Both my wife and I were educated in the state sector. My wife is a member of the Inner London education authority and all four of my children are being educated in the state sector. The hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends often run away with the fallacy that Conservative Members are not interested in state education and are not educating their children in the state sector.

It is urgent for parents, children and employers that the reforms in the Bill should be implemented.

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): The hon. Gentleman mentioned urgency. Will he tell the House how many representations he has received from parents? I have written to every governing body in my constituency

and I have not received a single letter from any parent or governing body saying that they are in favour of the Bill or the speed with which it is being put through.

Mr. Tracey: I have received several representations from parents within my constituency and outside—[HON MEMBERS: "How many?"] Some tens of representations. That is a fair number for a Member of Parliament to receive. The schools in my constituency , which is in the royal borough of Kingston-Upon-Thames, are well regarded by parents because we still have a grammar school and secondary modern system that the parents fight to retain. Indeed, they recently fought a Liberal-Labour coalition on the council to ensure that the grammar schools and secondary moderns were retained. On the question of standards as a whole, I have received representations and heard from parents saying that they support the aims of the Bill.

The comparison of performance between British children and children in Germany is illuminating. We hear that nine out of 10 children leave German schools with qualifications at 16 that are matched by only four out of 10 on a comparable basis in this country. There is considerable and accepted under-motivation of children in British schools and the level of attainment is not adequate; so many parents and employers regularly speak to Members of Parliament about that. I have been present at meetings of governing bodies where employers, who have been governors of schools, have raised that point with me.

Mr. Gerry Steinberg (City of Durham): Will the hon. Gentleman tell us why so many national organisations and parents have written to members of the Committee opposing the Bill? I am prepared to show the hon. Gentleman the number of letters I have received opposing the Bill. Is he prepared to show me the letters he has received welcoming the Bill?

Mr. Tracey: There is no doubt that the number of representations Committee members have received—no doubt the hon. Gentleman has received the same as me —have come mainly from unions and people who have been encouraged to write. My experience in inner London is that many parents and governing bodies are being whipped up to write to Committee members by ILEA. That authority says it is short of money but, as with Labour authorities that we all know so well in London, it can spend large amounts of money on producing propaganda to throw out when legislation is being discussed in the House.

Mr. Win Griffiths: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that if parents and governing bodies are being whipped up in response to the Bill, it is as a result of the dismay they feel at the proposals the Government are putting forward?

Mr. Tracey: My view is that the whipping up is being done by partisan politicians, particularly from the Labour party. The literature I have received as a governor of an ILEA school has been urging governors to write to the Department of Education and Science and Members of Parliament saying that the governors are out of sympathy with the legislation. That is a ridiculous use of ratepayers' money by the Inner London education authority.

The Inner London education authority was discussed at great length by the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson). As I pointed out at the time, I thought that the speech should have been about the timetable motion, but he seemed to think that it was a debate on ILEA. The question of the future education of our children in inner London is critical. I believe that ILEA should be abolished and I have said that on a number of occasions over a number of years. I believe that our children in inner London are being ill-served by the political majority in county hall and I believe that the standards they could achieve are not being reached. I am sure that——

Mr. Dobson: Can the hon. Gentleman name one Tory Member of Parliament who put that proposition in his election address at the general election?

Mr. Tracey: Nobody put that precise point in their election address because the Government were being seen to move towards allowing boroughs to opt out. If the Bill continues in its present form, a few Labour boroughs will opt out. In itself, that would trigger the full abolition of ILEA. I have tabled an amendment to reduce the trigger point from eight boroughs opting out to five boroughs. However, I believe that the best possible solution would be for ILEA to be abolished at a stroke. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and the Cabinet will agree to that policy.

Mr. Ashdown: The hon. Gentleman is complaining about the political direction of ILEA. Does he not realise that his proposals and those of the Government will put the schoolchildren of Southwark, Camden and Hackney into the hands of their boroughs? Is he happy to see that happen? That seems to be about as responsible as appointing as a head teacher at a school a drunken bankrupt who is in the process of having a nervous breakdown.

Mr. Tracey: I understood that the Liberal party had some hopes of winning control of Southwark council, so I am not quite sure what point the hon. Gentleman is making. When faced with a choice between the policies of the Conservative party and the policies of the Labour party, the electorate may well return a Conservative authority. It will be able to compare Labour's policies with the policies that have been pursued by Conservative authorities in well-run boroughs such as Wandsworth, where there is support for opting out.

I shall now direct some remarks to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras. *The Times* pointed out the other day that, at the "Labour Listens" exercise in Brighton, he did far more talking than listening.

Mr. Dobson: Will the hon. Gentleman give us the precise quotation from *The Times*, or is he getting yet another quotation wrong?

Mr. Tracey: I think the point made was that it was a "Labour Listens" exercise and that the hon. Gentleman did more talking than listening. By his rapid intervention just now, he has proved that he prefers to do more talking than listening.

The hon. Gentleman talked at length about ILEA. On 19 November there was a by-election in the Southfields ward of Wandsworth borough council. There was a rumour that the whole Labour Front Bench would be turning up to support the Labour candidate. As Labour Members are fair-weather politicians and it was a rather wet day, they resorted to sending only the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw). I cast no aspersions on what

[Mr. Tracey]

campaigning he tried to do, but the Labour party fought that by-election on the call to vote Labour and save ILEA. In fact, the Conservative candidate considerably increased his majority and, as a result, Wandsworth continues towards opting out of ILEA.

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras referred to the wonders and successes of ILEA. On that and on Conservative education policies, I can do no better than to quote none other than Mr. Neil Fletcher, the Labour leader of ILEA, speaking to the Socialist Education Association on 30 September;

"The appeal that the Tories are making, and which plays on parent's fears, clearly has some resonance. Put bluntly, these fears are that comprehensive education does not stretch and challenge children enough or provide them with the essential skills needed for survival in the modern world. How do you build into a comprehensive system a real emphasis on the achievement potential of each child . . . Does our system let down these children? For too many of them, if we are honest, the answer is yes. Why are working class children still not doing as well as their middle class peers? I am doubtful as to how far we should take socio-economic background as a determinant excuse."

Those are the words of one of the leading exponents of the Labour party's education policies. Mr. Neil Fletcher apparently accepts exactly what the Government are driving at and understands why there is an urgent need for the Bill to be implemented.

6.14 pm

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): I wish to make two brief points. First, as a person of extreme moderation, I find it difficult to know how I can be expected to vote for the timetable motion if the Secretary of State does not tell us in his wind-up speech whether ILEA itself is to be guillotined. At the moment, it is being destroyed by a thousand cuts and, as I told the Committee, by the tactics of chambre des oubliettes, but it seems that there is worse to come and that two Tory grandees, who have slipped out to avoid the whiplash of my tongue, are seeking to test to destruction the nerve of the Secretary of State.

As the Government try to make up their mind when and how to behead, dismember and disembody ILEA, they stand guilty, first, of denying the validity of the democratic process; secondly, of tormenting those who have the job of running ILEA's education system; and, thirdly, of playing with the education of 270,000 pupils. I should have thought that everyone, including the Secretary of State—good, decent, liberal person that he is—would find it tragic that the future of the children of the capital should be made contingent on the splenetic outbursts of the tigerish tiger from Henley and the Knuckleduster Kid from Chingford. Surely, the Secretary of State cannot be beyond shame. He cannot allow himself to become the cat's paw of the tigerish tiger and the punch bag for the knuckleduster kid.

I was present when the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) spoke about ILEA on Second Reading. He now appears to be in the driving seat at the Department of Education and Science. On Second Reading, he spoke about schools in ILEA and the institutions of higher learning that ILEA runs, with roughly the same gushing ignorance with which he speaks about so many other subjects. He comes here as a Privy Councillor and dabbles in this, that and the other. He ends up by appearing rather like a father who buys his young children a bucket and spade prior to sending them on holiday to the Rocky mountains.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) said, parents whose children attend ILEA's schools are beginning to wonder what it is—apart from political ambition — that makes the right hon. Member for Henley so concerned about the education of some of the poorest children in the country when he is one of the richest people in England. Parents in Hackney have decided that the right hon. Gentleman is living proof of Maurice Baring's famous dictum:

"If you would know what the Lord God thinks of money, you have only to look at those to whom he gives it."

My first point, therefore, is simply this: before we vote on this timetable motion, the Leader of the House or the Secretary of State himself, as he is to reply, should tell us when the right hon. Member for Henley will officially take over the portfolio at the Department of Education and Science.

My second point concerns the offer of a job made to Mr. William Stubbs, the education officer of ILEA, by the Secretary of State and the fact that Mr. Stubbs has accepted that offer. We should not vote on this issue until we have had a statement from the Secretary of State about what he perceives to be his role in this and how he perceives and justifies the role of Mr. William Stubbs. In New Testament biblical times, the going rate for treachery was 30 pieces of silver, but for Mr. Stubbs it appears to be 10 G — that is, the £10,000 that I understand the Secretary of State will add to his salary when he takes up his new job and abandons ship at ILEA.

I do not want to criticise Mr. Stubbs professionally, but I criticise his courage, because a serious political point is involved that cannot be forgotten. In abandoning ship, Mr. Stubbs reminds me of the naval captain who, on hearing that war was about to break out, scuppered his ships so that he would not have to engage in battle.

Mr. Stubbs tells us that there is no conflict of interest between what he is doing and the fact that he is the education officer at ILEA. I ask Mr. Stubbs, the Secretary of State and the House to consider that. The Secretary of State, who is giving William Stubbs a job, only last week announced that he was cutting ILEA's budget, which Mr. Stubbs heads, by £114 million, putting at risk 3,000 teaching jobs. To say that there is no conflict of interest is to abuse the ordinary use of the English language.

The Secretary of State has offered a job to Mr. William Stubbs, the head of ILEA, who says that the Secretary of State's proposals in the Bill will destroy ILEA. Only somebody well versed in devilish semantics would seek to argue that there was no conflict of interest there.

Worse than that, the job offered to Mr. Stubbs is as head of the funding council of the polytechnics. Every ILEA member to whom I have spoken is opposed to the way in which that funding council will operate and to the role that Mr. Stubbs will play in denying academic freedom to polytechnics. That is the point that the universities' and polytechnics' funding councils have made. How dare the Secretary of State or Mr. William Stubbs seek to argue that there is no conflict of interest in the offer and acceptance of that particular job?

If Mr. Stubbs really believes that there is no conflict of interest, he no longer recognises the nature or quality of his acts, he is no longer capable of distinguishing between right and wrong, and if he came before a court of law he

would be certified under the M'Naghten rules—and so, incidentally, would the Secretary of State. *[Interruption.]* We know that this is about, not certification, but political will power. *[Interruption]* I heard the Secretary of State ask me to repeat what I said outside the House. I was not going to tell him this, but over the weekend I wrote Mr. Speaker a private, confidential letter indicting the Secretary of State and Mr. Stubbs of breach of privilege and contempt of this House. I cannot talk about private confidential letters to Mr. Speaker, but I am sure that Mr. Speaker will take this matter rather more seriously than perhaps the Secretary of State has done.

This reminds me of the time when I was at the Bar, defending professional criminals. When some people had committed a serious crime, although their dabs were all over the scene of the crime and they had made a full and frank confession to the police and signed it, there was no way that counsel for the Crown—however hard he or she tried or however skilful he or she was—could get that guilty person to make any incriminating statement. By intensive psychological pressure one can wipe a crime out of one's mind. In this case, Mr. William Stubbs and the Secretary of State, caught bang to rights, will not issue a plea of guilty. Therefore, I hope that Mr. Speaker will take up the matter and come back to the House on it.

Mr. Walden: I have listened carefully to the hon. Gentleman's speech in which he has ranged widely from the Old Testament to the Rocky mountains and back to confessions. I was reminded of what my hon. Friend the Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey) said about the unpressured confession of Mr. Neil Fletcher. We are discussing the failure of ILEA, a massive and over-financed organisation, to provide education of quality for ordinary children. Before the hon. Gentleman sits down, will he deal with that central point and come back from the Rockies and the Old Testament?

Mr. Sedgemore: I was about to sit down, but I am happy to answer the hon. Gentleman's intervention. In my discussions with ILEA, it has been put to me that, as my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras said, there is a management problem. I do not want to criticise Mr. Stubbs professionally, but as the hon. Gentleman is drawing me out, I must say that the consensus of those who have studied the issue is that the management problem is not the problem to which Mr. Stubbs has addressed himself over the past 10 years. Although he has done some good work for ILEA, he has not addressed himself to the problem to which the hon. Gentleman objects most seriously. If that is true—and it is what ILEA members say—I regret it.

One should not damn ILEA out of hand. We hear a great deal about its examination results, and HMI has produced reports which show that, if ILEA's examination results are adjusted for social deprivation, they are slightly better than the average. I do not say that that is great; they should be improved. If there is any place in inner London where there is room to improve ILEA's education, it is Hackney which I represent. I am not trying to push ILEA to the skies or to knock it down. Nobody could suggest that either boroughs opting out or the Secretary of State introducing proposals to abolish ILEA, as we think he will, is sensible, and Mr. Stubbs to his credit, at least until recently, has argued that the proposals are silly.

Mr. Harry Greenway: As one who worked with Mr. William Stubbs, I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will not wish to slur Mr. Stubbs to the extent to which he has done, without at least saying that Mr. Stubbs has given the most distinguished service to the children and teachers of London and to all connected with education.

Mr. Sedgemore: Mr. William Stubbs has done some first-class work for ILEA, and the range of its educational service, which is universally admired by the inspectors, is to Mr. Stubbs' credit. On the debit side, Mr. Stubbs does not appear to have addressed the management problem. On the issue which I have raised, I do not retract one comma, colon or full stop. Everybody to whom I have spoken has been shocked by Mr. Stubbs, the speed with which he has acted and the fact that he did not consult his colleagues, or the people for whom he worked. In my view, his action constitutes a constitutional outrage for which both he and the Secretary of State must answer.

6.27 pm

Mr. Christopher Hawkins (High Peak): It may please you Mr. Deputy Speaker, to hear that I intend to speak not about ILEA, but about an issue of concern to people throughout the United Kingdom.

I strongly support the motion to timetable the Education Reform Bill. It is a massive Bill, as befits a massive task. It aims to reform all levels of education, up to and including universities. Since the Bill has more than 140 clauses and so far we have covered only 43, my fear is that we may not reach the important clauses on universities unless we have the timetable proposed by the Government.

Some of the clauses on universities worry me. Although the proposals for schools are catching the media spotlight, the proposals for universities seem to be at least as radical. Sadly, in some respects the proposals for universities will be extremely harmful. Since some of my hon. Friends believe that the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals supports the proposals, I should like to quote from a recent letter from Mr. Taylor, the secretary general of the CVCP. He writes:

"The universities are on the side of change. And indeed they have changed radically in recent years. They have been able to do so because their autonomy has allowed them to act imaginatively. They in no way question the importance of accounting in full for public moneys granted to them and have recently taken steps to sharpen up their procedures in this respect.

Their autonomy is now threatened. This Bill would create a new beaurocratic machinery subservient to direct and detailed ministerial intervention. This is strangely at odds with the Government's declared intention to foster university autonomy and runs counter to its express belief that organisations respond best if they are given the responsibility implicit in freedom . . .

At this stage we wish to concentrate on two major issues. The First is The Universities Funding Council and the powers of the Secretary of State. (clauses 92, 94). The Bill represents a very significant increase in the powers of the Secretary of State even above those foreshadowed in the consultative document issued six months ago.

For example:

The Secretary of State is empowered to 'make grants to each of the funding councils of such amounts and subject to such conditions as he may determine'. (94.3)

The Secretary of State 'may by order confer or impose on either of the funding councils such additional functions as he thinks fit'. (94.1)

The funding councils 'shall comply with any directions given to them by the Secretary of State'. (94.4)

[Mr. Christopher Hawkins]

The logic of this is that the UFC would merely be the Secretary of State's agent."

Nobody with a nervous disposition should read the powers given to the Secretary of State in the clauses relating to universities. Nobody should look on this Bill as a Bill solely for this reasonable Secretary of State, as we are writing legislation which may last 30 to 40 years and could cover all manner of Secretaries of State. These are extraordinary and dangerous powers. They are strong enough to destroy any reasonable level of autonomy in our university system.

On tenure and academic freedom, the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals says:

"The Government has decided to abolish academic tenure. Assurances have been given in speeches and parliamentary statements that academic freedom will be protected when tenure is removed. By 'academic freedom' universities do not mean unqualified job protection. They mean the freedom within the law for academic staff to question and to test received wisdom and to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions without placing individuals in jeopardy of losing their jobs. The Government has accepted this definition in its recent statements. So why is there no protection in the Bill?"

The Association of University Teachers is also opposed to the proposals on tenure, which it believes will add significantly to the brain drain. If our brightest academics can be fired at short notice, perhaps only for expressing unpopular views, why should they not go to other countries — even to America, which so many of my colleagues admire as the great home of the free market, where tenure is generally available in a free-market system and where no Goverment have tried in a nanny or any other way to remove universities' power to give tenure if they wish to do so.

These proposals are unwelcome in universities at all levels. I fear that they will create confrontation and ill will. It saddens me to see that resulting from our proposals.

I thought that it might be helpful for the House if I gave some figures to show what academic tenure means in practice — whether it means a job for life. Further, I thought that it might be helpful if I contrasted such figures with equivalents in the bracing atmosphere of the Department of Education and Science and other parts of the public sector, where, we are told, tenure does not exist.

I expected, of course, to find a static, sleepy university sector and a rapidly changing, thrusting and ever-moving DES. I found from the University Grants Committee official figures that one in six university staff in Britain have lost their jobs since 1979—some job for life!—and that 10,000 staff are on temporary appointments.

In a written question, I asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science

"how many employees of his Department have been made redundant on grounds of redundancy or financial exigency in the last 10 years". — [*Official Report*, 8 December 1987; Vol. 124, c. *100*.]

Those are the words used in the Bill. My hon. Friend the Minister of State replied that, from 1977 to 1985, the number of people declared redundant in the DES amounted to one part-time cleaner in a local office. In 1986 —another heavy year for redundancies in the DES—one packer, nominally on secondment to the British Library in Boston, was declared redundant solely because he or she was unwilling to accept regrading.

I thought that it might be of interest to the House if I gave some figures for the House of Commons—another bracing atmosphere. I asked the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), as representing the House of Commons Commission,

"how many employees of the Commission or its predecessor have been made redundant on grounds of redundancy or financial exigency in the last 10 years".

He replied:

"In the last 10 years one employee's appointment has been terminated on grounds of redundancy."—[*Official Report*, 10 December 1987; Vol. 124, c. *242*.]

The idea that tenure means a job for life is clearly a myth when one sixth of university staff have lost their jobs since 1979 and when 10,000 are on temporary appointments. All the flexibility that the vice-chancellors could possibly want, and which any reasonable Government could want for any reasonable plans for universities, is already built into the system. I ask Ministers, hon. Members and the Committee to bear in mind the figures that I have given. I hope that Ministers will seriously reconsider the draconian proposals in this part of the Bill.

6.37 pm

Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas (Meirionnyd Nant Conwy): The hon. Member for High Peak (Mr. Hawkins) has set out clearly his worries about the parts of the Bill that affect universities. I shall not cause him further embarrassment by praising his speech too warmly, but I am sure his trenchant criticism and the statistics that he provided will strike the absent Minister with responsibility for higher education when we reach the relevant clauses in Committee.

I shall be brief, as there is no need for those of us who are members of the Committee to rehearse setpiece debates that we have already had or those we are likely to have. I agree with the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) about the need for timetabling. I understand the argument that the exigencies of Committee work can sometimes lead to unexpected concessions late at night. My response is that we have had very few concessions, late at night or otherwise, from any of the Ministers. There have been no changes and it looks increasingly likely that changes will not be conceded unless the Government lose a Division.

We are not dealing here with the logic of the argument or the pressure on Departments. We should move towards pre-legislation reform through consultation with persons outside the House, and increasing use of Special Standing Committee procedure, followed by timetabling of all legislation. That would give us a more rational form of law-making than is available at present, when timetabling is not introduced until late.

I agree with one point made by the Leader of the House. There has been no attempt by the Opposition—neither the Labour, nor the minority party Oppositions as all Oppositions are plural in this House—to forestall or prevent the progress of reasonable debate in Committee. That is a credit to all Committee members and, particularly, to my hon. Friends who lead for the Opposition. They have been criticised in the education media for their role, but it is preferable to adopt such a tactic in Committee where principles and certain detailed issues can be debated and taken up with Ministers in a rational way. That is preferable to the notion of opposition which begins at clause 1, produces 100 amendments to that clause and wastes the Opposition's and the Government's

time. It is right for minority Members on the Committee to pay tribute to the way in which the Committee on the Bill has been conducted.

Although I have spoken in favour of the principle of timetabling all legislation, my hon. Friends and I will oppose the timetable motion, not because of the principle of timetabling, but because of the principles of the Bill. Those principles are unnecessary for the education system in England. They are not being introduced in Scotland because the Scots, quite sensibly, do not regard the need to legislate centrally as a prerequisite of curriculum or structural changes in education policy.

In the light of history, the Bill will be seen as a major centralist intervention in the education system, destroying the partnership between local education authorities and central Government and creating new forms of centralisation in the guise of local decentralisation. Grant-maintained schools will be established through a central Department agency, although I do not see many such schools being set up in Wales. The local democracy of local education authorities will be subverted. In that sense, the Bill's principles are centralising tendencies. They are not about local freedom. They are about the destruction of local communities, because they will take the control of educational institutions away from the local community.

Similarly, the proposals for the national curriculum are centralisation proposals. They are attempts by the Secretary of State to impose an unnecessary structure on the curriculum development in schools. The agencies for change existed in the Schools Council and the examination bodies, but the Department prefers to undo those democratic structures, which included an elected element from the teaching profession, and replace them with centralising tendencies.

Although I am pessimistic about the Bill, I have a great deal of confidence in the education system. The Secretary of State may legislate, but he will not be able to deliver the negative principles in the Bill. That is already emerging. When he sets up groups of experts to consider assessment, they will come back and say that these simplistic notions, such as testing the attainment of kids aged seven, 11 and 14, cannot be implemented. The centralising hand of the Department cannot operate in the curriculum because it cannot reach into the reality of the classroom and of the education system. Although we who have lived and worked in education are concerned about the Bill, we are convinced that the reality of the system will be very different from what is being legislated for in the Bill.

6.44 pm

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): I hope that the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) will forgive me if I do not follow him down the road which he has signposted, but I do wish to make a brief reference to the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore). I listened to his comments about Mr. William Stubbs and thought, "Methinks he doth protest too much." Mr. Stubbs must indeed be a good choice if he upsets Opposition Members as much as he evidently does.

The Education Reform Bill is important to the education system and to the nation's children. Like many other Conservative Members, I am anxious to see it enacted in time for the new school year in September. That is why a guillotine is being introduced. It is a large Bill, which, including the schedules, contains 158 clauses, and, so far, in Committee we have dealt with about a third in some 89 hours. It will, of course, receive much further consideration in Standing Committee.

I listened with interest to the comments of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House, when he described this timetable motion as the most generous for 20 years and said that it provides a further 90 hours to enable the Bill to be fully considered. In addition, it will be considered on Report and will attract considerable discussion and attention in the other place. If the motion is not agreed and the Bill continues at its fairly leisurely pace in Committee, the nation's children will not have the benefit of the reforms incorporated in the Bill by the next school year. That is why I and my hon. Friends will give the measure our unconditional support this evening.

Much nonsense has been talked about timetable motions. I have listened with interest to the comments of some Opposition Members. As the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) said, the record for timetable motions is held not by one of my right hon. Friends, and certainly not by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House, but by a member of the official Opposition who, when in government, guillotined five Bills in one day, on 20 July 1976. That was truly a black Tuesday in the history of the House—*[Interruption.]* My hon. Friends describe the right hon. Gentleman as Robespierre, but it is not for me to comment on that interesting thought.

It is an impressive list of Bills. The Bills guillotined that day were the Aircraft and Shipbuilding Industries Bill, the Dock Work Regulation Bill, the Health Services Bill, the Rent (Agriculture) Bill and—I hear the expressions of shock and horror from my hon. Friends, but the worst is yet to come—the Education Bill. That Bill set out to destroy choice and to introduce uniformity.

Opposition Members have expressed concern about the democratic process and the need for full discussion. I do not know how they can square their statements today with the actions of the Labour Government in 1976, but clearly actions speak louder than words. Their consciences, like their policies, must be pretty flexible.

The amount of time devoted to the Education Reform Bill so far is quite significant. More time has been spent on it than was spent on the corresponding stage of the Education Bill 1944, on which all post-war education has been founded. Here I must acknowledge with thanks the research done for me by the Library. The staff have advised me that about 86 hours, over 14 days, were spent on the 1944 Act. This Bill has therefore had more discussion than the 1944 Act.

The holier-than-thou attitude adopted by Opposition Members must sit uncomfortably on their shoulders, in the light of their party's previous actions. All Governments use the guillotine, and all Oppositions protest. The most effective weapon available to the Opposition is the delaying tactic—my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) made that point—but if Governments are to get legislation on to to the statute book, they must use timetable motions. I am anxious that the measures in the Bill are adopted as quickly as possible.

Incidentally, the Labour party speaks with a forked tongue on the core curriculum. On 11 October 1987, speaking on "Frost on Sunday", the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) said:

"I chaired a working party of the Labour party 15 years ago which recommended a national curriculum. It is a sensible way of trying to guarantee standards of education in all our

[Mr. James Pawsey]

schools . . . I am in favour and so is the Labour party of what we call diagnostic testing and regular and continuous assessment of children to find out how they are getting on." Those are comments of which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State would be proud, but it seems that between 11 and 20 November last year, a sea change occurred in the thinking of the hon. Member for Blackburn.

It is the duty of the Opposition to oppose, but opposition for opposition's sake on an issue as important as this is grossly irresponsible. That is why I hope that my hon. Friends will support my right hon. Friend in the Lobby tonight.

6.51 pm

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): The hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) obviously wrote his speech before he heard the debate. He has certainly not remembered much of what has happened in Committee—[HON. MEMBERS: "What about you?"] I admit that I prepared notes for this debate—

Mr. Pawsey: Why is my preparation wrong and the hon. Lady's right?

Ms. Armstrong: The House can see what we are having to put up with in Committee.

I accept that a member of my family has in the past spoken in the House in favour of guillotines. I am not against guillotines in general, but I am against the guillotine on this Bill now.

In Committee, we have had serious debates, during which Opposition Members, on the instructions of my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), have made brief speeches. We have tried to consider matters carefully, without wandering from the subject, and to stick to the amendments. That has meant that Opposition Members have spoken for less time than Conservative Members. The guillotine motion has been moved at a much earlier stage of the Bill than on any Bill during the past 20 years. It has been moved now because the Government know that we are getting near those aspects of the Bill on which they are most rocky and to which hon. Members and people outside the House object most fiercely.

We have been told that, at our present pace, we could not hope to get through the Bill in time and discuss all the issues, but Conservative Members must know that that is nonsense. The Opposition have dealt with the Bill responsibly to make sure that we would reach the end in time. We were determined that every bit of it should be discussed effectively.

The number of hours that has been quoted for our discussion of the Bill is inaccurate, because it includes tea breaks and adjournments for Divisions in the House. It is much less than 89 hours.

The inadequate consultation on the Bill and inadequate preparation by the Government have meant that the Opposition are expected to do things in Committee for which any schoolteacher would be disciplined for bad behaviour. We must consider reports as they come into Committee and then the clauses which relate to those reports. The procedure is, at best, anti-democratic. It makes nonsense of any Government's commitment to consultation or to democracy.

I should have liked to say more about this outrageous guillotine motion, but I do not have time. The Opposition are determined to discuss the Bill properly, but the Government will make that impossible.

6.56 pm

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): This has been an interesting and entertaining debate, with fine speeches from my hon. Friends the Members for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths), for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong) and for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore). I am grateful to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) for his remarks about the organisation of the Opposition.

We heard a courageous and stimulating speech from the hon. Member for High Peak (Mr. Hawkins), and we look forward to his contribution on that subject in Committee. It is noteworthy that the right hon. Members for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) and for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) stayed for the opening speeches and then disappeared—such is their close interest in the Bill and the future of the Inner London education authority.

The timetable motion is an abuse of power. No one can deny the wish of a Government to secure progress for their business, but that must be balanced against the need for adequate debate and discussion of a measure, for such debate and scrutiny of legislation are central to the work of Parliament. Guillotines can be justified only where an Opposition have filibustered a Bill, where they have refused all reasonable suggestions to agree a timetable, or where there is no possibility of the Government getting their business through at reasonable speed without a guillotine.

On Second Reading, the right hon. Member for Chingford anticipated all that. He said:

"In an attempt to show value for money, the official Opposition will insist on having about 80 hours' debate on clauses 1 to 3 or thereabouts in Committee, and then force a guillotine."—[*Official Report*, 1 December 1987; Vol. 123, c. 809.].

I am sorry to disappoint the right hon. Gentleman, and I am sorry that he is not here to answer my point—[HON. MEMBERS: "Where is he?"] I do not know where he is. I told him that I would mention him.

The right hon. Gentleman was right about one thing: we have spent more than 80 hours in Committee. But during those 87 hours we have covered 43 clauses and two extremely long schedules. Even without a guillotine, we have devoted fewer than two hours of debate to each clause or schedule. As my hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North-West said, Opposition Members have spoken for less time than Conservative Members.

The Leader of the House made the interesting admission that there has been no filibustering by the Opposition. We have had no interest in filibustering. Our interest has always been in careful and relentless scrutiny of the Bill, and it is precisely because of that dissection of the Bill, which caused acute embarrassment to Ministers, that the Government now wish to curtail our discussion.

None of us should be surprised about that, because the members of the Committee have witnessed some extraordinary performances by Ministers. The Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn)—I am not surprised that he has had his hand over his face—agreed that the national curriculum need take up only one minute of any week. He described the

national curriculum—to which the Conservative party devoted an entire party political broadcast—as a "fairy tricycle" or a "three-wheeled bicycle".

Under questioning, the Minister of State admitted that the policy of opted admissions was in reality one for accelerated closures of schools and, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bridgend said, gave three different answers in the same speech about whether opted-out schools could use money raised by parent-teacher associations to employ teachers.

Then there is the Secretary of State himself, a man who thought he would make his name with this Bill, but has found out otherwise, because support for opting out has not risen since he went around the country proselytising on behalf of the cause—it has declined still further from the 35 per cent. that it achieved in the polls after the election. Support for his version of the national curriculum has declined by an even greater percentage; it stood at 67 per cent. before he started advocating it, and it is now down to 46 per cent.

So I was distressed to read in the papers at the weekend that the odds on the Secretary of State in the Conservative leadership stakes have lengthened slightly as a result of his performance. That is a matter that causes me considerable distress. As I have told him, our interest, apart from trying to defeat the Bill, is to ensure that he remains upright when the leadership contest takes place. I am glad to see the Secretary of State taking that in the spirit in which it is offered.

Last Tuesday, the right hon. Gentleman could have taken all day to justify his proposals for opting out, but such is his real support for those proposals that he decided instead to take only seven minutes.

One reason why the Government have gone ahead with this completely unjustified guillotine — given that we have not filibustered — was to avoid the continuing embarrassment of Ministers. However, the Government planned to guillotine the Bill even before it was published. They did so for two reasons: first, because there was doubt about the competence, not to say the loyalty, of the Secretary of State's junior Ministers. When we heard the Secretary of State telling the Committee that he had never underestimated the capacity of his hon. Friend the Under-Secretary to dig himself out of any hole into which he had dug himself, we understood his dilemma.

The second reason for the guillotine, even before the Bill emerged from the printers, was that the Secretary of State was petrified at what would happen on Report, in the other place, and when the amendments from the Lords returned to this Chamber.

Since then, there has turned out to be a third reason why the Bill should be guillotined—the incompetence of Government business managers. They are creating a log-jam in the House of Lords; it took them two and a half weeks to get the poll tax Bill into Committee, which would certainly not have happened if the Secretary of State for Education had been in charge.

Mr. Sedgemore: There would not have been a poll tax.

Mr. Straw: My hon. Friend is wrong: it was the right hon. Gentleman's idea. I must tell Conservative Members that they need to watch the Secretary of State—he is very fly. He invents the poll tax and then clears off. He invests opting out and dismembers ILEA, and will then clear off. I daresay he will be put into the DHSS and then be cleared off.

The luckless Lord President of the Council is responsible for the fact that the House of Lords will have to digest 570 pages of legislation in about two months. I am not surprised that he sought to guillotine the Bill with no justification. Whatever the honeyed words of the Leader of the House or the syrupy words of the Secretary of State, this guillotine has only one purpose—to stifle debate.

I must tell the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) that he will have to find a bit more backbone if he wants to be the leader of the Liberal party, or the Social and Liberal Democratic party, or the Social Democratic party. To suggest, as he did, that the guillotine is relatively generous, is virtually to cross the Floor. He must be blind to what is happening. If we do the arithmetic, we discover, that roughly speaking, we have devoted just under two hours to each clause until now. As the hon. Member for Yeovil knows, that is not enough—despite the fact that he has spoken for a good deal of that time. But we have not wished to embarrass him by his record. If the Leader of the House had wanted to refer to a filibuster, he might have singled out the hon. Members for Yeovil and for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey).

Under the guillotine, there will be fewer than 45 minutes per clause. That is what the hon. Member for Yeovil calls relatively generous — *[Interruption.]* Of course he will be voting with us. As we know, members of the Social Democratic Liberal party — or Liberal and Social Democratic party — are reasonable people and always wish to be on both sides at once. On the one hand, the guillotine is relatively generous. On the other, it is outrageous. There is a facility for voting on both sides in the House, and I urge the hon. Member for Yeovil to use it.

It is outrageous that we shall have only two and a half days to discuss opting out, two days on the reorganisation of further education, two days on state control of universities and only a day and a half on ILEA.

Why do we need more time to discuss opting out? The critical clauses on the balloting arrangements for opting out will be allowed only five hours of discussion. We need a lot more than that for the Secretary of State to explain the ballot-rigging that is inherent in those clauses, and how it is democratic and fair to devise a ballot so that the minority—and I mean the minority of those voting—wins. Under the proposed arrangements, parents of a minority of the children whose parents have voted win the ballot.

If we take a school, put all the children in the playground, separate out the children of parents who have not taken part in the election — on the grounds that those people do not count—and then ask the children of parents who have voted for opting out to peel off in one direction and the children of those parents who have not voted in favour in the other, there will often be more children on the side that voted against opting out than on the side that voted for it—yet the side that voted for it will win. And they call that democracy.

Ministers must find time to explain another point. Why, at the same time as they are saying that a 50 per cent. majority of those who bothered to vote is enough for schools to opt out, have those same Ministers voted for the Second Reading of the Housing Bill, which provides for a completely different arrangement, insisting in clause 96 —I am happy to give a copy to the Secretary of State, who is looking puzzled at what the clause contains even

[Mr. Straw]

though he voted for it—that for local authority tenants to block a decision by a voracious private landlord to take over their tower block or council estate, 50 per cent. not of those voting, but of the total number of council tenants and people who happen to have bought their council houses must vote against that private landlord for the decision to be blocked?

I am glad to see that the right hon. Member for Chingford has returned. He must explain how he supports these proposals, when he sponsored the Employment Act in 1982. It contained a proposition, still on the statute book, that if a closed shop was to be approved, 85 per cent. of those voting had to approve it. The present Government Chief Whip, then the Under-Secretary of State for Employment, said at the time that that was because of the overwhelming importance to the work force of a closed shop and its effect on individual rights. If the closed shop had immense importance for individual rights, why does not the issue of opting out have similar importance? What is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander.

Mr. Tebbitt: I can immediately point out to the hon. Gentleman a great difference between the two things. A closed shop can easily rob a man of his job, with no appeal, but opting out of a school will not rob a child of his education.

Mr. Straw: We disagree on both counts. I believe that opting-out schools will rob children of their education. If the right hon. Gentleman has such confidence in his proposals, why does he not agree even to the idea that 50 per cent. of parents in a school should support a particular proposal?

Mr. Tebbit *rose*——

Mr. Straw: I must close in one minute.

The Secretary of State has often described the Bill as a gerbil. I do not know whether the Secretary of State is aware of the natural history of the gerbil, but according to Maurice Burton's "Systematic Dictionary of Mammals of the World", gerbils are carriers of fleas bearing sylvatic plague. The "Encylopaedia Britannica" tells us that the African genus tatera gerbil is a possible carrier of bubonic plague. The Bill will bring plague to the education of the nation's children and the timetable motion should be opposed.

7.10 pm

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Kenneth Baker): This has been a short, interesting and crisp debate with excellent speeches from some of my hon. Friends. My hon. Friends the Members for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey) and for High Peak (Mr. Hawkins) made excellent contributions and I shall consider carefully what was said. We also heard from my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey), and we had two speeches on procedure to which I shall come shortly.

I stress at the outset the amount of time that has already been taken up in discussing this great measure of reform. It started on 26 October last year on an Opposition Supply day, when the Opposition asked for a debate on our consultation process. So keen were they that, on the day after they tabled the motion, they tried to change the order of business to put it off. That shows their commitment. When the Bill was introduced on 20 November 1987, they said that it was all far too early. The Government wanted to introduce the Bill at that time to ensure that there would be plenty of debate in both Houses on this important measure.

On 1 December, we spent seven and a half hours on Second Reading and the money resolution, and the Standing Committee has spent 88 hours discussing 43 clauses. Under the terms of the proposed timetable motion, there will be a further 90 hours in Committee, making a total of 180 hours in Committee, and that will be followed by three days on Report and Third Reading. That will add a further 18 hours and the House will then have spent well over 200 hours considering the Bill.

By any standards that is a generous amount of time —even allowing for the fundamental reforms contained in the Bill. The Education Bill 1944 took 60 hours. The Opposition have said that that was an agreed measure. They should look at the debates on that Bill and at the debates preceding it to see how contentious it appeared to the various religious groups.

If we look at the three major Education Bills that we introduced in 1980, 1981 and 1986 and add together their Committee stages, we arrive at a figure of less than 200 hours—the time that will be spent on the present Bill. This is the most generous timetable motion for over 20 years. Of course, I recognise that no allocation would be sufficiently generous to prevent the Opposition's ritual complaints.

I invite the House to consider the facts. At the Committee's average rate of progress—and progress has been rather slower than average in the last two days—it will take about 250 to 300 hours to complete discussion of the Bill, including the detailed schedules. That is about another 15 weeks. Allowing for the Easter and Whitsun recesses, it is unlikely that the other place would receive the Bill until about June. If the Lords receive it in June, there is no way that they could complete consideration of the Bill by the end of July, and it would have to go into the October overspill.

If the Lords received the Bill as late as June, there is a real danger that they could not complete consideration at all. Of course, that is what the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) would dearly like.

Mr. Straw: If all that the right hon. Gentleman says is true, why did he not ask the Opposition for a deal?

Mr. Baker: It became quite clear in various informal discussions that I undertook that there was no possibility at all of a deal. That has been confirmed by the assertions made during the debate. The Opposition have said that we need plenty of time to discuss all the measures in the Bill that have still to be debated. That is what I want to secure.

The matter of a filibuster has been raised. There was nothing on the scale of John Golding's filibuster. He talked for 11 hours on the Telecommunications Bill and I heard every minute of his speech—*[Interruption.]* That was in Committee. No Opposition Member on the Committee upstairs could hold the Committee's attention and interest for 11 minutes, never mind 11 hours.

The nearest to come to that was the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore). He opened his capacious mind to the Committee and gave it discourses on philosophy, equality, homosexuality in public schools and the financial policies of the Pharaoh Amenhotep III, generally known as Amenhotep junior,

the golden emperor who ruled Egypt in the 15th century BC. We also heard him on Welsh disestablishment and on agnosticism and atheism.

The hon. Member startled the Committee one day by asking us if we all realised that at school he had won all the religious and scripture prizes. What a wonderful beginning! Since then it has been downhill all the way. He also wrote a poem about me. It was an awful piece of doggerel. Indeed, it gives doggerel a bad name. It neither rhymed nor scanned. The post of poet laureate is filled, but I suppose that the hon. Gentleman could well qualify for the post of poet lunatic.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) and my hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery), who is a distinguished former Chairman of the Procedure Committee asked about the general nature of timetable motions. The hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) also asked about that.

I have had the task of taking through the House under the guillotine procedure two major Bills — the British Telecommunications Bill and the Local Government Bill 1985. The Procedure Committee should take seriously the proposal that we should find a better way of dealing with some of our legislation. My right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North is a great parliamentarian. Therefore, in view of the positions that he has held, when he advises the House to consider new procedures for these matters, the House should weigh his words very carefully.

As I have said, my hon. Friend the Member for Honiton was the Chairman of the Procedure Committee that reported on this matter. Its second report recommended that a Committee should be established at the start of each Parliament to consider which Bills were likely to involve lengthy discussions in Committee, so that the guillotine could then be introduced for these Bills. I understand that that proposal was later turned down.

My hon. Friend has rightly drawn the attention of the House to the amendment on today's Order Paper. It was not called by you, Mr. Speaker, but none the less it is an important amendment. The amendment proposed:

> "The Business Sub-Committee of the Standing Committee shall allocate the time so as to ensure that all parts of the Bill can be adequately scrutinised and every substantive proposal of the Bill be considered."

I give my hon. Friend the assurance that, in my discussions with the hon. Member for Blackburn, I shall certainly try to ensure that every major matter is given full and measured debate. It is in the interests of all that that should happen—not only the Opposition, but the Government.

The purpose of this guillotine motion is to ensure an even pattern of debate so that the major issues are debated. So far, we have covered the national curriculum, assessment and testing, open enrolment, financial delegation and now grant-maintained schools. There is still much to be done. We still have to deal with the rest of the grant-maintained schools, further education, collective worship, city technology colleges, higher education, financial delegation to colleges, polytechnics and universities and, of course, the Inner London education authority.

On the subject of ILEA, I confirm, as I said at the end of last week, that we are considering the various views put forward about its future. No decision has been taken and the matter will have to be considered collectively by Ministers and our conclusions reported to he House. I re-emphasise the point made by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House — that should there be a major change of policy there will have to be discussion through the usual channels about its implications for the timetable. I want to ensure that all these measures are properly and fully debated. It is important that they are, because, as hon. Members have said, they are important measures.

The hon. Member for Blackburn chided my colleagues and me about our conduct in Committee. The House should recognise that the amount of time that we have now allocated, about 200 hours, is generous by any standards. I see that the Leader of the Opposition is calling it a gag. If it is a gag, it must be accounted the most inefficient in history. I think that the Leader of the Opposition knows all about gags — not from using them on himself, but from the accusations now being made by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) about his silencing debate in his own party. It would appear that the only party in the listening party who is not listening is the Leader of the Opposition himself.

None the less, that has not prevented the hon. Member for Blackburn from attacking the timetable motion. In fact, it has given him a new lease of life, because the Labour party has been rather subdued in Committee. Labour Members have not voted against 36 of the 43 clauses that have been taken as standing part of the Bill, including three dealing with grant-maintained schools. All observers of the Committee have been struck by the muted nature of the opposition.

I have had an analysis made of the time taken by each member of the Committee. The hon. Member for Blackburn has spoken for 321 minutes; the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown), on the other hand, has spoken for 475 minutes. He has spoken for longer than all the Conservative Back Benchers put together. It is therefore not surprising that *The Guardian* has described the performance of the Labour party in Committee as lacklustre. I have to say to the hon. Member for Blackburn, in the words of the old nursery rhyme, "Jack be nimble, Jack be quick, Jack's tripped over the Liberal stick." — *[Interruption.]* Let me point out to the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch that at least my poem rhymed and scanned.

The hon. Member for Yeovil—the Liberal stick—has tabled more amendments than any other member of the Committee, including the Government. We all know his very good reason for doing that. In the past few weeks, he has wanted it clearly known that he will not be concerned with any of the shenanigans in the Liberal party. On that fateful night when the joint manifesto was being drawn up by the leaders of the Liberal party and what is left of the SDP, he was in Committee Room 14. What is more, 31 hon. Members can testify that he was there, boring them all to distraction, at the time when the crime was committed. The hon. Gentleman has a perfect alibi.

With all this volume of eloquence, we thought that we might get something out of the hon. Member for Yeovil about the Liberal party's education policy. However, our hopes have been dashed. The hon. Gentleman says that he likes parent power, but not too much; he likes choice, but not too much; he likes delegated budgets, but not too much; he likes excellence, but not too much. He has conducted a sustained exercise in restrained enthusiasm. As he flits from one half-belief to another thinly held

[Mr. Baker]

conviction, the hon. Gentleman has become the snapper-up of unconsidered half-thoughts. How suitable in a spokesman for half a party.

Mr. Ashdown: I am somewhat flattered that the right hon. Gentleman has so far spent more of his speech attacking me than he has spent attacking the official Opposition. He knows perfectly well that those policies were laid out in a document that I know he has received. Is he prepared to say to the House what he said in Committee: that the only effective opposition to his proposals has come from me, rather than from the official Opposition?

Mr. Baker: Such modesty. Where is the manifesto? Where are the words? There we have it all. Where are the hon. Gentleman's colleagues? There is none to listen. His words have fallen on stony ground. The electoral college is not here.

The Opposition have not been making good use of their time in Committee. They have notably failed to put their arguments across convincingly. There is much more to be done.

It being three hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. SPEAKER *proceeded to put the Question necessary to dispose of them, pursuant to Standing Order No. 81 (Allocation of time to Bills).*

Question put accordingly.

The House divided: Ayes 281, Noes 222.

Division No. 159] **[7.24 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carrington, Matthew
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heddle, John
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jessel, Toby
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Hon Sir Charles
Morrison, Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Page, Richard
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John

Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Ms Hilary
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, J.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alastair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, James
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Galbraith, Samuel
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Ms Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Douglas
Hinchliffe, David
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, James
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Ilsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Miss Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Tom
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon J *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, John
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Ms Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerald
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thomas, Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Walley, Ms Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A. J.
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Anthony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mrs. Llin Golding.

Question agreed to.

Resolved,

That the following provisions shall apply to the remaining proceedings on the Bill:—

That the following provisions shall apply to the remaining proceedings on the Bill:

Committee

1.—(1) The Standing Committee to which the Bill is allocated shall report the Bill to the House on or before 3rd March 1988.

(2) Proceedings on the Bill at a sitting of the Standing Committee on the said 3rd March may continue until Eleven p.m., whether or not the House is adjourned before that time, and if the House is adjourned before those proceedings have been brought to a conclusion the Standing Committee shall report the Bill to the House on 4th March.

Report and Third Reading

2.—(1) The proceedings on Consideration and Third Reading of the Bill shall be completed in three allotted days and shall be brought to a conclusion at Ten o'clock on the last

of those days; and for the purposes of Standing Order No. 80 (Business Committee) this Order shall be taken to allot to the proceedings on Consideration such part of those days as the Resolution of the Business Committee may determine.

(2) The Business Committee shall report to the House its Resolutions as to the proceedings on Consideration of the Bill, and as to the allocation of time between those proceedings and proceedings on Third Reading, not later than the fourth day on which the House sits after the day on which the Chairman of the Standing Committee reports the Bill to the House.

(3) The Resolutions in any Report made under Standing Order No. 80 may be varied by a further Report so made, whether or not within the time specified in sub-paragraph (2) above, and whether or not the Resolutions have been agreed to by the House.

(4) The Resolutions of the Business Committee may include alterations in the order in which proceedings on Consideration of the Bill are taken.

Procedure in Standing Committee

3.—(1) At a sitting of the Standing Committee at which any proceedings on the Bill are to be brought to a conclusion under a Resolution of the Business Sub-Committee the Chairman shall not adjourn the Committee under any Order relating to the sittings of the Committee until the proceedings have been brought to a conclusion.

(2) No Motion shall be made in the Standing Committee relating to the sitting of the Committee except by a member of the Government, and the Chairman shall permit a brief explanatory statement from the Member who makes, and from a Member who opposes, the Motion, and shall then put the Question thereon.

4. No Motion shall be made to alter the order in which Clauses, Schedules, new Clauses and new Schedules are taken in the Standing Committee but the Resolutions of the Business Sub-Committee may include alterations in that order.

Conclusion of proceedings in Committee

5. On the conclusion of the proceedings in any Committee on the Bill the Chairman shall report the Bill to the House without putting any Question.

Dilatory Motions

6. No dilatory Motion with respect to, or in the course of, proceedings on the Bill shall be made in the Standing Committee or on an allotted day except by a member of the Government, and the Question on any such Motion shall be put forthwith.

Motion under Standing Order No. 20: extra time

7. If an allotted day is one to which a Motion for the adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 stands over from an earlier day, paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to the proceedings on the Bill for a period of time equal to the duration of the proceedings upon that Motion.

Private business

8. Any private business which has been set down for consideration at Seven o'clock on an allotted day shall, instead of being considered as provided by Standing Orders, be considered at the conclusion of the proceedings on the Bill on that day, and paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to the private business for a period of three hours from the conclusion of the proceedings on the Bill or, if those proceedings are concluded before Ten o'clock, for a period equal to the time elapsing between Seven o'clock and the conclusion of those proceedings.

Conclusion of proceedings

9.—(1) For the purpose of bringing to a conclusion any proceedings which are to be brought to a conclusion at a time appointed by this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee or the Business Sub-Committee and which have not previously been brought to a conclusion, the Chairman or Mr. Speaker shall forthwith put the following Questions (but no others)—

(*a*) any Question already proposed from the Chair;

(*b*) any Question necessary to bring to a decision a Question so proposed (including, in the case of a new Clause or new Schedule which has been read a second time, the Question that the Clause or Schedule be added to the Bill);

(*c*) the Question on any amendment or Motion standing on the Order Paper in the name of any Member, if that amendment is moved or Motion is made by a Member of the Government;

(*d*) any other Question necessary for the disposal of the business to be concluded;

and on a Motion so made for a new Clause or a new Schedule, the Chairman or Mr. Speaker shall put only the Question that the Clause or Schedule be added to the Bill.

(2) Proceedings under sub-paragraph (1) above shall not be interrupted under any Standing Order relating to the sittings of the House.

(3) If an allotted day is one on which a Motion for the adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration) would, apart from this Order, stand over to Seven o'clock—

(*a*) that Motion shall stand over until the conclusion of any proceedings on the Bill which, under this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee, are to be brought to a conclusion at or before that time;

(*b*) the bringing to a conclusion of any proceedings on the Bill which, under this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee, are to be brought to a conclusion after that time shall be postponed for a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on that Motion.

(4) If an allotted day is one to which a Motion for the adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 stands over from an earlier day, the bringing to a conclusion of any proceedings on the Bill which, under this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee, are to be brought to a conclusion on that day shall be postponed for a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on that Motion.

Supplemental orders

10.—(1) The proceedings on any Motion moved in the House by a member of the Government for varying or supplementing the provisions of this Order (including anything which might have been the subject of a report of the Business Committee or Business Sub-Committee) shall, if not previously concluded, be brought to a conclusion one hour after they have been commenced, and paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to the proceedings.

(2) If on an allotted day on which any proceedings on the Bill are to be brought to a conclusion at a time appointed by this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee the House is adjourned, or the sitting is suspended, before that time no notice shall be required of a Motion moved at the next sitting by a member of the Government for varying or supplementing the provisions of this Order.

Saving

11. Nothing in this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee or Business Sub-Committee shall—

(*a*) prevent any proceedings to which the Order or Resolution applies from being taken or completed earlier than is required by the Order or Resolution, or

(*b*) prevent any business (whether on the Bill or not) from being proceeded with on any day after the completion of all such proceedings on the Bill as are to be taken on that day.

Recommittal

12.—(1) References in this Order to proceedings on Consideration or proceedings on Third Reading include references to proceedings, at those stages respectively, for, on or in consequence of re-committal.

(2) On an allotted day no debate shall be permitted on any Motion to re-commit the Bill (whether as a whole or otherwise), and Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith any Question necessary to dispose of the Motion, including the Question on any amendment moved to the Question.

Interpretation

13. In this Order—

"allotted day" means any day (other than a Friday) on which the Bill is put down as first Government Order of the Day provided that a Motion for allotting time to the proceedings on the Bill to be taken on that day either has been agreed on a previous day or is set down for consideration on that day;

"the Bill" means the Education Reform Bill;

"Resolution of the Business Sub-Committee" means a Resolution of the Business Sub-Committee as agreed to by the Standing Committee;

"Resolution of the Business Committee" means a Resolution of the Business Committee as agreed to by the House.

Farm Land and Rural Development Bill [Lords]

Order for Second Reading read.

7.37 pm

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John MacGregor): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

This Bill comes to us from another place, where it has already been discussed in some detail. But to assist the House in its consideration, let me put the Bill into context, describe the background, and then deal with the three separate parts of the Bill on woodlands, farm diversification, and the structure of the Development Commission. I intend to keep my remarks brief because it is not a full-day debate. I am sure that many hon. Members wish to speak.

The new opportunities that the Bill will bring about are part of a coherent policy that we have been developing for agriculture and the countryside in relation to the alternative use of land. The farm woodlands and forestry diversification proposals will contribute in differing ways towards our general objective of promoting an enterprising and more market-orientated agriculture, a flourishing rural economy, and an attractive and living countryside.

I stress that the proposals are only part of the programme. No doubt we shall debate or have already debated other proposals on other occasions. Such proposals include environmentally sensitive areas, for which we already have powers. We have been moving ahead fast. We have successfully led the way in the European Community, which now contributes 25 per cent. of the cost of ESAs. The proposals also include developing set-aside for alternative crops, in looking at alternative crops, and encouraging research and development in to alternative industrial uses of agricultural products. Tonight, we are focusing on only two parts. I shall briefly set the background.

The House is well aware of the Government's efforts to deal with agricultural surpluses and the soaring costs of the common agricultural policy. This will call for major adjustments in the farming industry. In particular, when combined with the continued technological progress, which we can foresee in the next 10 years, it is clear that more land will have to come out of conventional food production.

A very useful report on the subject was published by the Agricultural Economic Development Committee last year called "Directions for Change: Land Use in the 1990s." I shall not go into detail, but it predicted that significant amounts of land, scattered throughout the United Kingdom, will be released, mainly from cereals and dairying, over the next seven, eight or nine years. Although experts would differ on the figures—it is impossible to be precise because it will depend on the changing and differing reactions among farmers and other matters—most would accept this basic premise.

The main thrust of action to tackle surpluses must be taken at Community level. Price restraint and stabilisers are the key to this, but other emerging Community policies will have an important part to play in the adjustment process, especially set-aside. Proposals on set-aside are currently before the Council of Ministers that build on existing provisions for the extensification scheme, which we have already discussed in the House.

[Mr. John MacGregor]

These proposals have considerable potential for taking land out of production. They are, however, still under discussion. Indeed, they are due to be considered at the European Council in 10 days' time. This is a fast-changing and fast-moving scene. It is impossible to say exactly what extensification or set-aside proposals we shall end up with, but that we shall do so I can confidently predict.

There is a broad measure of agreement that such schemes can make a substantial contribution as a complement to price policy in reducing over-production. Now is not the time to go into detail on set-aside; no doubt there will be other opportunities to do so.

Meanwhile, the Bill gives us the enabling powers for two other elements of the programme of new opportunities that the Government are making available in the United Kingdom to assist in the necessary process of adjustment and to ensure that alternative farm resources employed in diversification are used to enhance the attractiveness of our countryside and to assist the rural economy.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): I have looked at the Bill with great care. I can find no reference in it to any requirement of viability of enterprise arising from the enormous subsidies that might flow from the Bill. Will the Minister explain why there is no test of viability for the receipts of grants from Government by farmers who are now in serious difficulties?

Mr. MacGregor: There are two aspects to the Bill in this context, and I hope to come to some parts of that later.

The farm woodlands scheme is not simply a scheme to get agricultural land out of agricultural production. It also has an important environmental context. That is one of the other key objectives of this proposal. I am satisfied that it will be a sensible measure to assist with the problem of reducing surpluses.

With regard to the farm diversification scheme, we are talking not about enormous subsidies—I think that they were the words used by the right hon. Gentleman—but about comparatively modest measures to assist farmers in the diversification process. I shall explain later how we hope that this will be a sensible way of achieving viable businesses and why the proposal in the Bill is designed to help with that viability.

I shall now turn to the content of the Bill. I should like to take clause 2 first. It is the major part of the Bill and it provides enabling powers for Ministers to make a scheme of grants in respect of farm woodlands for any one or more parts of Great Britain. In Northern Ireland, the necessary powers already exist.

Encouragement for woodlands forms part of our package because woodlands have been focused on by many experts as offering one of the most realistic alternatives to land currently in productive agriculture. Many people, when considering alternative ranges of crops, have focused on woodlands as one of the most hopeful sectors. I am realistic, and I recognise that they can make only a partial contribution to the land use problem. I do not want to claim that the Bill contains the panacea for alternative land use in the two proposals that it puts forward. There is no single panacea; all can make a contribution of one sort or another.

The 12,000 hectares a year scheme that we are proposing over the next three years could result in up to 30 million new trees a year, or 90 million trees in all. It is important to put that figure in context. We have all been concerned about the devastation that the storm damage caused last October in many parts of southern England and East Anglia. We now know that about 15 million trees were lost. In the farm woodlands scheme there is potential for 90 million trees to be planted in the next three years. That is interesting in comparison with the 15 million trees that we have lost, which we all regard as having had a devastating environmental impact. The Bill has potential to create an attractive environmental impact.

Assuming that the House can give the Bill a swift passage, we shall be introducing the farm woodlands scheme in time for the autumn tree-planting season.

As some hon. Members will already know, I have revised significantly the Government's original proposals, taking into account the representations that we received during the consultation process. In particular, I have retargeted the scheme primarily towards arable land and improved grassland. This has a dual purpose, since, first, it will do more than the original proposals to reduce agricultural surpluses and, secondly, it will minimise the risk to land of conservation value. I know that the changes on the environmental and conservation aspects have been warmly welcomed by those interested in conservation matters.

To be eligible, improved grassland will have to have been cultivated and re-seeded in the past 10 years. Some have urged a less restrictive definition, but we must draw the line in a simple and effective way if we are to realise savings in agricultural support costs. That was the point to which the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) was trying to draw attention. As I always aim to do, in this scheme I have gone as much as possible for simple guidelines and simple administration.

We need to prevent farmers from ploughing up unimproved land to try to make it eligible for the scheme. We may therefore require a declaration from farmers to the effect that the land in question was already in cultivation in a particular base year — most probably 1986-87, as envisaged under the extensification scheme. Many of the points of detail are not for the Bill but for the regulations later.

At this stage, I should refer briefly to the main reason why it was necessary to bring forward a farm woodlands scheme. Of course, farmers are already eligible for forestry grants. It has been recognised in recent years that there is a cost in management to farmers in planting woodlands. There is also a loss of income on the land given to woodlands. There is a dual problem — a cost in managing, particularly in early years, and a loss of income on that land. Set against that is the fact that the income from woodlands is many years hence. There has been a question of income loss as well as the issue of encouragement to plant through planting grants. It is therefore the annual payments and the income to which the scheme is addressed.

Ms. Joyce Quin (Gateshead, East): In consideration of the farm woodlands scheme and the incentives for people to go into it, will the Minister say how many of the trees that he envisages being planted will be conifers? Will he accept that many people are worried about the environmental impact of large-scale conifer plantations and wish, therefore, to see environmental safeguards being built into the regulations?

Mr. MacGregor: I am coming to the environmental point. I am sure that the hon. Lady will welcome the way in which we have re-targeted the scheme to concentrate very much on broadleaf planting.

Because we are concentrating primarily on this more productive land, we have increased the rates of annual payment significantly compared with the amounts in the consultation document — to £190 per hectare in the lowlands, £150 per hectare in the disadvantaged areas and £100 per hectare in the severely disadvantaged areas. We are also encouraging more broadleaf planting by offering longer payment periods of 30 years for woodland containing more than 50 per cent. broadleaves and 40 years for pure oak and beech planting. The payment period for other planting will be 20 years.

As well as these annual payments, farmers will be eligible for forestry planting grants under existing schemes to get their woodlands established. For a wood of three to 10 hectares, the broadleaf woodland grant for pure broadleaves is currently £800 per hectare, nearly double the conifer rate of £420 per hectare. We have also accepted an amendment in another place which requires Ministers to review the rates of payment periodically. This appears as clause 2(3).

Because we are determined to try to keep down the administrative cost of the scheme and get as much of the money as possible through to the farmer, I have already announced that we shall be cutting down on the procedures whereby the Forestry Commission consults local authorities about proposed planting. Consultation on smaller schemes—those of less than 10 hectares—will no longer be required except in, for example, sites of special scientific interest, environmentally sensitive areas, national parks in England and Wales and national scenic areas in Scotland — national nature reserves are, incidentally, excluded from the scheme altogether.

I believe that this change will help to make the scheme more attractive to farmers, who are often put off by the complications of consultation, and will encourage the planting of small woodlands. I do not foresee any real risk to habitats or landscape from the planting of small areas of trees, mainly on improved land. Indeed, I think that the environmental impact of the scheme will be positive, particularly as applications are scrutinised by the Forestry Commission and can be amended if they are unsatisfactory on environmental grounds. But we shall look at this aspect very carefully when we come to review the scheme in 1991 at the end of the three-year experimental period.

Mr. Tony Speller (Devon, North): Will my right hon. Friend bear in mind the problem of farm incomes in general? I am sure that we all agree with my right hon. Friend's line on the environment, broadleaves and so on. Farm incomes are falling and falling. It seems as though on the present rating we are talking merely about slowing the decline in farm incomes. This is not a great help to the farmer.

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend has taken me rather wider than the Bill and I would probably be ill-advised to open up a much wider agricultural debate. As I have said, the Bill will help the process of adjustment on the reforms of the CAP.

Mr. Gordon Oakes (Halton) *rose*——

Mr. MacGregor: Having given away quite a lot, I should prefer to move on and enable as many hon. Members as wish to speak to do so.

The farmer's first point of contact will normally be with the agriculture advisory services. When he has prepared his application, perhaps with professional help, he will send it to the local Forestry Commission office. Checks will be carried out, including checks on the eligibility of the land, and a Forestry Commission official will visit the site to ensure that the proposals are suitable. The Forestry Commission will also conduct consultations with local authorities and other agencies where these are required. Once the application is approved, the agriculture Department will write and offer the farmer a place in the scheme. The farmer will then be required to confirm the number of hectares he intends to plant and when. In effect, the scheme is a sophisticated form of cash limit — a hectarage limit — and I should like to explain how I hope it will work.

This procedure is necessary, first, to ensure that the right sort of planting takes place, and, secondly, to enable us effectively to operate the limit of 12,000 hectares a year —36,000 hectares over three years. That is our limit. We cannot sensibly operate a first-received, first-served system, because applications will take different lengths of time to process, especially when consultations with other bodies are required. We do not want all applications to have to wait for the slowest one.

We intend, therefore, to allocate places in the scheme in order of applications being approved — up to when the hectarage limit is reached. One might describe this as a first-sorted out, first-served system. A similar system will operate for the quota of 3,000 hectares over three years for planting on poorer land in the less-favoured areas. This will attract the original — as in the consultation document — £30 rate of annual payment in recognition of the much lower agricultural income forgone on such land.

We shall, of course, monitor carefully the rate of approvals and, by limiting the total area approved to 12,000 hectares a year, we shall be able to ensure that expenditure on the scheme is kept under proper control. The area planted each year will determine the Government's financial obligation, first, in terms of planting grants from the Forestry Commission and, secondly, in terms of annual payments from the agriculture Departments which start to be paid a year after planting.

Because the area is monitored at an earlier stage than actual expenditure, our system will combine the virtues of limiting the Government's commitment and allow farmers to be reasonably clear where they stand. The monitoring of applications will also provide an early warning system so that, if the scheme clearly will be over-subscribed, we can close it to new applicants. This will save unnecessary work both for farmers in preparing applications which have to be rejected and for those administering the scheme.

One aspect of the scheme which I know will exercise the House in considering this Bill — farmers have often raised it with me — is the possibility of tenant participation. I am therefore pleased to be able to say that the National Farmers Union, the Country Landowners Association and the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors have recently agreed on the model texts on which they have been working for some time. There are two types of model text — model clauses for use in

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existing tenancy agreements under the Agricultural Holdings Act 1984 and a model forestry lease for use on larger schemes where this seems more sensible.

All sides also seem agreed that, given the long-term nature of tree growing, it would be wrong to allow tenants to join the scheme without their landlord's consent. As always, these landlord-tenant issues are among the trickiest issues to deal with in any new initiative and I am sure that it is best wherever possible to keep them out of primary legislation. Agreement on this model approach to tenant participation is therefore very welcome to the Government.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray) *rose*——

Mr. MacGregor: There is obviously a great deal of interest in the Bill. It would be better if hon. Members made their points in their contributions and my right hon. Friend the Minister of State dealt with them.

Clause 1 will enable us to introduce non-capital grants towards the establishment, expansion, promotion and marketing of the products and services of a diversified farm business. This will give us the powers we need to bring in the assistance towards enterprise feasibility studies and marketing costs envisaged under the farm diversification scheme. Here I return to the point raised by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield.

As the House will know, capital grants of 25 per cent. for investments up to a value of £35,000 in a wide range of on-farm diversifications have been available under this scheme since 1 January this year. These grants are designed to encourage farmers to explore the possibilities of earning income from activities other than the continued production of surpluses. The scheme will also, therefore, contribute—I freely confess that it will be in a minor, but important, way—to the adjustment process made necessary by CAP reform. An amount of £3 million will be available annually for the capital grants and £1 million for the feasibility and marketing grants. Those sums will be cash-limited.

The degree of interest shown in the scheme so far has been very high. We have already received 71 applications for improvement plans in England alone and more than 2,000 inquiries about the possibility of getting grants on particular diversification projects. This sign of farmers' willingness to adapt and to explore new opportunities is encouraging and, of course, it is only one indication. We see it in many other ways. The range of ideas coming forward is enormous and a tribute to the skill, ingenuity and entrepreneurial spirit of the industry.

Diversification is not, of course, a panacea for all.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South) *rose*——

Mr. MacGregor: I should press on.

I fully recognise that some farmers will not have the scope for reorganising their businesses to bring in new activities, nor may they have the spare resources in buildings, people and land which can be appropriately diverted to non-agricultural enterprises. Equally, I am bound to say that, as with any new business venture, not all will be successful. An element of risk is inevitably involved. By setting the capital grants at 25 per cent. we hope to stimulate those businesses which might not otherwise be able to get going, but it is the farmer who will need to fund the major part of the capital required.

Where we will be able to provide particular help is in assisting the farmer to plan his new venture sensibly, since careful analysis of all the implications is vital in developing a successful new business. That is why I attach importance to the grants for enterprise feasibility studies and marketing costs that the Bill will allow us to introduce.

During the consultation exercise, several organisations made the point that a greater stimulus was needed in respect of marketing costs, particularly in the first year. Other representations we received asked for higher grant ceilings. I have now decided that non-capital grants of 50 per cent. will be available towards the cost of an enterprise feasibility study and grants of 40, 30 and 20 per cent. degressively over three years towards the cost of employing marketing personnel in the initial phase of a diversified enterprise. Grants will be available to individuals and groups. The ceiling will be £3,000 a year for individuals and £10,000 a year for groups.

The farm diversification scheme is tailored to activities which naturally arise on farms and both types of grant will be available only to farmers. I have been particularly anxious in devising the new scheme to ensure that it complements rather than duplicates or cuts across assistance on rural diversification coming from other agencies, chief among which is the Development Commission and the Council for Small Industries in Rural Areas, but we have also kept in close touch with tourist boards, the Sports Council, the Countryside Commission and others in developing the new scheme.

In the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service we have a very useful network which will serve as the first point of contact for farmers. ADAS will also be keeping in very close touch with all the agencies that can contribute particular expertise or forms of assistance. We are keen to strengthen the rural economy by encouraging diversity of economic activity within it. The farm diversification scheme will give further encouragement to farmers to play their part in that vital process.

Finally, I draw the House's attention to clause 3, which will increase the limit on the maximum number of members of the Development Commission from eight to 12. That will assist with the merger of the Development Commission and its main agency, the Council for Small Industries in Rural Areas. It will also make it possible to increase the range of interests represented on the Development Commission proper. I am sure that that will be generally welcomed.

I am glad to have this clause in my Department's Bill because it is symptomatic of how closely we now work with our colleagues at the Department of the Environment, who are responsible for the Development Commission. It also fits in well with the overall rationale of the Bill and with our new policy in relation to alternative land use, which is to encourage, in a variety of ways — some experimental — the alternative use of agricultural land; to encourage more diversity on farms and in the rural economy at large; to encourage more market-oriented and outward looking farming industry; and a different balance between the interests of the countryside and environmental objectives, and those of food production in this new world of surpluses. For those reasons, I commend the Bill to the House.

8.2 pm

Dr. David Clark (South Shields): This is a most appropriate time for the House to discuss the Bill, which

is an enabling measure and about which we do not complain. We accept that we are discussing the Bill at a crucial and critical time in the history of agriculture in Britain because the industry is in a state of crisis and turmoil and facing many unknowns. In all the years that I have followed the agricultural and rural scene, I can never remember so much anxiety and uncertainty in the countryside and in farming.

Last week saw the publication of the annual review of agriculture, which confirmed that impression. In real terms, farm income is at its lowest level since the second world war — apart from during one year. In many upland areas, farmers have very small incomes indeed. The imposition of the poll tax will be the last straw for many of them. While we are on the subject of economics, we should note that investment in plant and machinery in agriculture is at a post-war low.

It is small wonder, therefore, that farmers are increasingly debating the virtues of alternatives which, sadly, they may often be ill-equipped to handle. However, I accept that the Bill is an attempt to persuade and to help some farmers to cope with the problems that they might incur in trying to develop alternatives.

Mr. Cryer: Will my hon. Friend comment on the fact that for some curious philosophical reason, on seeing the plight of the farmers, the Government are not saying to them that market forces will solve their problems and that the thrust of entrepreneurial ability will be left isolated, but that the industry will be cushioned yet again by support from the Government, which is a complete philosophical U-turn from their attitude towards manufacturing industry?

Dr. Clark: I take my hon. Friend's point. It is an interesting observation that agriculture does not operate in a free market. Indeed, I should like to make that point at some length a little later.

It is also noteworthy — my hon. Friend has drawn this to my attention — that we are debating the Bill at a time when the European Commission does not have a budget for the current year and, as a result, will run out of money midway through the summer, unless we find a solution. The Prime Minister faces a tough time in Brussels next week, but as long as she stands firm in reducing surpluses significantly, she will have our support.

That brings me aptly to the Government's raison d'etre for introducing the Bill. The House will remember that the first formal intimation of the Government's proposals came in a statement to the House on 9 February 1987 by the then Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling). The statement was made in somewhat ignominious circumstances. The Minister was forced to come to the House and to interrupt the debate at 7 o'clock, following an article in the previous day's edition of *The Observer* which had exposed the Government's secret plans for the countryside. It was so instructive that on the following morning the Minister faced a vote of no confidence — unsuccessfully — at the National Farmers Union annual conference. We are now discussing the formal Bill 12 months later.

It is interesting to read what the Minister said when he announced a review of changes in the CAP and his intention for the package of measures which the Minister rightly outlined to us earlier. The then Minister said:

> "We have concluded that, given the scale of agriculture surpluses now facing us, a new balance of policies is needed. This will entail less support for expanding production, more attention to the demands of the market, more encouragement of alternative uses of land, more response to the claims of the environment, and more diversity on farms and in the rural economy." — [*Official Report*, 9 February 1987; Vol. 110, c. 70.]

The House will note that the motive for that laudable change in agricultural direction was the unacceptable level of surplus production, and especially its cost. It is important to emphasise that. The Government are absolutely correct to do so because it is ludicrous that two thirds of the cost of agricultural support in Europe goes on the storage and disposal of surpluses, or, put another way, only one third of agricultural support goes to the actual producer of the food, the farmer. That cannot be correct. Therefore, the Government are right to try to tackle that issue, although I concede that I do not think that it will be an effective mechanism for tackling the problem.

However, in spite of their fine words on the environment, the Government's response in the Bill has more to do with finance than anything else. Indeed, they have missed the golden opportunity of a more enlightened approach to agriculture and we shall seek to redress that at a later stage of the Bill's proceedings. Of course, as the Minister has reminded us, the Bill is only one of the various mechanisms that the Government propose to tackle the problem of surpluses. Others include set-aside, afforestation, capital grants for diversification and stabilisers.

It is worth re-emphasising that the Government have introduced the Bill primarily to reduce surpluses. The Minister returned to that time and again. They have not introduced it to improve the countryside or agricultural practices in themselves.

As a result of their approach, the Government have ignored one of the most positive options of de-intensification or low-input farming. The advantage of that proposal is that it would, by and large, encourage farmers to do what they do best — farm the land. By that approach to agriculture, farmers would cultivate all their land, but less intensively. There would be a lower input of fertilisers and a more benign use of pesticides with the accompanying beneficial side effects on the environment. However, that approach would still retain the machinery and labour on the farm. In addition, it would also allow us to increase food production again if the necessity arose, as well as meeting the present increasing demand for organically produced food.

We believe that that is a much more sensible approach than that of set-aside, whereby farmers are paid simply for doing nothing. I regret that the Minister has been unable to follow that approach in the Bill. Such an approach would also minimise the risk of encouraging farmers to diversify into activities for which they may not have the aptitude or the training. I do not, for one moment, doubt the versatility or entrepreneurship of many engaged in farming. However, I believe that such alternative options may be more attractive at a superficial level than in substance.

We are all aware of the individual and spectacular successes of farm diversification. The manufacturing and marketing of yogurt and other value-added dairy products spring easily to mind. Those enterprises are nothing new. Yesterday, I was interested to see the Tyne-Tees "Farming

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Outlook" programme which profiled one such enterprise, Calthwaite farm in Cumbria. The owners of that farm, the Pattinsons, are no ordinary farmers.

At one time the family owned a mill in West Cumberland. They moved to Calthwaite farm about 30 years ago and astutely identified a niche for themselves with the production of high quality dairy milk from pedigree Jerseys. That production made them exceptional. Later, they diversified into the manufacture of yogurts and other products. Currently, they are marketing those products extremely successfully throughout the north of England. They developed their business most skilfully and with great business acumen. They have constantly reappraised their business and, on one occasion, reshaped their venture — when they thought they were growing too quickly — by reducing their work force from 80 to 28.

I emphasise the example of the Pattinson family because they are aware of the need to re-assess continually the feasibility of their operation. In doing so they have made considerable use of advice from the Department of Trade and Industry. Does the Minister believe that the new farm diversification schemes will include advice from his Department or the Department of Trade and Industry? In the past it appears that the Department of Trade and Industry has given such advice. Let me emphasise that we are talking about business and industry and not so much about traditional farming.

The Pattinsons are not unique; there are many other examples in every county. For example, there is Longley farm, owned by the Dickinson family, in Holmfirth. However, it is important to emphasise that there are only a limited number of farms that can diversify into yogurt, dairy products or indeed tourist accommodation or golf courses. There are only a limited number of outlets for such activities.

To revert to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), one of the key difficulties that farmers might not appreciate is that they have traditionally been used to a guaranteed market, but in their diversified businesses they will normally have to fight for their particular share of the market. I do not believe that that can be repeated too often.

Mr. MacGregor *indicated assent.*

Dr. Clark: I note that the Minister is nodding his head and I am aware that the Government are aware of that difficulty.

Clause 1 makes provision for grants to be paid to farmers for feasibility studies into projected alternative businesses. It is significant that the Government have made provision for the payment of grants towards the capital expenditure of diversified business before making provision towards the cost of the feasibility studies. That is putting the cart before the horse. The Minister has been ill advised to rush ahead with the end product before he has allowed farmers the opportunity to benefit from the grant for feasibility studies.

One of the crucial issues in the successful establishment of any new business is planning consent. Numerous farmers have built up successful farm-related businesses only to fall foul of local planning or highway authorities at a later stage. The Minister is aware that often there is no need for planning consent when a small business is getting off the ground, but at a later stage planning consent is necessary.

The classic case is that of the North Yorkshire farmer, Brian Moore, who built up his ice-cream business to such a successful scale that he was required to obtain planning permission. The objections to his operation did not come from the urban dwellers — the townies — who enjoyed visiting his farm shop, but from his rural neighbours who felt the negative effects of his success in the form of increased traffic and the loss of privacy. It is worth emphasising that farmers represent only a small proportion of our rural population.

We recognise that the successful development of alternative businesses on farms may have the potential for serious conflicts of interest. Will the Government make it clear that they do not countenance any weakening of the well-tried local planning system? That planning system has stood us well over time and I believe that it would be a retrogressive step if it were weakened.

I specifically ask that question because I know that the Government, are contemplating — indeed, the Minister mentioned it earlier today — limiting the consultation process with local authorities for any farm woodlands under 10 hectares. We believe that that is a retrograde move. For the long-term viability of the new farm ventures, whether business or woodland, we believe that it is essential that local approval and, if possible, consensus, is reached at the outset. That precludes difficulties at a later stage. I urge the Minister to consider that matter most carefully.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): Is my hon. Friend aware that 10 hectares of forestry represents at least 25,000 trees? To allow 25,000 trees to be planted without consultation or without any local involvement in the decision-making is excessively generous.

Dr. Clark: My hon. Friend has made a pertinent point. Ten hectares may be intrusive on the local environment, and one can imagine that in a particularly sensitive environment or landscape, which may not be in the accepted areas outlined by the Minister, even one acre may be intrusive. I believe that there must be much more consultation with local authorities.

The Minister may say that the Forestry Commission will be consulted. However, will he send a circular to the Forestry Commission to draw its attention to the requirement of the Wildlife and Countryside (Amendment) Act 1985 that imposes a duty on the Forestry Commission to pay regard to environment and conservation? I believe that that would be a useful exercise.

Clause 2 deals, quite rightly, with farm woodlands. As my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) has reminded us, farm woodland may greatly affect the face of our countryside. Obviously it is desirable to plant more trees and redress the loss of 40 per cent. of the broadleaved woodland that existed in 1947. Furthermore, we are still losing hedgerows at the rate of 1 mile for every daylight hour of the year.

Mr. Andy Stewart (Sherwood) *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Hardy: It is no use the hon. Gentleman shaking his head.

Dr. Clark: I do not know if any hon. Member is seeking to argue about that statistic. It was produced by the

Countryside Commission in 1985 with finance from the Department of the Environment. They are not my figures, but the Government's figures.

More trees and farm woodlands would not only add to the aesthetic value of our landscape, but would enrich the habitats of our native wildlife. However, what type of tree should be planted, and where? Obviously, there is concern that our lowlands may be covered with a boring blanket of conifers. My hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin) has already raised that point. The Ministry has tried to avoid that problem by offering larger grants for deciduous trees, but even then it is aiming for only one third of the plantings to be deciduous and has no power to insist on that proportion.

When pressed in the other place on that issue, the Minister refused to include in the Bill any clause relating to the proportion of deciduous trees to be planted. The argument was that 64 per cent. of private sector planting under the Forestry Commission grant schemes in lowland England was of that type. If private sector planting is currently achieving a rate of 64 per cent. of deciduous trees, and that is the going rate, why can that not be included in the legislation or in the statutory instrument? That would be logical. Will the Minister reconsider increasing the level and requirement of deciduous planting?

The Forestry Commission and private forestry in Scotland have an excellent record of allowing the public access to their land. As considerable public money is now to be invested in farm woodlands in lowland Britain, what proposals do the Government have in mind to ensure that there is adequate public access to those woodlands?

Clause 3 seeks to increase the membership of the Development Commission. I was interested to see that clause in a Ministry of Agriculture Bill. As the Minister said, we are pleased that the Department of the Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture are working together. Would that that were always the case. We look forward to seeing a happy development along those lines. We agree that the Development Commission has a vital role to play in the revitalisation of the rural economy, and we are happy to support that move. However, we urge the Minister to ensure that at least some of the new appointees have wide environmental and conservation expertise.

While, generally, the Development Commission has a good track record, there is some evidence that of late it has been carried away by its own enthusiasm. I specifically have in mind its support of a golf course complex in rural Northumberland, which now includes the proposal to build 60 to 80 houses for permanent occupation in the green belt. Hon. Members will recall that that led to the famous gaffe by the Secretary of State for the Environment that there were no golf courses in the north-east of England. He was wrong. There are more than 90 in north-east England. The presence of a sound environmentalist on the commission might have helped to avoid that difficulty.

We give the Bill a cautious welcome, but certain aspects of it still concern us. In particular, we feel that it is too narrow and that it does not encourage the farmer to develop his own farming skills in an environmentally sustainable manner. Furthermore, we see the risk of stampeding the farming community into establishing diversified, farm-related industries which they lack the expertise and training to operate. By decreasing liaison with the local planning authority, there will be a danger of increasing conflicts locally if businesses flourish and woodlands develop. There are weaknesses in the Bill, and we shall seek to improve it at a later stage.

8.23 pm

Sir Charles Morrison (Devizes): There are two characteristics of any debate about forestry and trees. The first is an expression of general hatred for the poor unfortunate conifer, and the second is a furious demand for the right of access so that people can see the conifers. I have never quite understood that conundrum, but it has happened repeatedly for as long as I have been a Member of Parliament. I shall refer to some of the points made by the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) later in my remarks.

The context of the Bill, as my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has reminded us, is the over-production of agricultural commodities, and the consequent need to reduce agricultural surpluses. No one would claim that the Bill is, or will be, the last word on the subject, or that it will come anywhere near a solution of the problems of excess production, which stem from the amazing advances made in agricultural science, and those advances being put into practice by able farmers and skilled farm workers. Nevertheless, the Bill is another small step in the right direction of containing the output of food. Therefore, it is to be warmly welcomed.

The methods proposed for the reduction of output are, in clause 1, the diversification of farm businesses, and, in clause 2 the conversion of farm land into farm woodland. I should like to say a few words about each of those clauses. Clause 1 seeks to stimulate investment in a variety of alternative farm enterprises and to encourage effective marketing. Assistance is to be given to businesses involving horses, particularly livery stables and, in the uplands only, horses for hire. The general principle of giving assistance seems excellent, but why for horses for hire in the uplands only?

The demand for riding horses and ponies is huge and growing, particularly in areas adjacent to towns, some distance away from the uplands. Why is assistance not to be available nearer towns? If it were, it would encourage the removal of more good agricultural land from food production. That would cut surpluses more than in upland areas.

Horses and ponies, to a far greater extent than has yet been recognised, can help the Minister to overcome excess production problems. More people want to ride horses and ponies as a recreation; therefore, more horses and ponies need to be bred, and more acres need to be set aside for their keep and use. It is worth noting that even now, the latest national equestrian survey estimates that there are more than 1 million households in Britain in which someone rides a horse, and about 3·3 million people ride regularly.

The horse and pony breeding industry alone uses about 293,000 acres. Furthermore, labour intensity in breeding establishments is much higher than it is on general agricultural land, involving about one person per 23 acres compared with one person per 132 acres in agriculture generally. Thus, in addition, horse and pony breeding establishments are a good means of sustaining rural employment, and the demand for horses to ride is growing.

The little help that the Bill offers is welcome, but from every point of view—above all from that of my right hon. Friend the Minister—if might be worth being a

[Sir Charles Morrison]

little bolder. I must add that the use of land for horses will not be increased or helped unless the Government act to equate horse and pony breeding with other agricultural activities by derating it, as was the case from the mid-1930s until 1981 and the recent outcome of the Whitsbury stud test case when the courts decided, contrary to a 1930s judgment, that horse and pony breeding establishments should be rated.

There seems to be little point in encouraging better opportunities, as the Bill does, while elsewhere there are new deterrents to the breeding and maintenance or horses. I know that this is not a subject that can be dealt with in this Bill, but I hope that my right hon. Friend will bear in mind the deterrent that the newly imposed burden of rating on horse and pony breeding establishments has on breeders and the adverse effect it could have on possible alternative land use.

I have no doubt that clause 2 will be an encouragement to farmers to reconvert some of their land to farm woodlands. I was glad to hear from my right hon. Friend today about the National Farmers Union-CLA-RICS agreement. It is a credit to all those concerned, and undoubtedly it will be helpful in the achievement of my right hon. Friend's objectives.

I said "reconvert" some of the land to forestry, because it should be remembered that in times past much more of our countryside was wooded, incidentally providing variety, windbreaks and cover for wildlife. We import about 90 per cent of our timber needs, so it must be sensible to use more of our land for timber production. The environmental benefit is an excellent extra bonus.

I shall now deal with one of the points made by the hon. Member for South Shields. I must express my regret that in another place — and apparently so far here — the Government have remained unprepared to accept a new clause that would have provided a third method in their armoury of weapons aimed at cutting surpluses. That method goes under the terrible title of de-intensification. Putting it simply, it would involve a return to more traditional and simpler forms of farm production.

A variety of schemes could be considered, but, for the most part, they would limit, or even disallow, the use of fertilisers and chemical sprays. Clearly, organic farming would qualify and so would the conservation headlands that have been pioneered by the Game Conservancy Trust. Such schemes would have a double benefit. They would reduce production and be enormously advantageous for environmental conservation. In passing, I must give credit to my right hon. Friend for including conservation headlands in the Breckland environmentally sensitive area. However, their application could be much more general and beneficial.

The effect of the headlands in terms of the regrowth of wild arable flora is astounding. The seed bank, which still happily exists in the land, and the consequential effect of the germination of seeds from that bank on insect and bird life has to be seen to be believed. It is a pity that there is not a de-intensification clause, even of the Government do not immediately wish to make use of its provisions on the basis that they may wish to carry out more research before doing so. In spite of that reservation, I welcome the Bill for what it proposes and congratulate my right hon. Friend the Minister on taking another step in the right direction.

8.32 pm

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): I ask for the indulgence of the House because I have not participated in an agriculture debate before. I hope that my interest in the Bill will become apparent as I proceed. I should like to congratulate the civil servants who drafted the Minister's speech because it gave new meaning to the old phrase about not being able "to see the wood for the trees".

The reality is that the Bill derives from the total failure of the common agricultural policy. It seems inconceivable that the Minister did not mention the fact that on television we hear of starvation in the Third world, while he is boasting that he hopes to reduce food production in Britain and that the Common Market will be reducing food production too. An incapacity to relate world needs and world resources is one of the great problems facing humanity.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), who is also a Member of the European Parliament, told me that the CAP costs about £11·50 per family per week. That is to pay farmers to reduce production and to bring about—this new phrase—de-intensification. When the miners of south Wales object to six-day working at Margam, I shall advise them to talk about de-intensification. It is really a way of saying that if more people could be employed with lower productivity in economic terms, one is serving a purpose that the Government want.

The farmers are in trouble. One has only to listen to "Farming Today", which is one of my regular diets, to know how serious the problem is and why so many farmers have come to participate in the debate on the Bill tonight.

I read the Bill with considerable interest. In particular, I read clause 1. It talks about the power to give grants for "the establishment or expansion of a farm business". It talks about grants for

" the establishment or expansion, for purposes connected with the establishment, expansion or carrying on of such a farm business"

or

"the promotion of such a farm business"

or

"the marketing of anything produced".

The Bill began to ring a bell. It is the same as my Industry Bill of 1975. I have with me the very copy of that Bill which I took through the House against bitter Tory opposition. That Bill dealt with the establishment of the National Enterprise Board. It talks about assistance to make a grant and the

"assistance of the economy of the United Kingdom or any part of the United Kingdom;

(b) the promotion in any part of the United Kingdom of industrial efficiency."

It states:

"The functions of the Board shall be—

(a) establishing, maintaining or developing, or promoting or assisting the establishment, maintenance or development of any industrial enterprise".

That Bill was introduced by a dangerous man about whom I read in the newspapers from time to time—myself. The Bill was designed to deal with the problems in industry that have now hit agriculture. Community membership damaged our industry by exposing it to competition from the more competitive German and French industry. The common agricultural policy raised the cost of food in this country instead of adopting the old farm support scheme introduced after the war.

The Minister has drafted the first Bill for a Socialist Government in Britain. It is nice to have the Queen's Speech drafted for us by the Conservative party. I would make only two amendments to the Bill. The first would be to delete the words "Farm Land and Rural Development" and call it the "Development Bill", and secondly, so as not to make the farmers left out, because I sympathise with them as with others, I would add "and others".

The Conservative party has lectured the miners year after year for their failure to be productive or competitive and in the Bill the Government are subsidising—that is the word, and I have no objection to the idea—farmers, faced not with foreign competition, but with the absurdity of the agricultural support scheme that flows from our membership of the Common Market.

There is another issue about which I am concerned. I hardly dare mention it because it is so reminiscent of the nanny state we are supposed to be repudiating. That issue is the power of the Minister to

"impose requirements to be complied with by persons applying for the grants."

Local authorities are not allowed to do such things. They are not allowed to have contract compliance so as not to have to buy from South Africa. The Labour Government would no doubt use clause 2(2)*(b)* to

"confer a discretion on the appropriate Minister . . .

(c) to provide for the grants to be paid to persons on such terms as may be specified in or determined".

It is interesting that the Bill proves once and for all that this is not a monetarist Government. I never believed that they were. I never thought that the Prime Minister sat up at night with a cold towel round her head reading the works of Milton Friedman—however attractive, given the alternative, that might have seemed—before going to bed. The Government are paying their supporters for the support they depend on in the shires. The Bill reveals the Conservative party as having an absolutely simple pork-barrel view of how to get back into power.

Sir Charles Morrison *rose*——

Mr. Benn: I shall certainly give way to the hon. Gentleman. Short of the newly elected president of the National Union of Mineworkers, nobody could have done better for the industry of which he is a member.

Sir Charles Morrison: How does the right hon. Gentleman reconcile his remarks with the fact that the Government have invested some £5·5 billion in the coal mining industry since 1979, at a rate of about £2 million per working day, and, what is more, plan to invest another £2 billion over the next two years?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. I do not think that the right hon. Gentleman should allow himself to be led down that path; it does not relate to the Second Reading of this Bill.

Mr. Benn: Like the cavalry, Madam Deputy Speaker, you save me from a tempting diversion, although I do not notice this Government now, at this stage, allowing food from South Africa to come in without restraint, which would automatically not be permitted under this Bill.

Why do the farmers need the money? It is partly because of the problem that I described and partly because tenant farmers are having to pay rising rents to their landlords for their land. As with all land, the price of agricultural land has risen very sharply. High land prices are creating the urban crisis of high rents in housing in the towns and pressure on tenant farmers in the countryside.

The money paid to farmers under the Bill will go in part to landlords. I again congratulate the legal department of the Ministry on explaining, through the Minister, the difficulty and complexity of landlord-tenant relations in agricultural legislation. If one wants to bring rents down, it would be better to bring them down by common ownership.

Lest any hon. Member should think that this is a new idea that has emerged from what is now known laughingly as the "Champagne" group of Labour Members, I remind the House that the idea of common ownership is a very old idea. The idea that the earth is "a common treasury" and that it is "a crime to buy and sell the land for private gain" goes back to the 17th century.

And for the benefit of the Liberal party—whichever of its factions is here today—I was brought up on Lloyd George's land song:

"The land, the land, the land on which we stand,
Why should we be paupers with the ballot in our hand?"

I therefore hope that I may be acquitted of introducing a controversial note by talking about the common ownership of land.

The private ownership of land was the result of a medieval privatisation. I have been to the Library to look at the Enclosure Acts, under which common land was sold to the rich farmers, just as British Telecom, British Gas and British Petroleum were sold. It was the Enclosure Acts that took the common land and gave it to the landlords, who are now to have their rent subsidised through a grant, in the guise of providing money for woodlands.

I have introduced a little Bill, which you, Madam Deputy Speaker, would not allow me to read. Its purpose is to bring the land into common ownership—except for owner-occupied land, which is a different case. The rent of all the land in this country would amount to £70 billion a year. That would cover the full costs of the rates and the rate support grant. It would be the answer to the poll tax, which I understand my hon. Friends on the Front Bench are working on very carefully—and listening as they do it. The answer to the problem of the poll tax is the common ownership of land, which is in the constitution of the party of which I happen to be a member.

For all the reasons that I have given, I shall support the Bill with enthusiasm. If there is a Division, I shall go into the Lobby with the Minister, because I believe that what he has done, in a flash of rhetoric—albeit perhaps not fashioned by his own pen—is to expose the nature of the Conservative party. It is a party that does not believe in free enterprise, in the Common Market, in monetarism or viability. It believes—as any party naturally would—in winning power. As Samuel Gompers once said:

"Reward your friends and punish your enemies."

This Bill rewards the Minister's friends and, meanwhile, his enemies are being punished in the mining areas of Britain. Incidentally, I never heard any argument about the environmental advantages of coal over nuclear power, although we have heard today the environmental argument for woodlands.

At this late stage in the third term of the Prime Minister, who is evidently going on for ever and ever, it is refreshing to find at long last that we know the true nature of the Conservative party. It has come out in the Bill and, if necessary, I shall be a Teller for the Ayes. Otherwise, I shall raise my voice loudly in its support and thank the Minister for the clarity that he has brought to such an important subject.

8.44 pm

Sir John Farr (Harborough): I hope that the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) will forgive me if I do not follow his argument. He should be reminded that the reason for the success of agriculture, which has brought about the surpluses, is that over the past 10, 15 or 20 years there has been a massive annual increase in productivity.

I see that the right hon. Gentleman has turned his back; he will not even do Conservative Members the courtesy of listening. The present problem of agricultural surpluses has been brought about by the tremendous increase in efficiency and productivity year by year, which has left the coal mining industry and every type of manufacturing industry miles behind and in another street. That unparalleled success, brought about by intensive mechanisation, accounts for our problem of surplus. That is a far better problem with which to have to deal than the problem of shortages that we have in our coalfields, which means that we are having to import cheap coal from all over the world. I am proud of what British agriculture has done with Government aid.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Minister on his speech. I also congratulate the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) on his important remarks. He referred in particular to clause 1, which deals with the diversification of farm businesses. He also said that it was necessary to get improved planning consent arrangements. As it happens, my reason for speaking is to illustrate to the House the difficulties that people who want to expand are facing in obtaining planning consent. In the east midlands, we have a very active branch of the National Farmers Union, which covers the counties of Leicestershire, Northamptonshire and Rutland. That branch has repeatedly had difficulties with local planning authorities which have failed to give approval for bringing redundant farm buildings into use again.

In December, the local NFU wrote to me about a case which came up a few weeks ago. One of my constituents, who often lets out work in his farm, has a large grain dryer which is a redundant farm building. His daughter and son-in-law have set up a computer business, which they run from part of the grain dryer. Planning permission was refused, and I was sent a copy of the correspondence. The Harborough district council's refusal, dated 19 December, relating to the conversion and use of the farm building for storage, offices, craft shop and workroom at Wood lane, Tugby is worth quoting to the House. It gives us an example of an obstructive local authority that has not changed with the times. The refusal states:

"The site lies in the countryside and the proposal is contrary to policy L/SE14 contained in the Structure Plan for Leicestershire . . . whereby development normally will not be permitted in such areas except where it can be shown that it is essential for the efficient operation of agriculture, horticulture, forestry, recreation, public utilities or tourism. The District Planning Authority is not aware of any special circumstances which would justify setting aside this policy. The site is prominent in this pleasant rural landscape and approval of the use proposed would have an adverse effect on the visual amenities of the locality."

The NFU received the refusal in December and the group secretary, Mr. Theakston, asked me to raise the matter in the House because, repeatedly, local authorities, such as Harborough district council, continue to give adverse responses to applications to save redundant farm buildings from complete and utter dereliction. The purpose of this admirable Bill is to keep those old buildings in use. We have entrepreneurs who want to retain the buildings in the countryside, but time and again local authorities bar them. In his letter of 16 December Mr. Theakston stated:

"In the meantime I am still interested in the principle of why the Government has made encouraging noises for conversion of redundant farm buildings to rural industry, yet this has not percolated through to local Planning Authorities."

It is all very well passing this Bill, but it is meaningless if there is a network of obstructive local authorities. I wrote to my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning, who replied on 27 January, saying:

"Since 1980 we have consistently urged planning authorities to treat applications for the re-use of redundant farm buildings sympathetically . . . Permission for the re-use of redundant farm buildings should therefore be granted unless there are specific and convincing planning objections."

Clearly, my right hon. Friend must encourage the Minister for Housing and Planning to do more than merely "urge" local authorities to behave in that way.

The Minister has been kind enough to send me a couple of booklets — one published in 1987 and the other in 1985 — dealing with this matter. Both have been circulated to local authorities, but local authorities seem to be determined to turn their backs on what I regard as not progress, but maintenance of an existence. I hope that my right hon. Friend will urge the Minister for Housing and Planning to look again to see whether local authorities should not be more than just "urged".

I agree with my right hon. Friend on forestry. I was interested to hear what my hon. Friend the Member for Devizes (Sir C. Morrison) said about the terrible word "de-intensification". It is not a double negative, but a double positive and it could be improved on. It is a weapon which Ministers could bear in mind. I understand that in the other place a new clause on de-intensification was discussed and that the Government took on board some of the points raised. If a new clause were introduced in Committee, it would help with some of the nitrate excesses, chemical excesses the factory farming and outlook of agriculture and it would possibly reduce some of the worse excesses of the intensive farming system. A de-intensification clause would provide additional encouragement.

I welcome what is said about forestry in clause 2. The new payment of grants towards expenditure incurred in the conversion of agriculture land to woodland is long overdue and badly needed. I hope that my right hon. Friend will agree in Committee that some improvements can be made to the Bill. It would be helpful if there were a form of indexation for the payment of grants so that they keep pace with inflation.

I particularly welcome what my right hon. Friend said about co-operation between the CLA and the NFU and the agreement which has now been reached to make available to tenant farmers the available grants after agreement with the landlords through the CLA. I am also particularly pleased to welcome the four main objectives of the farm woodland scheme, which are to enhance the landscape, to encourage recreation and tourism, to contribute to supporting farm income and to maintain or stimulate rural improvement.

This is a good Bill and certainly it will not be opposed tonight. I congratulate my right hon. Friend on introducing it.

8.55 pm

Mr. Geraint Howells (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): I have waited nearly 15 years for the opportunity to debate tree planting. It has been a tradition in our family from my great grandfather down to myself to plant thousands of trees annually. I shall say a few words from my experience of tree planting in the less-favoured areas in the mountains of Wales.

To help the Minister and perhaps the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) on their way—I should be a little worried if I saw them going into the same Lobby; I am sure that I would go the other way—over the past 80 years my grandfather, father and I have planted more than 10 per cent. of all the land in the less-favoured areas, and we have been able to increase our stocking rating over the years as we take more land out of production to plant trees. The simple reason is that sheep like shelter. We have planted small plantations of up to 10 acres, not hundreds or thousands of acres, and we have been fortunate in having grants from the Ministry. This year I shall go in for similar schemes.

About 20 years ago, when I was keen to plant about 20,000 Sitka spruce and Japanese larch on a particular piece of land, permission was not granted. Nevertheless, I planted the trees and today they are worth looking at.

The everyday reality for farmers is that they have to come to terms with a changing market and control of food surpluses. Following the introduction, with such indecent haste, of milk quotas, thousands of dairy farmers found themselves in heavy debt. The rural economy has been undermined seriously. Only last week, five creameries—one in my constituency and another in that of the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones)—were scheduled to close, with the loss of hundreds of jobs. I warn the Government that producers of other commodities face similar difficulties.

On behalf of hill farmers in less-favoured areas, I plead with the Minister not to dismantle the sheepmeat regime. Farmers are pleased and satisfied with it. It is a wonderful regime and it has been with us for decades.

We must welcome any attempt to help farmers and improve the rural economy. The Bill is a small step in the right direction, though it will not solve the problem of surpluses and not every farmer will be able to benefit from it. The Minister will find it difficult to persuade many farmers to go in for tree planting. I have tried to persuade many of my friends in Cardiganshire, but they will not do it. I hope that the Minister and his team will be more successful in persuading hill farmers to plant trees.

This is a constructive measure which has received general support from farming unions and conservation bodies. One criticism voiced by farming unions is the failure to find a way of including areas of permanent pasture which could qualify for the farm woodland scheme. Paradoxically, they are the areas where farmers are least able to diversify and where many farm incomes are coming under pressure.

I understand the Minister to say that he is considering giving farmers a chance to plant land that has been cultivated during the past three or five years. I am anxious that the planting of broadleaved trees should be encouraged as much as possible. I like, however, to see a conifer growing here and there—I have planted many thousands of them.

With respect to the hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin), conifers have been criticised a little too much by many people. The Sitka and the Scots pine are beautiful trees if they are not planted too thickly. The mistake that has been made in Wales as well as in Scotland and England is that thousands of acres have been planted with conifers. It would have been better if those in charge of the Forestry Commission had planted, say, 1,000 acres, left another 1,000 and then planted the next 1,000, rather than plant all of a 10,000-acre plot.

There may not be sufficient assurances that the annual payments will keep pace with inflation. I believe that there is an argument for making the commitment to review the scheme a more positive statement.

Although my grandfather planted many trees, as did my father after him and as I have, I do not think that we have made one penny out of it. We like the trees and we will leave them. My advice to the Minister is to carry on with the planting. I shall give him all the advice that I can if he needs help, but I do not think that he does. Since he took office after the general election last year, he has not, with respect, given farming much encouragement.

I know that the Minister finds it difficult to persuade his counterparts in Europe, but farmers are looking for encouragement. We all shout at the farming community to produce less, but we cannot expect farmers then to produce less when they are offered no incentives—only a freeze at the annual price fixing. We cannot penalise the farmers and expect them to produce less. That situation cannot go on. I hope that the Minister will persuade the Prime Minister to give extra financial aid so that he, in turn, can look after the interests of the farming community much better in future years than he has over the past four years.

9.4 pm

Mr. Andrew Hunter (Basingstoke): It is a privilege to follow the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells), and I endorse very much of what he said.

I am sorry that the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) is not in his place. His speech was such fun that one could not take it seriously. He told us that he starts each day by listening to farming programmes on the radio. He may well listen to them, but I fear that he understands and learns little from them. His speech was a treat of a grandiose Socialist extravaganza, but irrelevant to the debate.

I welcome the Bill as a quiet and relatively uncontroversial aspect of the Government's policy, which seeks to discourage the production of surpluses and encourage the creation of a more soundly based rural economy. The central points of the debate are well known to us and I shall be brief. I want to refer only to the farm woodlands scheme and its environmental and wildlife implications.

My hon. Friend the Member for Devizes (Sir C. Morrison) referred to the exclusion of permanent pastures from the scheme. My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food knows that this worries the National Farmers Union and the Country Landowners Association. The measure will remove from the scope of the scheme one third of agricultural land in England and a higher proportion of agricultural land in Wales. It removes a great deal of the wetter, heavier soil of the west country and of the north of England, which are

[Mr. Andrew Hunter]

among the best parts of the country for growing trees. In such areas, options for diversification are few and farm incomes are under greatest pressure. It is to be regretted that the scheme is not more widely applied, and I hope that further thought will be given to it, even at this stage.

My hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) spoke of the need to index payments. This is an important point. I welcome my right hon. Friend's decision to increase the amounts from his original proposal. I welcome the fact that he is prepared to review the scheme after three years and then at least every five years. The scheme will lack confidence unless this indexing can be achieved.

The need for annual review of a different sort has been put forward by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, which has contributed so much to debates about the Bill. The RSPB is surprised that the Bill makes no provision to review the effects of the scheme annually and the extent to which it achieves its objectives. The argument is for a statutory annual review. Taxpayers' money is being used and the environmental impact should be monitored. It can be argued that the scheme should have greater monitoring.

To be effective, the scheme must be readily available to tenant farmers. All hon. Members welcomed the statement at the beginning of my right hon. Friend's speech. I am glad that a formula has been produced, whereby tenancy agreements can be readily adapted. Unless the scheme is readily available to tenants, it will be seriously weakened.

I wish to make a number of observations about the implications for the environment and wildlife. Much fear has been expressed that the small areas of conservation value will be badly affected. The Government propose to reduce the consultation process for small developments of less than 10 hectares. The Nature Conservancy Council and others fear that less consultation will mean less protection. We still look for reassurance from the Minister that this will not be the case.

There is anxiety about the impact of the scheme on unimproved land, on which 3,000 hectares of planting will be targeted. That will benefit hill farmers and bring back to the uplands birch and oak woods, but the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds says that those uplands are inhabited by important species of wild birds, especially greenshank and curlew. We look for more reassurance from the Minister that those interests will be safeguarded.

Much the same could be said about improved agricultural land of conservation value. Many improved pastures have reverted to rough grass and rushes. Those pastures are breeding habitats for many species of wading birds. We want reassurances that improved pastures will not be turned into woodland and unimproved land ploughed up, thus doubly damaging wildlife habitats.

I should mention a final point on which we need clarification. In a letter to many Members of Parliament, the National Farmers Union expressed the belief

"that the exact mixture of broadleaf and conifer trees in each plantation is best left to local negotiation between the interested parties."

What does the Minister understand by the term "interested parties"? Are environmental organisations involved? On what criteria should interested parties base their judgment, and will those criteria include planned provision of wildlife habitat?

Although some points need further consideration, the Bill should be welcomed. Above all, in its implementation, the greatest care should be taken to ensure that the farm woodland scheme enhances the beauty of the countryside and effectively protects and promotes wildlife.

9.11 pm

Mr. Elliott Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): As a Member of Parliament for a largely rural constituency, I give a general welcome to the Bill, but I also wish to mention the balance between the needs of the farming community and the environmental needs which we all share as a community. I hope that when he replies the Minister will clarify some parts of the Bill. On diversification in farming, will nature trails or wetland habitats in the form of nature parks be eligible for grant? Will the environmental impact on a scheme be carefully considered before, instead of after, aid is given, so that a scheme which may have an undesirable environmental effect can be rejected?

Hon. Members have talked about marginal land and ploughing up meadowland. Could a farmer receive a grant for planting trees and then plough up empty marginal land to plant crops, thereby not only receiving the grant for the woodland but retaining the capacity and defeating the purpose of the Bill?

I understand that areas of outstanding natural beauty will not count under the terms of the 10-hectare limit. That is a glaring omission from the Bill.

I see some benefit in granting aid for planting in severely disadvantaged areas, especially if it includes the planting of indigenous species, including broadleaf trees. But the schemes could affect the habitat of breeding birds in those areas, and some of the rarer species, including the merlin and the hen harrier, are under threat. The Minister will be well aware of the controversy that is raging in the flow country about the effect of such tree schemes on those habitats.

I am concerned that insufficient emphasis is given to the involvement of local authorities in the schemes. There has been criticism of local authorities that have stopped the development of rural areas and farm building, but local authorities have a responsibility to the whole community. While I am in favour of diversification, I am not in favour of it at any price. Local authorities should have a say in any sort of scheme; they should give their point of view and protect the needs of the whole community.

Hon. Members have mentioned monitoring of the schemes; annual monitoring is important, and it is also important that assistance be given to farmers who plant woodlands. For many of them it will be a new venture in a new business. So I hope that any woodland scheme will be staged and staggered so that when it comes to cropping the woodlands in the future, they will not all be cleared in one go, but in stages. I am sure that such advice is available to the people concerned. The Bill is an important step forward, but I would appreciate some assurances from the Minister on the points that I have raised.

9.15 pm

Mr. David Curry (Skipton and Ripon): I want to raise two themes that are important to the success of diversification generally and my constituency in particular —planning permission, which has already been aired at length tonight, and Sunday trading, which is important in the context of an integrated rural economy.

My constituency consists of large tracts of Yorkshire Dales national park. When growing trees there, conifers are an important element as a nursery crop to afford protection from hostile weather to the broadleafs that are growing in association with them. My constituency also consists of an important part of green belt between Leeds and Harrogate in which, among many others, Mr. Moore lives — a fact which Opposition Members have mentioned. I think that he will fall on his feet at the end of the day, because he is an enterprising person. There is also some high quality arable land in the vale of Mowbray.

So my constituency is a microcosm of the countryside of Britain. If the programme of farm diversification is to work, it must work there. It is also a major tourist area of wilderness and urban fringe. Planning delays, perhaps more importantly than restrictions, coupled with Sunday trading, are in danger of being an unintentional instrument for the destruction of jobs and opportunity—precisely the sort of opportunity that the farm diversification programme seeks to create.

The national parks present their own problems, and the work of COSIRA and the Development Commission is important in that context. This Friday, I shall have the pleasure of presenting some COSIRA awards in my constituency.

The green belt is a harder problem. It is easy enough to read economic lessons on how anti-economic the effect of the green belt is, but there is a clash of legitimate interests in it. There are no villains; there is a lack of consensus, if that is not an unparliamentary expression, about what the countryside should do. It extends to relations between some Government Departments, although I am delighted to hear from my right hon. Friend the Minister that emissaries have been exchanged between the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Department of the Environment.

We see the dangers and the problems when we read the reports of inspectors who have the misfortune of trying to adjudicate cases sent to them on appeal. In practice, they are trying to reconcile opposing advice. In trying to reconcile different interests, that opposing advice remains at odds. We do not want a landscaped people, with suburban Marie Antoinettes playing shepherds and shepherdesses in an ephemeral Ruritania; we want a working countryside. Equally, residents who have purchased for amenity have the right to expect that necessary developments will be sensitive to that amenity in scale and nature. Unless there are clear guidelines based on such a consensus, plans for rural development will sink beneath the quicksands of innumerable planning sub-committees.

If the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has sent emissaries to the Department of the Environment, I invite it also to send an ambassador to the Home Office, because Sunday trading is also an important issue affecting the rural economy. Shops in most small villages and towns are able to open for trading in the summer. The problem arises in winter because small shops which take perhaps as much as one third or one half of their takings on Sunday need to be able to cater for the tourist trade. That is vital for small shops. The villages are the focus of visits and the visitors then spread out to the farms and to the various other amenities offered by the farm diversification scheme.

Shops are at the mercy of an arbitrary and asinine law that shuts shops in one village and leaves them open in another, and that closes one market square and allows another to trade. That is not the fault of local authorities which have no option but to apply the law once a complaint has been received. Perhaps the law has a right to be an ass, but it must not be an indiscriminate ass in its application. There is no point in farms setting up businesses that require retail operations if the law then closes them down on the day on which they are likely to do most of their trade.

The Government must not funk this issue. It is intensely destructive to the rural economy, especially in the tourist-orientated areas such as the national parks in the northern uplands.

When we talk about farm diversification, as often as not we are inviting the farmer's wife to take more responsibility, because a major part of the diversified activity may fall to the wife. I recommend that an emissary be sent to the Treasury to sort out the married worried woman's tax treatment. That is a major disincentive to farmers' wives to mount this sort of collaborative enterprise. A little help in that direction will do a great deal more than a whole string of marketing aids.

9.22 pm

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): The Minister emphasised the co-operation between his Department and the Department of the Environment and certain other agencies. I am sure that we all welcome that. He devoted a good portion of his speech to clause 2. That deals with tree planting, and, as he said, we in Northern Ireland already have the necessary authorities and mechanisms in place.

I am mainly concerned about clause 1, which deals with farm businesses. I am sure that grants under this heading will be very welcome. What farmer has ever declined grant assistance? Farmers are an enterprising race, and most of them will make a success of their business, grant or no grant. Their main problem will be not finance, but, as some hon. Members have pointed out, the attitude of planning authorities. To some extent the Bill renders that attitude obsolete.

I do not advocate the wholesale scrapping of planning safeguards; I merely suggest the introduction of some common sense. Common sense has not always been very evident in some planning decisions. I shall give one example. A farmer with suitable premises opened a farm shop to dispose of his own produce. Seasonal fluctuations in supply forced him to purchase produce from other sources. Immediately, the planners pounced and finally ordered him to revert to own produce or close down. Then, wonder of wonders, along came Marks and Spencer with a planning application for a massive supermarket within a few hundred yards of that farm shop. That application has been granted. When I was asked for my view, I said that I would accept the own-produce restriction on the farm shop if Marks and Spencer could be required similarly to sell only goods produced on its new site.

In view of the Minister's mention of co-operation between Departments and agencies, I hope and trust that Ministers in the Departments concerned, who have a reputation for tenacity and fairness, will see that the Government's approach to this matter is a seamless robe.

9.24 pm

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): I wish to speak briefly in this important debate on behalf of the west

[Mr. Anthony Steen]

country, and particularly South Hams. As the House may know, my constituency, which is mostly south Devon, consists of designated areas, known as areas of outstanding natural beauty. Little of South Hams is not designated as such. Nearly 70 miles of my constituency are "heritage coastline": conservation areas, areas of great landscape value, sites of special scientific interest and, of course, part of the Dartmoor national park.

What has kept the area so beautiful? It has really been the farmers, who have done a tremendous job in looking after the land. What concerns me, and other west country Members, is how we are to find solutions to the problem of conserving such a wonderful part of the country, when the production and income of those farmers are to be reduced. If diversification grants fall short, how will the farmers maintain the area? They cannot be expected to turn into golf course pros or safari park attendants. Areas such as South Hams need special grants to protect them.

Will my right hon. Friend the Minister, when he replies to the debate, say whether he is considering giving grants to farmers who are farming areas of outstanding natural beauty, such as the lower slopes of Dartmoor? I do not see how such areas can be maintained on the present grant. If the Bill is fully put into practice, the planners will inevitably be under enormous pressure to relax their regimes. Many disused barns will be used for small craft workshops; hillsides will be used for modern housing and urban sprawl.

Ivybridge, a small town in my constituency, contained 2,000 souls 10 years ago. There will be 14,000 there by 1992, all just on the edge of the national park. That is the extent of the suburban sprawl and the pressure on the south: a 14 per cent. increase in the population of South Hams in the past 10 years. The pressure is increasing. Unless my hon. Friend is very robust, the diversification policy will mean that areas such as south Devon, which has been traditionally preserved by the farmers, will be destroyed by the farmers.

My plea to the Government is to introduce an extensive new category for compensation. Let the Government tell farmers in the west country that they are needed for their conservation work, and that my hon. Friend wants to see south Devon kept in pristine condition, with its rare beauty preserved. Will he perhaps declare as areas of outstanding natural beauty Britain's "farming preservation areas"? I know that we are very fond of declaring special areas, but could we at least designate such areas by another name than the de-intensification of farming? That term was defeated in the other place. We need a new name. We could vote on it, and then my right hon. Friend could say that he had won.

We must have a means of preserving south Devon and other west country areas as tourist attractions. We must preserve the countryside and find alternative land uses which, while they will not solve the farming crisis on their own, will help to solve it. Besides allowing farmers to get out of farming, the Government must encourage others to remain in farming to keep the countryside attractive so that people will spend their vacations in the west country.

That is my message today. Will my right hon. Friend act to preserve areas of outstanding natural beauty against destruction or neglect?

9.29 pm

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): I am delighted to follow the hon. Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen). As an ardent conservationist, it would give me great pleasure to see an amendment to the wildlife and countryside legislation that recognised that, under the Government, farmers have become an endangered species. The hon. Gentleman might support that proposition in the Division Lobby. I agree with the hon. Gentleman. It is a matter of great concern.

In many parts of Europe, there is deep anxiety about rural depopulation. It would be a great mistake to allow the present fearful situation to lead to excessive population growth and the blighting, destroying or disfiguring of attractive areas, when the scale of the problem could effectively be dealt with by greater emphasis on de-intensification. "De-intensification" is an ugly word, and the hon. Member for South Hams will recognise it as such. It is an ugly word, but it is one approach that the Government should properly pursue.

I noticed that the Earl of Cranbrook, whose father was of considerable assistance in respect of two or three of my private Member's Bills in the 1970s, put forward a cogent set of arguments in favour of that approach. I hope that a Ministry will accept that Lord Cranbrook's amendments represent a possible approach to the problem and a sensible arrangement. I do not say that the Minister's proposals are not acceptable. I am merely suggesting that other approaches should be considered.

The Minister may agree with the suggestion that the World Wildlife Fund has made to me. It suggested that the approach contained in Lord Cranbrook's new clause, which he unsuccessfully moved in another place, would be perfectly within the terms of EEC regulations. EEC regulations 1760/87 would allow the approach that the Government have so far rejected and might be an important arm in reducing the food surplus.

I have certain anxieties about the effect of the Government's proposals, which have already been aired by my hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) and the hon. Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter), who referred to the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds on whose council I serve. I shall not delay the House by referring to anxieties at any length, save to say that other hon. Members will refer to conservation bodies' axieties. I certainly hope that the Minister will take into account the points that have been made and seek to ensure in Committee that the anxieties that have properly been expressed and which are genuinely felt can be resolved. The Government will have to move some way towards an adequate and improved arrangement for consultation.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes) sought to intervene during the Minister's opening speech. He wished to make a specific and important point. He cannot be present, so I agreed to make it on his behalf. My right hon. Friend is the vice-president of the Association of County Councils. As my constituency contains a metropolitan authority, I must recognise that the Association of County Councils may have more representatives on Conservative Benches than on Opposition Benches.

The Association's concern is non-partisan, but it is serious. I referred to it in an earlier intervention. I pointed out that 10 hectares, which may be planted without any

consultation, can accommodate 25,000 trees. The Government are saying that someone can get 10 hectares of land and, without consulting anybody, can plant 25,000 trees.

Frankly, there may be some parts of the country in which the planting of 25,000 trees may be an advantage. There may be areas in which 25,000 trees may be planted and not many people will notice. However, there would be plenty of people in the constituencies of Labour Members —constituencies which we treasure more dearly than Conservative Members treasure theirs—who would be horrified if the Government allowed 25,000 trees to be planted without any consultation with or consideration for local authorities.

We have reached a pretty pass. Over the past three years, the Government have shown contempt for local government. Now they appear to be prepared to take on and ignore local government by allowing a locality to be disfigured. I accept that some Conservative Members will not worry at all. The hon. Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry) introduced the subject of Sunday trading into the debate. He might be prepared to swap Sunday trading for 25,000 trees in his area of Yorkshire.

Many of my constituents would bitterly resent the planting of 25,000 trees in their area and in the hon. Gentleman's area without consultation. I hope that he will not be bombarded by representations from all parts of Yorkshire if he supports this development, which is a cause for anxiety among local authorities representing the shires of England. It is because of the concern of the Association of County Councils that I hope that the Minister will pay heed not only to my comments but to the urgent point of my right hon. Friend the Member for Halton.

The Minister suggested that this was a limited debate touching on only some of the aspects of the problems of food surpluses. I have consulted farmers in my constituency, and they, like me, would welcome a wide debate in which we could consider the realities of our European involvement. The Minister suggested that the responsibility lies to a large extent with Europe rather than ourselves. We need a debate in which we can consider the implications of increased agricultural production, not only on a national or continental basis but on an international basis. Until there is international agreement with the United States on the price and production of cereals, the problem will continue to be serious.

If we are to consider the problem on a European scale, the Minister must recognise that the proposals made or practices followed by some other member states give cause for considerable anxiety about the arrangements that we make here. For example, the Minister well knows that the Italians have not introduced milk quotas. The French appear to be ignoring the system of dairy farming. The Germans have brought forward proposals for set-aside that make the Government's proposals—apart from the new ones with regard to certain kinds of tree planting—seem ridiculous. We cannot take a completely different view and operate on a lower scale of expenditure than our European colleagues.

I spoke in the Council of Europe Assembly debate on launching the North-South campaign last week. I largely reflected the view of the committee that I chaired with regard to forestry. We showed that the rate of destruction of forest in the world is such that the area of forest destroyed in the past four years equals the size of the largest European country. The pace of destruction is accelerating. Given that fact, the Government must have our sympathy in tackling the problem of afforestation in a realistic manner.

I shall not suggest that our present dependency on £4·5 million-worth per year of imported timber can be ignored. We must match that dependency by increasing our timber production in Britain.

I am concerned that in this and in other ways the Government's forestry policy is largely irrelevant. We are talking about planting more trees on marginal and poor land. Perhaps we could increase our timber harvest through that policy, but it would be a marginal or modest improvement. We must increase our timber production, but not by using the poor land that cannot grow anything else and does not produce much timber per hectare. We must grasp the nettle and grow timber on grade 1 and grade 2 land. Those are largely the farms that produce the surplus and will remain untouched by the Bill. The debate —a modest one, as the Minister said—is irrelevant, to an extent.

I am not suggesting that we should turn 20 per cent. of our arable land to the production of standing timber. The Minister knows that the French have already embarked on producing cellulose and timber for industrial purposes. Once again, we are allowing a lead which we could have obtained to be surrendered to our continental colleagues.

We must afford a modest welcome to the Bill, not merely because it is the first obvious step in the spurning of market forces, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) reminded the House, but because it gives us an opportunity to debate the priorities that the Government should pursue. I hope that the Government will be sufficiently sensible to listen to the suggestions of my right hon. and hon. Friends, whether in the Chamber or in Committee, and to pay heed to the advice available from various sources, including the conservation bodies.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has been commended by others, and it has basked in a little self-righteousness, in regard to its movement towards conservation. The hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart)—I am not complaining about the fact that he does not take part in the debate; there are obvious reasons —shook his head vigorously to deny that hedgerows had been cleared at a regrettable rate over the past few years. I remember the Ministry blocking my Hedgerows Bill in 1982 and making it clear in 1983 and 1984 that it would continue to block the Bill if I presented it again. The reason that the Ministry advanced for blocking the Bill in 1982 was that it regarded the problem as largely resolved. I believe that it had not been resolved in 1983 or 1984. It was not resolved in 1985, and hedgerows are still disappearing at an unacceptable rate.

If the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is serious about the timber policies that it is proffering in the Bill and is concerned with the environment, as it has suggested throughout the debate, I wonder what it will do when I again present a hedgerow protection Bill later this Session. Perhaps the Minister of State would like to demonstrate the sincerity or genuineness of the conversion for which credit has been sought. I wish the Bill well, but I hope that when it emerges from Committee it will be different. I trust that the proposals made by Lord Cranbrook in another place will have received rather more sympathetic attention in this House.

9.42 pm

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Minister on introducing the Bill. It is a welcome initiative. I had nearly thought to say that it was a modest initiative, but I appreciate, after some 30 weeks in this place, that the word "modest" must be used with particular care.

I wish to restrict my contribution to clause 2, on the woodlands, and ask my right hon. Friend the Minister to comment on three points. First, why restrict grant in most areas to arable and improved pastures and not extend it to permanent pasture? That disqualifies most of the land that it would be realistic to put forward as suitable.

I understand that the Bill's aim is to reduce agricultural production, but surely this structure will reduce the Bill's effectiveness. In the west country, most applicants under the Bill will be small farmers; therefore, their applications will be for small acreages of woodland. I believe that, since we are talking about just a few acres, the conservation aspect has been slightly overdone, important though it is.

Secondly, in recent years many new sawmills have been set up in Scotland, Wales and England, with all the latest Scandinavian technology, but we know from the latest Forestry Commission revised surveys that there is likely to be a shortfall of coniferous logs. If we are serious about timber production, we must acknowledge that fact.

My third point concerns the planting grants and the annual grants. Unlike the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), I thought for once that I had understood the drafting of a Bill and was rather proud of myself. However, I had reckoned without the briefing from that centre of excellence from which no lies emanate, in Smith square, which confused me thoroughly. It stated:

"It was envisaged that during the first three years of the scheme the planting would be paid under existing forestry grant schemes based on the Forestry Commission's powers under the Forestry Act 1979, and that the annual payments would be paid by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. It is for these annual payments that clause 2 of the Bill provides."

That would seem fair enough for the first three years, although three years is the minimum and it may be longer. However, do applicants make an application under the forestry grants scheme in the normal way and then at a later stage apply to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food? It seems a cumbersome process if applicants have to deal with two Departments. Indeed, if one must commit oneself in the first instance to a forestry grants scheme, and then apply for the MAFF annual payments, surely that will make it something of a lottery? The process should be kept as simple and as straightforward as possible. I would greatly appreciate my right hon. Friend's comments on that.

Notwithstanding those points, the Bill is a considerable step forward. The rewards to the nation that will flow from informed woodland management are significant and substantial. In some rural areas they will help to prevent depopulation and they will certainly help to keep local people employed.

9.46 pm

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): As we have heard from hon. Members of all parties, the Bill is modest and must be seen in its proper context. Its limited aim is to tackle part of the problems created by the surpluses in some agricultural commodities in the European Community. In consequence, therefore, it lies on the fringes of the problem rather than being on the centre stage.

As we have heard, the Bill introduces grants for farmers to diversify farm businesses and to encourage them to find alternative sources of income, other than in traditional areas. Although I can give the Bill and its proposals a cautious welcome, the opportunities for diversification are limited in areas such as my constituency. Traditionally, Wales has been dependent on livestock production and dairying. Due to our terrain and weather patterns, it is difficult for our farmers to move into other areas of production. That is why the impact of milk quotas has been so severe, especially in west and north-west Wales. The Government must have regard to those difficulties. Indeed, I suspect that in such areas the Bill will have a limited impact.

I find it difficult to be objective in this matter, but I believe that an element of subjectivity is important for an hon. Member who seeks to elucidate the genuine concerns of his constituents. Over the weekend I visited Llangefni creamery, where 46 people are to lose their jobs. That visit affected me deeply. We are told that the main reason for the closure of that creamery is the lack of milk due to the imposition of milk quotas. Those people at the creamery who now face the prospect of unemployment — some have given 25 years service to agriculture — have been given what they consider derisory redundancy terms.

Those workers will read the record of this debate and they will learn that farmers are to be given grant to diversify. They agree with that prospect, but they ask, "What of us?" They have also provided sterling service to the agriculture industry, but they are to be left with little after so many years of work.

Tonight we have heard a great deal about the need to protect the economy of rural areas. I believe that the plight of the creamery workers at Llangefni and at Felinfach in the constituency of the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells) should be recognised by the Government. I urge the Government to ensure that grants are made available to those people who have served the industry well to enable them to set up alternative small businesses. I look forward to the Minister's response to that idea.

Clause 2 relates to woodland. It has already been said many times in the debate that the proposed scheme must be attractive enough to be taken up by sufficient farmers to make it worthwhile. Time will tell whether the rates adopted by the Government will provide sufficient incentives. I welcome the encouragement given to mixed woodland, which will contain a high percentage of broadleaved trees. Parts of the countryside have been spoilt by acres of uniform conifer plantations.

I remind the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North of a Welsh saying, which, translated into English means:

"When we do things, we do things in moderation."

When we consider conifer plantations I urge the hon. Gentleman that we do so in moderation. We must strike a balance between planting of conifer plantation and the planting of broadleaved trees. Having considered the provisions of the Bill and read the contributions made in the other place on Second Reading I question whether the Bill, in its present form, goes far enough to encourage the plantation of broadleaved trees. I hope that those provisions can be strengthened in Committee.

The Bill cannot be seen as the answer to reducing surpluses. In truth it is a minimalist Bill. The great problem to be tackled is the economic, cultural and social consequences of the change in agriculture. I hope that, before long, the Government will face up to that central task and bring proposals before the House.

9.52 pm

Mr. Tim Boswell (Daventry): I support and welcome the Bill. I do so as someone who had the privilege to work in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food at about the time when these matters were beginning to be considered, so I would, wouldn't I?

The Bill can be defended on three separate criteria, which, as a Conservative, I would support as measures of Government assistance. The first offers adjustments to an industry facing a rapid change in economic circumstances; the second offers aid for starting up new activities within the industry; and the third recognises certain external benefits from the activities of agriculture.

Agriculture is distinctive. Most industries are conducted behind closed factory doors, but the production process of agriculture takes place in the fresh air and occupies 80 per cent. of the land surface. Therefore, it is of immediate interest to the public and to farmers.

I am pleased that the Bill, with its reference to the Development Commission, begins to move away from the concept that has been prevalent since the days of "Dig for victory", that agriculture should be the sole activity of the countryside and that industrial activity should, as far as possible, be pegged back and carried out on industrial estates in towns. The Bill can lead to greater diversification and variety, which is to the good of both.

I should mention two particular interests in woodlands. First, as a member of the Select Committee, I know that we have not yet heard evidence, let alone produced a report, but the Bill is a useful foretaste of what we shall be coming up with later. Secondly, as a farmer, I acknowledge that the Bill is directed towards farmers such as myself. I take a potential interest, as I may avail myself of the scheme later. Farmers who are not naturally knowledgeable about trees have not had to bother about them, but now they find that they may have a certain role in future.

It has been said, almost to the point of boredom, by the Government and others that the Bill is a modest one. It is entirely right that we should not try to oversell what it stands for. The Bill will not deal with agricultural surpluses. Taking out 36,000 hectares might, at best, remove one year's technological improvement in the industry. By the same token, the Bill will not deal with the timber shortage—certainly not for the time being, and, on its own, not at all. It will not reverse the downward trend in farm incomes and employment.

However, the Bill can make some useful contributions to agriculture. First, it can provide an alternative income on suitable areas of individual farms. The definition of marginal land is always somewhat slippery and confusing. It can be quite properly directed in arable areas, where the highest incentives are now to be offered, to farm areas that are less suitable or less convenient for cropping. Therefore, it can fulfil both roles. The second point is not often made in this context. In arable farming, it can spread the labour profile by giving the work force something to do in winter.

More widely, the Bill can increase the timber-consciousness of farmers, to which I referred in my own case. In Germany, half the farms have a significant farm forest enterprise. If that is to catch hold, it will need more than the Bill; it will need a big thrust into the improved marketing of timber. I am pleased to see the way in which the timber industry has reacted to the crisis of windblow in the south-east since October. It will need greater exploitation and recovery of the existing desolated woodlands.

Finally, the Bill can lead to some environmental improvement. It will lead to improvement in game habitat, an important consideration for many farmers. I am glad that not only broadleaves are to be grant-aided, and that there is to be a graded scheme, because many working farmers may wish to avail themselves of it. It is appropriate that they should be able to plant conifers as a nurse crop and a cash crop while the broadleaves are growing up.

That leads me to touch briefly on areas of contention. I support hon. Members who have spoken about permanent pasture. The scheme is cash-limited and size-limited. It is entirely appropriate that, if farmers deem the part of their farm that is now in permanent pasture to be most appropriate, they should be entitled to use it. As for conservation, I have listened to speeches from both sides of the House and read submissions from the RSPB and the CPRE, of which I am a member. The difficulty is that farming has an internal and an external aspect. It is important that both are harmonised and kept in line.

I am not absolutely certain that the answer is to maintain the existing process of consultation through the forestry grants scheme, which has been argued by many conservation interests. It might be worth considering merely notifying, or perhaps the Forestry Commission could pass on submissions, but the Government should return to the matter and give it closer consideration. Perhaps they might consider the possibility of using the quinquennial review of the scheme not only to review the level of grant, but to review the general progress and tenor of the scheme and to work on it as the situation develops.

Both sides of the House want to help farmers and, at the same time, they want to help the countryside. We all want to ensure that the Bill is tailored to achieve those objectives.

9.59 pm

Mr. Calum A. MacDonald (Western Isles): I shall be brief, because there is another important debate yet to be held and time is marching on. I shall confine myself to one important point affecting the highlands and islands of Scotland. I say with genuine regret that I can give only a faint welcome to the Bill. It is not that I do not welcome the principles behind it; I recognise the need for diversification and I welcome the support that the Bill gives to that process.

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Farm Land and Rural Development Bill *[Lords]* and the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

Farm Land and Rural Development Bill *[Lords]*

Question again proposed, That the Bill be now read a Second Time.

Mr. MacDonald: As I was saying, I support the principles behind the Bill, albeit with the reservations that have been expressed by my hon. Friends.

I wish to focus on the fact that, for the crofting community of the highlands and islands, the Bill represents a missed opportunity. It is an opportunity that has been gratuitously lost. As it stands, the Bill is of academic interest only for crofters in the highlands and islands because, as the law stands, they will be unable to take advantage of the opportunity that the Bill opens up to diversify into commercial forestry. Crofters will not be able to take advantage, because trees planted on crofter common grazings belong, at present, not to the crofter but to the crofting landlord.

To correct that and enable crofters to participate in the woodland scheme would require certain legal changes that I believe could and should have been included in the Bill. In a nutshell, those changes would give crofting townships the right to own the trees they plant on common grazings, which already belong to the townships, thus enabling them to enjoy the economic benefits behind the scheme.

I believe that those legal changes could have been included in the Bill and I hope they might still be included. Surely it is unfair that crofters should be excluded from the opportunity to diversify. Crofters have already shown great commercial aptitude and enterprise in diversifying away from traditional agriculture activity. For example, in the past 10 years we have seen crofters diversify in a large way into aquaculture. Indeed, fish and shellfish farming constitute one of the great economic success stories of recent years. I have no doubt that crofters could make an equal success of commercial forestry if they were allowed to. They would not only be successful in developing it commercially, but would develop it in a way that would be sensitive to the environment and would genuinely benefit their local communities in terms of jobs and income.

I regret that the Government have failed to respond to the many entreaties they have received to extend the benefits of the Bill to the crofting community. I hope that the time and the opportunity can be found during the later stages of the Bill to make the changes necessary to correct that exclusion. I hope that the Government will be sympathetic to that and not place obstacles in the way.

10.3 pm

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): I should like to join my hon. Friends in welcoming this small but important Bill as a step forward in allowing farmers to diversify from farming into other ancillary industries and tourism. It is to that aspect that I wish to address my remarks.

Perhaps I may reply to the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), who I thought had made a speech that was intended to sabotage the Bill. He spoke about the similarities that he saw between the Bill and the Industry Act 1975. He urged my right hon. Friend the Minister to follow him down the path that he took in 1975. We all remember the Meriden motorcycle co-operative, the *Scottish Daily News* and other success stories of the Act. I am sure that anybody with any sense would wish to ensure that the Bill has no similarities with the Industry Act 1975 of late memory.

I was interested to hear that this is the first agriculture debate in which the right hon. Member for Chesterfield has spoken. His ignorance shone like a beacon. I probably have more dairy farmers in my constituency than any other hon. Member. If my constituents heard the right hon. Gentleman say that land prices had increased and farmers were making a profit, they would be most surprised. In the past few years, the price of land in my constituency fell from £2,000 an acre to £1,200 an acre, and has only recently increased to £1,400 an acre.

The right hon. Gentleman showed his ignorance of farm incomes, too. The latest figures for farm incomes in Wales, issued by the Welsh Office this year, show that, in real terms, dairy farm incomes in Wales went from 100 on the indices in 1982, to 81 in 1983, 56 in 1984, 79 in 1985 and 83 in 1986-87. My constituents would be very pleased indeed to have the incomes enjoyed by miners in south Wales. I only wish that the right hon. Member for Chesterfield would speak from experience rather than ignorance. He said that he listened to the radio every morning. Perhaps he should listen to Radio 2, as he clearly does not understand the farming programme on Radio 4.

Both my points relate to clause 1. The first concerns planning matters. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Minister will have a word with the Department of the Environment about the need to ensure that local authorities take into account the changing structure of the farming in the countryside. Authorities should allow those involved in farming to diversify rather than obstructing them with planning regulations that do not even allow farmers to change to carpentry—as happened recently in my constituency. I should not have thought that carpentry, as a sideline pursued by a farmer's son, necessitated too much of a change in use, but nevertheless the move was blocked by the local planning authority. It is wrong, too, that we should have planning regulations that block farmers who wish to bring derelict buildings on their land back into use, as also happened recently in my constituency. That, too, goes against the aim of clause 1.

Thirdly, I hope that the Minister will take account of the need for farmers to be allowed to advertise the businesses that they set up. For too long, restrictive conditions have been placed on advertising in the countryside. No one wants great big neon signs and advertising hoardings, but if farmers who diversify their activities are to market what they produce, it is important that they can advertise to attract passers-by who may come in on impulse and purchase their wares.

I wish to deal with the community charge and its effects on farming. We hope to extend the range of activities that farmers undertake. In my constituency, much of which is in the middle of the Pembrokeshire national park, and which has a large number of caravan sites, I have already heard from people involved in a small way in caravans, including many farmers, that if the community charge proposals go through—up to two units may attach to a second home—the amount that caravan owners have to pay may increase from £600 to £8,000 per site.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Did the hon. Gentleman vote against it?

Mr. Bennett: Of course not. This is a matter of detail rather than a matter of principle. I wish the detail of the Bill to be changed, but I do not oppose the principle.

I urge my right hon. Friend the Minister to ensure that, when representations are made about the community charge in Wales, we ensure that farmers wishing to have a few caravans on their farms are rated under the uniform business rate rather than having to pay individual domestic community charges. If we do that, and recognise that such activities constitute a business, my constituents will be greatly helped. I have great pleasure in supporting the Bill, but I hope that my right hon. Friend the Minister will take my arguments on board.

10.9 pm

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Like other hon. Members, I intend to brief, and like the hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald), I give the Bill a cautious welcome. While there is a consensus in the farming community and other organisations that the concept of diversification is worthwhile, the Bill will have a limited effect on marginal or less-favoured areas in the farming industry.

During the debate, it has often seemed as if diversification was a new concept to agriculture, but hon. Members must be aware that in marginal areas the ingenuity of the farming community has kept the community alive. In my area of Banffshire we have deer farming, peat farming, craft centres, pottery centres, knitwear centres, bed and breakfast, tourist centres and walks. All sorts of facilities are run by the farming community to ensure the survival of the rural area. Recently it was announced that the Highlands and Islands Development Board, in conjunction with the Crown Estates Commissioners, would develop the Glenlivet estates on that basis with an overall strategy and plan. All that is happening outside the ideas of diversification in the Bill.

Indeed, within the marginal areas, farmers are much more interested in what will happen to their hill livestock compensatory amounts and to the sheepmeat regime, when the devaluation of the green pound and interest rates will be discussed; and how we shall deal with the contraction of pig production in Scotland, particularly in Grampian region. A whole variety of issues affecting agriculture are not touched on in the Bill and I hope that the Minister will tell us that we shall have an opportunity to consider those issues in future.

I seek clarification on a few points. Have the Government made any assessment of the implications for the capital value of land of planting trees? It seems that effective agricultural land has a high capital value. That is of great importance to farmers who, for example, have overdrafts. The banks are interested in the capital value of their land. Will not land planted with trees decline in capital value? Despite the allocation of grants, there could be adverse financial effects on certain farmers.

The Minister said that an agreement had been reached on a model lease so that tenant farmers could benefit from the legislation. How will the grants be allocated between tenants and landowners? Perhaps it is too early to give us that information, but certainly I shall seek proper protection for tenant farmers, who have often suffered the burden of ensuring that a family farm is continued.

I echo the sentiments of the hon. Member for Western Isles that we should investigate how we can assist crofters. Finally, on planning permission, many right hon. and hon. Members spoke about the environmental impact of trees on the landscapes and the overall impression of our countryside. Tree planting has implications for existing industries. As some hon. Members know, I spoke at length on that in the Committee on the Scotch Whisky Bill last week.

Extensive afforestation is affecting the acidity levels of water and that could work to the detriment of the Scotch whisky industry. The Ministry must be careful to take into account existing industries and existing interests when it considers tree planting, so that they are not affected adversely by any diversification scheme.

10.13 pm

Mr. Martyn Jones (Clwyd, South-West): The aims of the Bill must be welcomed. Agricultural surpluses are a major problem and should be dealt with, but they must be dealt with sensibly. It is estimated that about 3 million acres must be taken out of agricultural production to deal with the problem of over-production adequately.

The Government's suggestions to deal with this problem centre around diversification, primarily into timber and tourism. The Government's target for forestry is 90,000 acres and immediately it is clear that that alone will have only a small effect on surpluses. There is a world shortage of timber and the Government are right to encourage farmers, particularly those on lower grade land, to move into forestry, but if they wish the scheme to succeed, farmers must not incur any loss of income.

There must, however, be proper provision to prevent the over-planting of conifers. The Government must encourage the planting of native broadleaved species, especially as many were lost during the recent storms in the south. The consultation document will allow 95 per cent. conifer planting on uplands and 65 per cent. planting on lowlands. Those quotas are far too high. More broadleaves must be incorporated, and conservation aspects must be taken into account. Woodland wildlife must be considered, as must the problems of acidification and the damage that it can cause the environment.

The Government are offering a grant for salaries in marketing activities. Will it be paid to members of the farmer's family? If it is not, it will serve only further to drive off the land the very people who have been brought up to know and care most about it. If family members are not included, the problems of the rural young unemployed will only be accentuated.

Diversification should not be targeted only at small and medium-sized farms. By doing that, maximum returns, in terms of reducing surpluses and preserving employment, will be lost. The change to diversification on the larger farm, where the majority of agricultural employment is to be found, will have a much greater effect on the preservation of jobs in farming.

Timber and tourism will not cure the problem of agricultural surpluses, especially in areas such as my constituency. Other methods are necessary for upland, often marginal, land, as the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones) said. The Government show a lack of imagination in simply paying farmers not to work their land. It makes far more sense to pay them to farm less intensively. The Government should realise that the best method of augmenting farm incomes is making it possible for them to produce food in an environmentally sound way. Grants should be paid to farmers who, through a

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positive effort, lower their yields while keeping their land in production and facilitating conservation. The grant should abate any financial loss incurred through that activity.

Conservation should be the key word when discussing the elimination of surpluses. Farmers should be paid to preserve their land. That is in the interests of the nation. The countryside belongs to the people. Farmers had traditionally been seen as the guardians of the countryside — until the common agricultural policy of the EEC encouraged the hectic drive for higher and higher output. It drove many farmers to damage the environment.

Now that production is to be cut, farmers must be helped into their role as custodians of the countryside. I am sure that most farmers would be prepared to see conservation as a legitimate crop, provided that the price was right.

Any legislation which involves rural areas must preserve, if not improve, the lifestyles of those who live and work there. Moreover, it must protect the interests of the nation as a whole. It must ensure that food prices do not rise. Just as important, it must ensure that the beauty of the countryside is left intact and that it remains accessible to those who live in an urban environment. Farmers' incomes must also be protected or they will not be able to co-operate in any scheme, and grants must always cover any income that is lost.

Tourism and timber should be encouraged, as should other types of diversification, but conservation must never be neglected and the agricultural worker must always be protected by adequate housing and jobs in the countryside. Rural people should be able, with Government assistance, to care for their land as they have for many hundreds of years.

10.18 pm

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): We have had a wide-ranging and instructive debate. The proposals have received support, although some of it has been qualified, from both sides of the House. We have had speakers from every part of the British Isles. This bodes well for the Minister. When he introduced the Bill this evening, he said that he was looking for an easy passage through the House. He will get a swift passage, but I am not quite so sure whether he will get an easy passage.

Most of those hon. Members who spoke indicated their support. None spoke more enthusiastically than my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn). He and I share an interest. He will remember that, in 1972, when he came to my constituency, which was then the constituency of his right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock), he visited the Bedwas colliery just outside Caerphilly, and was made an honorary member. Needless to say, that was the first colliery to be closed after the unsuccessful miners' strike.

I reassure my right hon. Friend that the sentiments that he expressed, when he said that we must defend mining communities, are felt strongly and sincerely by those of us who still represent mining communities. We extend our argument to rural communities. It is because we believe in maintaining continuity of employment and because we recognise the need for the welfare and strength of our rural communities that we are supporting the legislation this evening. However, my right hon. Friend introduced an interesting dimension to the debate. I look forward to his contributions in Committee when we discuss matters in more detail.

I wish to correct my right hon. Friend on one point. He said that the Minister will always reward his friends. That is why Conservative Back Benchers support the Bill. I ask my right hon. Friend to consider some of the accents that we have heard in this evening's debate, because the accents of the hon. Members for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells), and for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones), of my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, South-West (Mr. Jones), the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond), the hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) and of my hon. Friends who did not speak in the debate—including the hon. Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams)—would have told him that the rural areas, certainly in the west of the country, are not the prerogative of Tory Governments. We enthusiastically reject Tories, just as the constituency of my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield rejected Tories.

There has been general support for the Bill. Two qualifications have been raised. Some Conservative Members expressed concern about what was called de-intensification, which I prefer to call extensification. The hon. Member for Devizes (Sir C. Morrison) and even my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield spoke in support of that case. The hon. Members for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) and for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) and my hon. Friends the Members for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) and for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) made it clear that the debate will not be restricted to the narrow parameters set by the Government.

The second qualification concerns areas of outstanding natural beauty. The hon. Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen), who spoke very movingly, but unfortunately was so moved that he is no longer in the Chamber, expressed his concern about areas of outstanding natural beauty, as did my hon. Friends the Members for Wentworth and for Glanford and Scunthorpe.

It is a pity that the latter part of our proceedings was interrupted by the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett). He was present throughout the debate, but it is a pity that he could not follow the tenor and tone of the debate and that he had to interrupt with a particularly ill-mannered and arrogant contribution.

The peripheral areas of Britain were represented by contributions from the hon. Members for Ynys Môn and for Western Isles. We must remember that parts of the western periphery of this country have specialised forms of agriculture. I hope that we shall debate the problems of those areas in Committee and that the Government will recognise those problems.

The Minister will have gathered from the comments made that the Opposition have some reservations about the Bill. We give it a broad welcome, because we support its intention of reducing surpluses and expenditure on surpluses and of providing opportunities for those involved and employed in agriculture to diversify their businesses. It will provide a new revenue grant scheme to assist in that diversification and annual payments to assist in woodland management. I especially welcome the second innovation, because, for the first time in the programme of support by successive Governments, we have a management grant to enhance forestry and woodland management practices.

However, the Opposition have considerable reservations about some aspects of the legislation. The Minister will have understood our anxieties on environmental grounds, but I shall make some additional points on which I would appreciate his comments. Our major reservation is that the provisions will have little impact on the current surpluses. The highest woodland grant will be £190 per hectare. That low grant will not act as an incentive to convert into woodland anything other than grade 4 or 5 agricultural land. It will not be enough to attract the cereal growers on grade 1 or 2 land to diversify from cereal production to the planting of woodlands.

Secondly, the scheme will be limited to 36,000 hectares over three years. The National Farmers Union talks about taking out 1 million to 1·5 million hectares of land, so taking only 36,000 hectares out of production for this purpose is inadequate. I have no doubt that during those three years, developments in plant-breeding techniques and other technology will more than offset the loss of 36,000 hectares from production.

Mr. Foulkes: Chickenfeed.

Mr. Davies: My hon. Friend is right; it is chickenfeed.

When Baroness Trumpington introduced the Bill in the other place, she called the capital grants scheme the core of the new scheme. When the Committee discussed the statutory instrument relating to the scheme, I challenged the Minister as to whether 342 separate applications would dry up the financial resources available. The Minister conceded that that was true. If he is presenting a brand new scheme, and if its intention is to attract sufficient applications from farmers to diversify into many other activities, and to reduce the present massive surplus, I must tell him that 342 separate applications, which is all that resources will allow, will not reduce the grain mountain by even a shovelful.

The provision of the diversification or woodland grants does not depend upon the recipients reducing overall production. I welcomed the consultation document produced by the Minister some time ago. The set-aside proposals required that an individual participating in the scheme should reduce production in his holding by 20 per cent. Unfortunately, the Minister has not adopted that provision in either of the two grants that are now available.

The scheme would be improved, certainly in terms of achieving its objective of reducing surpluses, if the Minister said that any individual who received a diversification or woodland grant would be expected to reduce overall production in his holding. Under the present scheme, it will be possible to take advantage of the woodland grant and to increase production in the holding by more intensive farming. I know that our anxiety is shared by some Conservative Members.

In *Farmers' Weekly* in December, a journalist summed up our anxieties adequately when he said of the scheme:

"However, while the scheme is a positive step in the right direction to cut EEC agricultural over-production, I fear that it will have little impact on either surpluses or farmers."

That is a fair summary of our concern about surpluses.

My last major area of concern is the environment, and the fact that the Government have not taken advantage of the opportunities that the moment has presented. In the guidelines on the legislation that we have gathered from the debates in the House of Lords and from documents produced by the Government, there has been little attempt to protect or enhance the environment, using the opportunities that these new circumstances permit. Why have the Government excluded areas of outstanding natural beauty from the special areas on which consultation will continue?

My hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth mentioned consultation. Last week I asked the Minister:

"what consultation procedures will precede the payment of grants under the proposed farm woodland scheme; whether they will apply to all applications; and if he will make a statement."

He answered part of the question and said, in conclusion:

"However, in areas such as sites of special scientific interest, environmentally sensitive areas and national parks existing arrangements would continue to apply."—[*Official Report*, 26 January 1988; Vol. 125, c. *176*.]

Why, if the environment in all those areas is so sensitive as to require consultation, have the Government excluded areas identified by the Countryside Commission and accepted by the Government as areas of outstanding natural beauty? That question was put in the House of Lords, and I put it again to the Minister now. What are the Government's intentions in respect of areas of outstanding natural beauty? Will the consultation procedures apply to them, or will they be excluded? If they are excluded, why will the procedures apply to all those other special areas and not to them?

We are now in the paradoxical position in which an application for a planting grant alone for, say, eight hectares, will be subject to consultation, but a similar application accompanied by an application for a management grant will not. That is nonsense: it means that the more public money goes into the scheme, the less consultation there will be. That is unacceptable.

The hon. Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell) raised another point about the environment, reading well from the RSPB brief. My hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe spoke knowingly about it, too, because he understands the RSPB brief. There are no safeguards to prevent the bypassing of the schemes's guidelines. Why, for example, can a farmer who ploughs up land in one year apply the next for a planting grant, on the grounds that the land has been under cultivation? There is no provision for a cut-off point to allow the Minister to prevent that, and it would be a flagrant abuse. The areas that we are discussing, the marginal upland parts of Great Britain, have a particular attraction by virtue of their aesthetic beauty and the birds and other forms of wildlife that live in them.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North spoke partly in defence of Sitka spruce. Under the proposals, an area larger than 20 acres in an area of outstanding natural beauty can be 95 per cent. planted with conifers, without consultation. That, too, is unacceptable; I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North is nodding his agreement to that. If not, I shall relay to the House the conversation that I had with him before the debate started. I asked him whether he would be speaking on behalf of the alliance, the new party, the Liberal party or himself. He said, and I paraphrase, "Well, you know me, boy. I have always spoken for the Liberals, and that is who I shall speak for tonight." No matter about the earth-shattering political developments over the last couple of weeks; and in spite of the proposed new alliance, we have the

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consolation of knowing that the Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North is still speaking for the Liberal party.

We shall seek amendments in Committee, and I hope that we have given the Minister sufficient food for thought to realise that there is support for the Government's proposals but that it is not unqualified. We are anxious to ensure that there are no abuses and that there are adequate environmental safeguards. For the last year or two, farmers have been in a mood of despair and despondency. The Minister will be gratified to know that I do not hold him totally to blame for that despair. Agriculture is at a crossroads and we are presenting our farmers with major challenges. If the Government are to preside over that period of change, they will have to give a lead to the farmers and to people in rural areas.

I am concerned that the legislation is limited in scope. I have no doubt that the Minister will say that it is part of a comprehensive package and one of many schemes. I understand and accept that, but I hope that, as the debate unfolds, farmers will be given a more positive lead and a more positive clue about the way in which the Government wish them to go. We shall look to the Government to give firm evidence of their intentions.

I know of the role played by the Minister in the discussions in Europe. He has received our assurance that, on stabilisers, he will receive our support. I am sure that he values that. It must be of great satisfaction to him when he tucks himself up in bed with his cup of cocoa. We shall continue to support the Government, provided that they give evidence that they will effectively tackle the structural imbalances in agriculture in the United Kingdom. That guidance must protect not only our farmers but the countryside. The Minister will be glad to know that we do not propose to divide the House on this matter. However, I shall join in the dispute with him in Committee on some of these matters.

10.37 pm

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John Selwyn Gummer): I thank the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) for much of what he said, and particularly for his tribute to the blameless home life of my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. I remind the hon. Gentleman that in Brussels the cup of cocoa normally arrives at about 4 o'clock in the morning rather than at a sensible time.

I noted the hon. Gentleman's comments about seeking the authentic voice of Liberalism. I was surprised that he lighted upon the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells), because I thought that I had heard that authentic voice in the speech by the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark). On every possible occasion he used the phrase "on the one hand . . . and on the other". He said that on the one hand we do not want planning arrangements to be too loose, but on the other hand a gentleman selling ice cream was in great difficulty. He said that on the one hand we must not have too many trees because they would be intrusive, but on the other hand there is a great need for trees and we must have as many as possible.

The hon. Member for South Shields started by complaining about the Bill, which is about farm woodland, because it did not deal with organic farming. We also heard a great deal about de-intensification. I was surprised to hear complaints about the Bill because of what is not in it, when the Bill is not designed to deal with those things. It is a modest Bill, in the sense that its purpose is to fill in the areas in which we do not have powers to do things that we need to do in terms of farm woodland and in one area of farm diversification.

I can tell my hon. Friend the Member for Devizes (Sir C. Morrison) that his pressure for de-intensification to be part of the Bill is understandable. However, I hope that he will look at two things. First, he should look at what is being done on the proposed extensification scheme and, secondly, he should look at the discussions presently taking place in the European Community. We felt that it was a mistake to bring forward further proposals in that area when discussions, still continuing in Europe, would make a great deal of difference to what we were able to propose.

It is also true, of course, that we can do most of the things that we want to do in any de-intensification scheme under existing legislation or by secondary legislation, and we do not need extra powers at primary level. The Bill is largely concerned with the primary legislation that we do not have at the moment.

Mr. Steen: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Gummer: I shall not give way. We have covered a great deal of ground. I have many answers to give, and I shall try to give them.

I have considerable sympathy with the concern that my hon. Friends have raised about horse and pony breeding. We are carefully examining the matter at the moment. Many changes have recently taken place, and they will need further investigation. I understand the points that were put forward. [An hon Member: "The right hon. Gentleman is a Liberal."] No one has ever accused me of that before. I shall save it for the next opportunity that arises.

After my hon. Friend the Member for Devizes, we heard the authentic voice of Socialism from the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn). We must thank him for choosing an agricultural debate for the moment of re-emergence. It is of particular help that his election campaign began here. We shall remember that. I shall be critical of two things that he said. I hope that he will forgive my criticism, but it is an important point.

It is an entirely out-of-date argument to suggest that, if only we could export the over-production of agriculture in the developed world to the developing world, we would do something fundamental for the problems of the hungry. My hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development will agree that Oxfam and all other major charities quite clearly say that they do not want food aid as a permanent part of the picture. They want help for countries to produce their own agricultural products and make sure that they are able to meet their own needs. One of the things that undermines them——

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): In the meantime, the starving need to be fed.

Mr. Gummer: We are discussing a serious matter. It is not appropriate to shout from a sedentary position. Some hon. Members care about the matter too much to shout about it in such terms.

The real problem at the moment is that many foreign countries — the poorest countries in the world — find

their agriculture undermined by over-production in the West, which is then exported at low prices and makes it impossible for agriculture in such countries to work. One of the major reasons for the need to reduce production in the Western world is to give a fair deal to those who are trying to produce in the Third world. It is a serious matter, and we must address it. Frankly, we cannot do so with the out-of-date views of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield.

The right hon. Gentleman also tried to compare agriculture with the coal industry. One of the differences is that agriculture has been a fundamentally successful industry in enabling us to compete with other countries. We are not in the difficulty of having an industry that needs considerable restructuring because of its production patterns. We are in the difficulty of having an industry that has been so successful that it is able to feed all those who need its food, yet, at the same time, is asked to look after the land and care for the countryside. All that we are trying to do with the Bill and with other measures is give farmers an opportunity to continue to care for the countryside. After all, they are, and have always been, the first line of conservation.

I remind the House that the right hon. Gentleman repeated his belief in the common ownership of land. We shall make sure that no one fails to know that that is still part of the basic tenets of Socialism, and we shall remind as many people as possible. It will have the same electoral effect as it has had since the 17th century. It did much to bring back the monarchy, it has done much to support Conservative Governments down the ages, and we shall make sure that it will continue to do so.

I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) for his tribute to farmers and his point about planning permission. I inform the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) that the problem that he raised about the north of Ireland is exactly the same as that in my constituency. We all heard his words. He said that things in Northern Ireland are different in that they are exactly the same.

There is a great need for some local authorities to remember that the countryside is a workplace; it is a place of employment. It is a place where, if it is to be alive and not a museum, there must be jobs for people—jobs not just for farmers but for farm workers and for ex-farm workers. Unless local authorities are prepared to recognise that it is a workplace, that as such it has as great an importance as many of the other demands that are made of it, including the demands of those who have chosen the countryside as a place of retirement, and to accept that a balance must be achieved between them, there will be many unemployed people who need not be unemployed. The countryside will be artificial and false, not the real countryside that springs from the working population that lives there.

Mr. Ron Davies *rose*——

Mr. Gummer: I cannot give way. The hon. Gentleman asked a number of questions, to which I should like to reply. No doubt in Committee we shall be able to go into the matter in more detail.

The hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North defended the conifer. I do not want to talk of the conifer in an idealistic way which fails to refer to those marching series of trees, which all of us have seen in many parts of the country, and which the Forestry Commission and others would now admit was not the right way to produce a forestry industry. The hon. Gentleman was right to correct the balance. In the area in which I live, some of the best views are enhanced considerably by conifers. It would be wrong to pretend that all conifers are ugly or that they cannot be planted sensibly.

One must ask how best to do it. It is difficult to achieve a balance, but how does one encourage farmers who have not been foresters in the past to begin to plant trees? One must ensure that the system is not so complicated that they will not begin to try. I can assure my hon. Friend the Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman) that they will have to make one application, not two. The application will be considered by the Forestry Commission and the Ministry because the needs and responsibilities of each are different.

That is why we have tried to make the consultation system rather simpler. We felt that, if we wanted to encourage people to go into forestry for the first time, they should not be confronted by a vastly complicated means of so doing. Naturally, they are reserved about the concept of someone else telling them whether they may plant a particular crop. If farmers are to perceive forestry in small areas as a crop, which is what we want, there must not be a special arrangement for this crop that makes it completely different, much more complicated and very much more frightening than other crops.

I understand Labour Members' concern about this matter. It was for that reason that I was particularly careful to meet representatives of all the environmental bodies, including the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, and listened to them most carefully. If we find, in our review in three years' time when we reconsider the matter, that any of the fears that have been advanced are seriously justified, we will have to think again.

The hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) was right about the problems with regard to the 25,000 trees and of the tenant farmer. However, in every case, permission must be granted. The grant will be given by the Ministry, and it will be possible for us to say, and we shall do so, "It is unsuitable in these circumstances." The Forestry Commission will be able to say, "It is unsuitable in these circumstances." The mix that is offered is one that the Forestry Commission can refuse.

All these matters are built into the arrangements. If we ask farmers to have a prescription that is so particular and detailed and demands so much negotiation and discussion and say that there must be so many broadleaved trees, whatever the circumstances, we shall defeat the object of the Bill.

Mr. Hardy: Many of us have a high regard for the Forestry Commission, which the Minister will share. It is particularly concerned about production rather than some of the other aspects of tree planting. If the Minister will not give way on consultation, will he ensure—this point has been made by one or two hon. Members — that members of the Development Commission will adequately reflect the conservation interest? If not, the alarm will be raised very much earlier than the three-year period that he referred to earlier.

Mr. Gummer: I have listened carefully to the hon. Gentleman. That is not within my gift, but I shall ensure that the point is made clearly to those whose gift it is.

The Forestry Commission and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food are concerned about this

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matter. We take the same view. We are looking at the environmental impact. We have made it clear that that is part of what we are trying to do in the Bill.

My hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) talked about the indexing of payments. I am fundamentally opposed to indexing any payments in those circumstances. That is not a helpful way of proceeding. We must say that we will review the payments after the first three years and then regularly after that. That is the way to proceed.

I am unhappy about indexing. Sometimes circumstances will dictate a different choice. An annual review would provide for too short a time to measure the impact. We have said that we will review it in three years and then every five years thereafter. That will mean a better balance when seeing how it has panned out. Tree growing is a long-term matter, not one that can be easily dealt with as quickly as my hon. Friend suggests.

The hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) talked about the monitoring of the scheme. We shall monitor it, although I do not think that it would be right to do so annually. Grants can and will be withheld if we feel that the circumstances mean that they are an intrusion into the environment.

I shall not follow my hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry) on Sunday trading—we might have some difficulties in that—but I share his concern about planning. I should like to underline what he said about the farmer's wife being a key figure. Clearly, she has been taking the lead in diversification.

Mr. Foulkes: That is sexist.

Mr. Gummer: My hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell) made clear the need for a diverse society in the countryside. We are trying to carry that through—*[Interruption.]* There is very little that is sexist in saying that farmers' wives are female, but the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) has this difficult problem with which to cope. As he has not been involved in the debate and so far has intervened several times, as usual, from a seated position, perhaps we can leave it there.

The hon. Members for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) and for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) referred to crofting communities. Such communities are more appropriately a matter for a Scottish Bill. We felt that, if we went into that, we would open this Bill very much further, but I take the hon. Members' points on board and will ensure that the Scottish Office considers them.

The hon. Member for Caerphilly said that finance would allow for just a very small number of people to be covered if they all asked for the maximum amount and all received it within the right time in exactly the same period. Of course that is possible, but it will not happen. Even I would be prepared to take a very small bet on the fact that it will not happen in that way. Many of the hon. Gentleman's other points are worthy of much more consideration, but that is not one about which I would be concerned.

The hon. Member for Caerphilly raised an important point on areas of outstanding natural beauty. We made a list of places in which we would continue the present consultation procedures. It is no secret that we are considering whether the present consultation procedures in every case are exactly suitable. The hon. Gentleman need not worry. It will be a matter that the Government as well as the Opposition will bring up in Committee, so the hon. Gentleman need not think that it must be pressed now.

The debate has shown general and widespread support for this proposal. Both sides of the House accept that this is only part of a package which is necessary to deal with the problems of over-production, to contribute more towards the improvement of our environment and to ascertain whether we can put something by to meet future timber needs. These are all things that we believe to be good in themselves. They are not anything like the whole package, nor do they go as far as some would like. I remind the House that, as with environmentally sensitive areas, we proposed a relatively small scheme to begin with; we found it rapidly to be a success; and we were able to expand it. The principle of experimentation, of seeking to do enough to learn, is the way in which we should proceed with all these new aspects with which we are concerned.

We can see that the Bill gets off to a good start, with support from both sides of the House. No doubt, in Committee, we shall be able to be a little more tetchy with one another and a little more strongly opposed in order to achieve what I hope will be a major and important step in the changing face of British agriculture.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

Farm Land and Rural Development Bill *[Lords] [Money]*

Queen's Recommendation having been signified.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Motion No. 3, the money resolution.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Mr. Deputy Speaker——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Question is as on the Order Paper——

Mr. Bob Cryer: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I stood to speak on the money resolution and shouted out several times. Therefore, I request that you call me to speak on it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I beg the hon. Gentleman's pardon. I had not noticed him. I will reverse engines and call him. Mr. Cryer.

Motion made and Question proposed,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Farm Land and Rural Development Bill *[Lords]*, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—

(a) any grant paid by virtue of a scheme under that Act; and

(b) any administrative expenses incurred in consequence of that Act by the Secretary of State or by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.—*[Mr. Boscawen.]*

10.55 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer: I am most grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because I take the view that the House should not let money resolutions go through just on the nod. I shall not take up much of the House's time, but a Bill which provides no calculations and which specifically provides for payments to be made under subordinate legislation should not go through without questioning.

The explanatory and financial memorandum states:

"The Bill only provides enabling powers but the subordinate legislation when implemented will entail an increase in public expenditure and probably in public service manpower. The amount will depend on the resources available, the rates of grant, the uptake of the schemes and other factors."

As the Minister said that this was a "modest" Bill, the Government should have some idea of the amount of public expenditure involved, because once the Bill is through this place, that matter is left entirely to the Minister.

The money resolution states:

"That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Farm Land and Rural Development Bill *[Lords]*, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament".

It goes on to list the grants and other administration expenses.

During his opening speech on the Bill, the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food told us that the grants will be at varying rates—at 25 per cent. for capital grant and at 50 per cent. of the cost of feasibility studies. However, the Minister can presumably vary that proportion if he so chooses, because he is empowered to make that authorisation under subordinate legislation.

In winding up, the Minister of State said that there will be simple applications and that farmers will be encouraged to make those applications. I do not suppose that anybody will object to that, but the fact is that that will mean potentially greater public expenditure. The Government do not do that, for example, for supplementary benefit applicants. They do not say, "We want to make it as simple as possible. We are going to encourage people to make applications." Indeed, the Government criticise Labour-controlled local authorities that do encourage applications for supplementary benefit. They make that argument because there is a great deal of expenditure in the supplementary benefit vote.

Therefore, what concerns me is that, if the Government are to make applications simple and encourage them, they should have some idea of the total expenditure so that, if it is coming to an end, they can tell the farming community that there is not a bottomless pit and that grants will be curtailed because the amount of money that has been allocated is not unlimited. It is that authority that causes me concern.

In, for example, the Regional Development Grants (Termination) Bill which went through this House recently and cut grants to manufacturing industry in the regions —areas of high unemployment—the financial effects of that Bill were specifically set out. They stated:

"Planned expenditure in 1988/89 is approximately £210 million, falling away to approximately £115 million in 1990/91."

Admittedly it is easier to calculate expenditure than to calculate the amount that will be spent. Surely the Minister would not accept that the Department of Trade and Industry is more accurate in making those calculations than the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. I am sure that MAFF is used to dealing with the large amounts of subsidies that have gone, in a variety of ways, to farmers throughout the post-war period and certainly as a result of the CAP. Indeed, MAFF has an enviable reputation for providing advice, support and guidance to the farming community. It is important that MAFF provides that help —it did so between 1939-1945 and has done so ever since. Farmers do not stand alone in the market place, in competition, without Government intervention.

Given the Ministry's knowledge, surely some calculations have been made about the amount of expenditure, the number of farmers likely to be affected and the sort of grants that will be made. After all, clause 1 tells us about the proportion of grants—25 per cent. and 50 per cent. respectively—that will be entailed in the Bill, and they should give the Ministry some idea of the expenditure.

I do not intend to oppose the money resolution, but I simply wish to place on record the fact that I believe that the Government should provide an explanation for the expenditure and calculations should be made. Such information should be included in the explanatory and financial memorandum of the Bill; if it is not included it makes a mockery of the term "financial memorandum".

11.1pm

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): I wish to ask the Minister a straightforward question: how much money has the Ministry got the Treasury to agree should be expended in the first three years operation of the Bill? We are told that it is not an open-ended commitment — those who get it will be the first to apply. Therefore, figures must have been agreed with the Chancellor before the White Paper was published. How much money has the Treasury agreed that the Ministry can spend on this measure in the first three years of its operation?

11.2 pm

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John Selwyn Gummer): My right hon. Friend made it quite clear that there is £1 million a year for farm diversification, which is cash-limited. By 1990-91, we expect to be talking about £10 million for the farm woodland scheme. Obviously, if we made alterations thereafter to the rate of grant, there would be a different figure, but that is the nature of trying to make long-term arrangements for forestry. If we want people to grow trees, we must accept that that takes a long time. Therefore, any financial arrangements must take that into account.

There is also £3 million for capital grants that are not specifically in the money resolution, but which have close associations with it. That which is not cash-limited is hectarage-limited. There is no cash-limiting in the long term for the farm woodland scheme, so we have said how many hectares should be covered. That represents a clear financial commitment.

I am pleased that the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) has such great concern about cash limitation and about what the Government are spending, given that the taxpayer has to pay. I look forward to the many occasions on which I shall remind him of his speech. It is not a speech that comes well from an hon. Member who is normally making unlimited demands on the public purse.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Farm Land and Rural Development Bill *[Lords]*, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—

(a) any grant paid by virtue of a scheme under that Act; and

(b) any administrative expenses incurred in consequence of that Act by the Secretary of State or by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency Bill

Not amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

11.4 pm

The Minister for Overseas Development (Mr. Chris Patten): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

This modest but valuable Bill was welcomed by both sides of the House on Second Reading. The discussions in the full and comprehensive Committee stage underlined the support for the measure. No amendments were tabled. In the circumstances I do not propose to take up the time of the House at this hour, which is rather later than we were anticipating, with a long speech. However, I shall gladly try to respond to any questions or points that have not previously been put.

As the House will by now know, the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency will stimulate private investment in developing countries through the provision of contracts of guarantee against defined political risks. It will also provide technical assistance for investment promotion. Therefore, it should help the social and economic development of developing countries. That is an aim which I know is supported by both sides of the House.

The purpose of the Bill is to enable us to give effect to the MIGA convention by ratifying it. On Second Reading I told the House that 20 countries with about 23 per cent. of allocated shares had ratified the convention. Since then, the number of countries has grown to 23, and their shareholdings to 25 per cent. Britain's allocated shareholding is just under 5 per cent. An early ratification by the United Kingdom would, therefore, bring the total shareholdings of the ratifying countries to the trigger level of one third which is needed for the convention to enter into force.

Once again I confidently commend the Third Reading and I express my gratitude to hon. Members from both sides of the House for the support which they have given the Bill so far, and which I hope they will continue to demonstrate at some stage tonight.

11.6 pm

Miss Joan Lestor (Eccles): Like the Minister, I have no wish to delay the House for more than a few moments on the Third Reading of the Bill and the ratifying of the convention. After the amicable Committee stage I should stress again that MIGA can play its part in offering a degree of confidence and security to investors in the developing world. However, poverty, hunger and disease are the main causes of the economic instability that investors fear. Although MIGA can definitely play its part, without a conscious and sustained effort by the international community to promote human welfare and economic development, the present decline in overseas investment is likely to continue.

As has been said, MIGA offers guarantees to private investors. As my hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) mentioned in Committee, it is fair to ask what guarantee MIGA will offer the developing countries that accept investments. Guarantees on environmental matters were raised, for example, in view of Bhopal. Such guarantees are essential. In Committee the Minister gave some assurances on those matters. It is those matters, in particular, that we will be watching, especially since the president of the World Bank has recently responded to criticisms about some of the environmental shortcomings of some activities and investments. Now it seems that the World Bank is willing to improve project appraisal and to take account of the impact on the environment. MIGA must follow that example and refuse to guarantee investments that fail to meet the stringent development and environmental criteria. With those few remarks, I hope that we can proceed fairly soon.

11.8 pm

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): Like my hon. Friend the Minister and the hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor), I will not delay the House too long on this excellent measure, or attempt to make a Second Reading speech on the aid budget. I notice that many right hon. and hon. Members spoke on that on Second Reading from which I was unfortunately absent due to commitments at the Institute of Development Studies on that day.

Having read the reports of the Second Reading debate and the Committee stage, may I ask the Minister one or two questions? First, let me say that a measure that encourages direct private investment in Third world countries is to be wholeheartedly welcomed. I believe that the Minister deserves a great deal of credit for bringing this measure forward quickly. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer also deserves credit for signing the original agreement. It is part and parcel of the extremely fruitful moves of the Minister and the Chancellor who produced the initiatives on debt and produced this excellent measure for our consideration.

May I ask the Minister about one or two technical matters? Will the cost of MIGA add to the costs of private companies investing in Third world countries and, therefore, to the cost of production in the countries in which investment is made? In the long run, will it add to the total indebtedness of, and the repayments due from, Third world countries as a result of investment by private companies in those countries? If so, is there any way in which we can ensure that those costs are minimised and that large overhead costs of running MIGA in Washington are not passed on to the impoverished Third world countries?

Will not MIGA compete with the private insurance market, which also offers political risk insurance? I hope that this international agency will act where the normal private insurance market declines to take a risk and that there will therefore be no direct competition between MIGA and the private insurance market, although I would expect MIGA to offset some of its risks in the private insurance market.

Will MIGA cover trade risks? If so, will that function be included in the total amount available under MIGA, or will it simply be capital risks? Many start-up trade-type investments in projects overseas could properly be entitled trade risks. I am anxious to know whether the new agency will cover the risks of the supply of initial products, raw materials, spare parts and so on to start-up projects.

If a host Government to a MIGA-guaranteed project of investment commits the type of political risk that we are discussing — restrictions on currency conversion or transfer, the possibility of expropriation by the host Government and the repudiation of risks where the

[Mr. Bowen Wells]

investor suffers a loss through breach of contract by the host Government were the principal categories to which the Minister referred on Second Reading — and thus undermines a MIGA-guaranteed investment, will that Government suffer in any way other than by being denied MIGA cover for further investment?

On the delicate subject of the cost to the aid budget, I welcome the dual responsibility of the Treasury, which, I understand, is to bear 50 per cent. of the initial costs of setting up MIGA, and the Overseas Development Administration which is to bear the other 50 per cent. Will the Minister confirm that what is in the aid framework to the end of March is a figure of $131,463? That is my calculation of the ODA's likely contribution from its budget, but I should not like to trust my interpretation of the figures. Presumably the money will not be disbursed this year but will have to be carried over to next year. The figure will, therefore, enter the element of the aid budget known as slippage and will be otherwise deployed for overseas development investment before the end of this financial year.

I also ask that this agency does not operate as the ECGD has operated, rationing the amount of cover which it will give to any particular country according to the overall sum available, and thus denying MIGA cover to some worthwhile investments and making it difficult for an investment to get other insurance from the private market for other elements of the package. I hope that such rationing will not take place because in the case of the ECGD it has been a serious disincentive to investment in many countries.

Those are my few remarks and questions on this excellent measure, and I hope that the House will vote unanimously for its Third Reading.

11.15 pm

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): I should like to restate Liberal support for this modest measure which is a constructive initiative to help investment in underdeveloped countries and so, perhaps, to reduce the immense problem of international debt.

Sadly, it is a fact that many still naively suppose that there is a positive flow from the developed to the poorest countries, stemming from foreign aid payments. The hard fact we must face is that the reverse is true and interest alone due on the developing world's debt is greater than the total amount of aid that it receives. Taking into account both aid and debt repayments, the developing world pays a net payment of $26,000 million per year to the developed world, which is about £14,000 million. That is the background to the Bill and the reason why it is of value. It does not go anything like far enough and what is urgently needed is a new initiative from the Group of Seven.

The striking feature about the passage of the Bill has been the almost total lack of dissent from any quarter both tonight and in Committee, which I unfortunately missed. Indeed, the Minister said that he was willing to answer any questions, and I am not sure that that is altogether normal on Third Reading.

But that same confidence has not been evident everywhere outside the House. I have received some correspondence from people who have drawn parallels between MIGA and the International Tin Council which collapsed in late 1985. This is not the time to go into the details of that, and if the Minister has not read the document on that I shall certainly send it to him. I hope that he will confirm that there are significant differences betweeen MIGA and the ITC. I hope that the lessons of that experience have been learnt. Perhaps the most significant difference is that the MIGA convention is clear about the liabilities to which member states lay themselves open by joining. Some 80 per cent. of the subscription takes the form of money on call, held initially by member states, whereas the ITC did not explicitly limit liability in that way, which made the commitment conceivably greater, but in practice much less reliable.

I have three points to put to the Minister. First, in view of those who have experience of the ITC, no well advised company would insure or re-insure risks within MIGA without a cast-iron guarantee from its Government. I question that, but perhaps the Minister will respond.

There is an interesting query about the fact that, apparently, no legal action to enforce a contract with MIGA could be brought in the country where it has an office, which presumably means Washington DC. I do not know about that.

A comparison is drawn between the voting structure in MIGA and that in the ITC. It is argued that the form is similar and could produce comparable paralysis in a crisis. I would be happy to have confirmation that such fears are not well founded. The commitment of the World Bank, its record in such matters and the fact that its president is to be the ex-officio chairman must provide confidence, and it is confidence about which we are talking and which the agency is designed to reinforce.

I happily give full support to this laudable, if limited, Bill and, naturally enough, I trust that the Government will keep a close eye on what is happening and ensure that it operates sensibly and prudently. If it does not, it will fail to win the confidence of investors in Third world countries, which, after all, is what it is all about.

11.21 pm

Mr. Chris Patten: With the leave of the House, I should like to reply to this short debate. I start by taking up what the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) said. The debate is about giving the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency Bill a Third Reading. The hon. Gentleman referred to the correspondence, which many of us have had, about the affairs of the International Tin Council. With respect to that correspondence, it is somewhere between a googly and a red herring. It is a red googly. Perhaps I can turn it to leg relatively briefly, but I shall do so because I know that several hon. Members have received that correspondence.

The critique that has been circulated is based, as the hon. Gentleman suggested, on the hypothesis that MIGA will become insolvent. It does not talk about if it becomes insolvent. It is a spartan "if". For several reasons, I believe that such an event is improbable. First, article 22 of the convention places limits on the amount of contingent liability that the agency can assume, and it envisages risk diversification measures to limit the agency's exposure. Article 25 enjoins the agency to

"carry out its activities in accordance with sound business and prudent financial management practices with a view to maintaining under all circumstances its ability to meet its financial obligations."

It is inevitable that some of the agency's insured risks will become losses, but it is inconceivable that they will all

become losses. By spreading its business judiciously, MIGA should be able to minimise the risk of a heavy volume of claims straining its ability to meet its total liabilities. The difference from the ITC, which dealt with only one commodity, is fairly obvious.

Secondly, MIGA will be part of the World Bank group of agencies, and the chairman of its board of directors will be the president of the World Bank. No member of the World Bank group, and no other international financial institution of which the United Kingdom has been a member, has ever become insolvent or even had to call on its callable capital. They all enjoy AAA rating by the major credit agencies.

Thirdly, the experience of ECGD's investment insurance scheme, which is similar to MIGA's, is that, with sound management and taking one year with another, such schemes will be viable.

Fourthly, MIGA will have a board of directors appointed by member countries which, under article 32(a), will be responsible for the general operations of the agency. I am confident that the board will ensure that the agency will discharge its obligations following prudent financial management practice.

The financial obligations of members under articles 7 and 8 will be to pay 10 per cent. of their share prices in cash and a further 10 per cent. in promissory notes. The promissory notes will be drawn down only if necessary and if approved by the board of directors. The other 80 per cent. of the capital is callable. The callable capital of the other international financial institutions has never been called. Similarly, there is no reason to expect that MIGA's callable capital will ever need to be called, but it is available in the last resort if needed.

Article 55 deals with the unlikely event of liquidation. It makes it clear that guarantee holders and other creditors would have priority over members in the distribution of assets.

Those are all points that I would have been delighted to make to those who have corresponded with hon. Members. I dare say that I could have saved a few postage bills had I been approached in that way.

The hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) mentioned the needs of the developing world and said that they would not be met even by an increase in private investment in response to this important measure. Of course, we must consider other ways of channelling and effectively targeting resources to the developing world. God willing, several of us will be here later in the week to discuss the International Development Agency replenishment order, which is an attempt—I hope that it will be successful—to do precisely what the hon. Lady and the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber want.

The hon. Lady mentioned some of the warnings that she gave in Committee, and that the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) gave on Second Reading, about the acceptability and unacceptability of investment in developing countries. She drew attention especially to environmental concerns and paid appropriate tribute to the interest of the president of the World Bank in this issue and his determination that that interest should be reflected in the policies pursued by the bank.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells), whom we missed on Second Reading and in Committee, and whose questions might have received even more comprehensive answers had they been put then, asked several questions. I thank him for his comments about the debt initiative which the United Kingdom has been pursuing, with some success, in the international financial forums. He mentioned the costs of investing in developing countries. Investors will have to pay premiums for insurance policies. I hope that administrative costs will be a very small part of the overall turnover. Any costs should be offset by the increased confidence that investors will have about the success of investing in poorer countries. My hon. Friend also mentioned private insurance. We hope that MIGA and private insurance companies will complement each other, with co-insurance and reinsurance. My hon. Friend also asked about coverage of risks. I draw his attention to article 11 of the convention, which I believe covers that point adequately.

My hon. Friend asked about the aid framework. I assure him that the figures that he mentioned are covered in the aid framework: half our initial subscription. The normal rules of rollover apply and are, as my hon. Friend knows from his experience on the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs, the subject of regular discussion with that important and wise body.

I trust that, on that bit of flannel, I can conclude this debate by commending this important measure to the House and looking forward to equally rewarding and uncontroversial discussions in the weeks, months and even years ahead.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

Local Authority Search Inquiries

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

11.30 pm

Mr. John Heddle (Mid-Staffordshire): I am most grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and to my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for attending the House at this late hour to debate a matter of great concern to the constituents of all right hon. and hon. Members. I am delighted to see my hon. Friends the Members for Fulham (Mr. Carrington) and for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson) here tonight. Given that the subject of tonight's debate is the reduction in the delay of local authorities in replying to solicitors' local searches, I shall endeavour to be economical with my words to ensure that this Adjournment debate does not last beyond midnight.

It is the declared wish and intention of the Government, and I wholeheartedly support them, to extend home ownership as widely as possible across the social spectrum in all four corners of the United Kingdom. It is, therefore, the Government's responsibility to ensure that the path to home ownership is not strewn with pitfalls or potholes, with bureaucratic undergrowth or unnecessary expense and, most particularly, that, by precept and example, we eliminate that awful practice of gazumping.

The House will recall that, in February of last year, I introduced, under the ten-minute Bill procedure, the Law of Property (Amendment) Bill, the object of which was to eliminate gazumping as far as practically and politically possible, by reducing the time between the acceptance of an offer by a vendor and the signing of a contract by the purchaser.

I was delighted to read in the Conservative party manifesto the following words:

"Some people are still deterred by the costs and complications of house purchase. That is why we must look for new ways to make house buying simpler and easier. Our abolition of the conveyancing monopoly has already made it cheaper."

Since being returned to Parliament by my constituents in Mid-Staffordshire at the general election last year, I have endeavoured to seek practical and political ways of making the process of house-buying easier, simpler and cheaper. The House may recall that, in November, I introduced in a similar Adjournment debate the subject of Land Registry delays. My hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General replied in a most positive vein, allowing the Land Registry to retain the £27 million surplus that it made to enable it to increase its staff and to eat into the backlog of cases that all hon. Members will recall that their constituents have to suffer.

Tonight's Adjournment debate directs the attention of the House to a much more fundamental and more sinister source of delay, frustration and expense, which our constituents have to suffer.

It is an established part of the conveyancing process that before anybody is committed to buying a property he or she, or his or her solicitor, should make searches and inquiries of the local authority. The replies that the local authority gives can reveal important facts about the property. The inquiries are part of the process of making sure that the bargain will be as the buyer understood it to be when he or she made the offer in the first place. Prospective mortgagees similarly rely upon searches and inquiries so as to be sure that nothing threatens the value of their security.

At the outset I must draw a clear distinction between two types of information sought from local authorities by solicitors acting for purchasers. Conveyancers usually apply for both together, but technically they are quite separate. First, there are the local land charges registered by local authorities under a statutory duty imposed by the Local Land Charges Act 1975. Everyone has a statutory right to search for information recorded on this register.

Secondly, there are additional inquiries on standard forms to which the authorities have agreed to supply answers. The agreement to reply is voluntary; there is no statutory duty to do so. In some cases, however, the inquiries relate to information that the authority is obliged to make available to the public, and this is a convenient way to make it available.

For some years — and increasingly in the last few years and most certainly in the last few months—it has been impossible in some areas to obtain information in reply to the inquiries within a reasonable time. I regard a reasonable time—I believe that I am supported in this by both the Law Society and the conveyancing standing committee of the Law Commission — as something of the order of 10 to 14 days. That target response time contrasts with some times that have been reported recently in the *Law Society's Gazette.*

Some London boroughs — these are the only ones that are recorded, but I am sure that the London boroughs to which I shall refer in a moment are not alone in being guilty of this delay and, dare I say, inefficiency and possibly negligence—have recorded periods of up to 20 weeks to reply to simple preliminary inquiries by solicitors. By contrast, correspondence in the same *Law Society's Gazette* has cited examples of very prompt replies.

The London borough of Lewisham, the constituency of my hon. Friend the Minister for Sport, which is a Labour-controlled borough, takes six weeks to reply. The London borough of Lambeth, Labour-controlled, takes 10 to 12 weeks to reply. The conveyancing standing committee of the Law Commission suggests that a reasonable time is 10 to 14 days. The London borough of Camden, a Labour-controlled borough, takes 12 weeks to reply. The London borough of Hackney, Labour-controlled, takes 20 weeks —five months—to reply.

I put it to the House and to my hon. Friend the Minister that to take that long to reply to simple inquiries discriminates against the nurse, the teacher, the first-time buyer—the people who want to stand on their own two feet and rid themselves of the shackles and the interminable delays that would otherwise await them on the council housing waiting list.

I submit that this is the unacceptable face of municipal socialism and that these Labour-controlled London boroughs, and Labour-controlled boroughs elsewhere, are the worst culprits. Local councils that do not deliver a service on time must accept measures that give the public the right to the same quality of service everywhere.

A firm of solicitors in Hackney, reading in the national press recently of the imminence of tonight's Adjournment debate, wrote to me on 14 January and said:

"I send a copy of a search recently received from the London borough of Hackney. You will see that the search was submitted on the 29 June 1987 and was finally received on 12 January 1988."

It will not surprise my hon. Friend the Minister that the London borough of Hackney is one of the two boroughs reported to the local ombudsman for that sort of delay. Perhaps I may tell the House what the local ombudsman, Professor Miller Yardley, said about one particular case—that of a Miss Fern, who was frustrated in her attempt to buy a house in Hackney by the council's inefficiency. He said:

"Such delay is quite unreasonable and amounts to maladministration. I am also satisfied from this investigation that Miss Fern suffered injustice as a result of the Council's failure to deal with their administrative deficiencies over a long period of time . . . The public are charged by the Council for searches and they are entitled to receive a reasonable service for such charges. This they have patently not received in Hackney."

He concludes:

"Nevertheless the Council's maladministration caused her to suffer from the additional time her purchase took, as well as to incur trouble and expense, and the Council should recognise this by making an appropriate payment to her. I would also hope the Council will quickly make some firm decisions on how to provide an efficient system for dealing with searches, and then take prompt steps to deal with the accumulated backlog."

In the time I have left, I want to suggest to my hon. Friend the Minister some practical ways of improving the service. Before doing so, it is only right and proper that I should place on record the fact that this debate is highlighting the activities of a minority—how large I do not know—of councils. Overall, most local authorities, especially those in the shire counties, give a good service, and their efforts go largely unnoticed. However, the local authorities that offer a poor service account for areas of high volume and high-price conveyancing transactions; they also cater for buoyant markets in which gazumping can flourish—so drastic measures must be taken.

Without wishing to anticipate my hon. Friend's reply, I imagine that he will tell the House that his Department has engaged in the work of the interdepartmental group by publishing a booklet simplifying house buying. I do not wish to dwell on that, nor on the consultation paper recently produced by the Law Commission entitled "Local authority enquiries: how can we eliminate delays?". I know that the discussion period for that document expires on 31 March, and I eagerly await my hon. Friend's Department's response to it.

I am sure that the conclusions that the Department reaches will be constructive and forward-thinking. However, although I am sure that there are ways of speeding up the process by privatisation and computerisation, by putting out the function of replying to local searches to the private sector, or by compelling local authorities to be more responsive by means of the Local Government Bill, I believe—I raised this point with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment at Question Time just under a fortnight ago—that there are two practical measures that my hon. Friend could discuss with his ministerial colleagues in the next few days.

First, when I tried to find out, by parliamentary questions, the nationwide performance of local authorities, I was told by my hon. Friend the Member Oxford, West (Mr. Patten) a year ago when he was the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction, and more recently by my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave), the present Minister for Housing and Planning, that the information is not kept centrally. But the Department of the Environment is responsible for the behaviour of local authorities nationwide, and that information should be centrally available to hon. Members, just as information on each authority's rent arrears and void houses is available to us all.

Secondly, and more importantly, when a local authority falls down on its obligations and responsibilities to the public by not responding within a reasonable period of time—I suggest 14 days—legislative powers should be taken to allow members of the public or their professional advisers to carry out personal searches.

Local authorities will tell my hon. Friend that of course they have no objection to the public carrying out personal searches. However, I can tell my hon. Friend that most of the local authorities in my firing line in this debate, and certainly all those that I have mentioned, do not allow solicitors, licensed conveyancers or members of the public to make personal searches. The only way to outlaw this despicable, insidious practice of discouraging people from wanting to buy their own house simply, quickly and cheaply, and the only way to rid local authorities of inefficiency and maladministration, is to do as I suggest. I await with great pleasure and anticipation my hon. Friend's response.

11.46 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Colin Moynihan): Having listened carefully to the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle), I can see how wise his constituents were to return him to the House last June. Such eloquence and such thoughtful argument in so concise a time does credit to my hon. Friend and to the House. I congratulate my hon. Friend on raising a matter that is of widespread concern. He is particularly well qualified to speak on this subject, as he has been involved in the property and housing world for many years, first as a surveyor and currently as a vice president of the Building Societies Association.

My hon. Friend has been hard working and persuasive in pursuing the interests of the house-buying public. This is by no means the first evening on which he has stayed late to press his strongly held views on this subject. I note that he raised the issue of delays in the Land Registry during an Adjournment debate on 30 November last year. I know that he is following with interest the progress being made on computerising local authority searches. I shall of course be responding to the constructive suggestions that my hon. Friend has made, but I should first like to spell out the nature of the problem as we see it.

In the first part of his speech, my hon. Friend alluded to the fact that the search inquiry is a two-part process. It is important to make a distinction between the two parts. First, there is the statutory search of the local land charges register to establish whether the property is subject to any charges. Under the Local Land Charges Act 1975, everyone has the right to obtain information from this register. The statutory search is quite straightforward because it simply involves checking against the index. This part of the process can be done quickly and we have no reason to think that it contributes to delays in responding to inquiries.

The other part of the process is to make general inquiries of the local authority about matters such as planning consents, local structure plans, road building

[Mr. Colin Moynihan]

proposals and a wide range of other matters that may affect the value and use of the land. These are generally known as supplementary inquiries. They are not part of the statutory search, but they are invariably carried out as part of the same process, and it is in responding to these inquiries that delays occur. They are much more labour intensive than the statutory search and often require contributions from several different departments within the local authority.

The supplementary inquiries have not always been linked to the statutory search. Until the eve of the second world war, conveyancers were expected to ask for supplementary information separately. At that time, the inquiries were made after contracts were exchanged, rather than before. This was a rather ad hoc system and it became more and more unwieldy as inquiries became more frequent and more diverse.

In 1939, the local authorities and the Law Society decided that it would be more sensible to prepare a list of the main questions which needed answers with a recommended fee for answering the questions. The list of questions has grown over the years, so that the standard forms produced by the Law Society and local authorities now contain 18 questions for use in every case and 13 more questions that can be used when appropriate. They cover a wide range of topics, from drainage to planning to clean air legislation. As the range of inquiries has grown, so has the number of local authority departments that may be involved in supplying the information. Not surprisingly, that has affected the speed with which inquiries are processed. In 1939, the Law Society and local authorities laid down a maximum of seven days for a reply to inquiries. In a paper published last December, the Law Commission's conveyancing standing committee recognised that times have changed. The committee suggested that, nowadays, the satisfactory maximum period for answering routine inquiries would be 10 working days.

We would all agree that, if we were simply talking about an increase from seven days to 10 days, there would be no need for this debate. However, my hon. Friend has demonstrated that the scale of the problem is much more severe than that. He quoted examples of delays. We could all tell similar stories. The question is what evidence there is to show how widespread the problem is. Let me quote the evidence that we have. I shall start by quoting my own. My hon. Friend was kind enough to refer to my constituency. I regret that he had to do so in the light that he did. He is right. Many of my constituents have made representations to me in Lewisham. The delays there—45 days in many cases—are unacceptable.

The local authority associations gave evidence about delays to the Government's conveyancing committee, which published a report in January 1985. The figures that it gave to the committee were interesting. They show that out of 361 authorities who responded, over half replied to search inquiries within 10 days, on average. On the other hand, 61 authorities took more than 15 days to reply. But the figures hide the fact that, in some cases, delays are considerably longer than 15 days. The Holborn Law Society, in evidence to the committee, recorded response times from six London boroughs during the second half of 1982 as rising to five, seven, eight and nine weeks, and in one case to three months. We do not need to go back to 1982 for that sort of evidence. The *Law Society Gazette* regularly carries a table of delays in London. In 1987, it recorded periods of up to 20 weeks.

I am glad that my hon. Friend recognised that most authorities are providing a reasonable service to the house buyer. We must not lose sight of that fact when we consider the problem. But it is also clear that there is a genuine and serious problem in some areas. For those whose attempt to buy a house has been unnecessarily prolonged or thwarted altogether, it is no consolation to know that there are other areas, often not far away, where the same process would have taken place much more quickly.

When considering the reasons for delays, we accept that it is clear that the amount of work involved in dealing with supplementary inquiries has increased since the present system was introduced in 1939. The number of local authority departments involved has grown. Moreover, the level of activity in the house market has increased in recent years, especially in London and the south-east. All those factors have contributed to slowing down the process. Furthermore, there are undoubtedly cases in which the conveyancer is at fault—by not describing the property accurately; by addressing inquiries to the wrong local authority; by supplying incorrect information; or by not sending in enough money to pay the fee. Local authorities attribute delay to factors such as peaks in demand, staff sickness or vacancies.

None of this alters the fact that some authorities perform much better than others. The difference in performance cannot be attributed entirely to the different circumstances or work loads of particular authorities. My hon. Friend will agree that it is hard to avoid the conclusion that long delays are due to inefficiency or bad organisation or arise because the authority gives low priority to dealing with inquiries.

I suggested at the start of my comments that delays are caused by supplementary inquiries rather than by the time taken to make a statutory search. Local authorities are not under a statutory duty to respond to supplementary inquiries, and they have come to a voluntary agreement with the Law Society about the standard list of questions. Since responding to inquiries is not part of a local authority's statutory responsibilities, there is no formal action that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State can take. However, that does not mean that the Government have been indifferent to the problems that house buyers face. As my hon. Friend knows, we have already taken action to make the house buying process easier, quicker and cheaper. We have ended solicitors' monopoly on conveyancing, and the Law Society has relaxed the rules that prevented solicitors from advertising, which has stimulated competition.

My noble and learned Friend Lord Hailsham, who was then the Lord Chancellor, set up a committee on conveyancing in February 1984. That committee, under the chairmanship of Professor Julian Farrand, to whom I pay tribute for his invaluable service on the subject, produced a report in January 1985 on conveyancing simplifications. The report described delays in local authority search inquiries as

"the most contentious aspect of the operation of local authority registers".

Following that report, my noble and learned Friend asked the Law Commission to establish a conveyancing standing committee, with a continuing remit to seek and

promote ways of improving the conveyancing system. That committee has produced a very timely consultation paper on the subject, called "Local authority enquiries: how can we eliminate delays?" The committee is asking for comments on its paper by 31 March. The Government will be looking closely at the outcome of that exercise.

My hon. Friend has made some suggestions about the ways in which the search process could be speeded up. I have considerable sympathy with his ideas, but I do not want to hide the fact that we want to see the responses to the standing committee's paper and the committee's views before we decide whether Government action would be desirable and, if it would, what form it should take.

My hon. Friend suggested that we should consider privatising the service. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State promised 10 days ago that we would consider that suggestion and that it might even be a candidate for the list of "defined activities" that local authorities must expose to competition under part I of the Local Government Bill. The Bill is currently being scrutinised in another place.

As my hon. Friend knows, we are moving forward on a broad front in that Bill. There is provision in it for my right hon. Friend to add to the list of activities subsequently by order. Our attitude has been that we would prefer not to have to force local authorities in this way. We are doing so only because they are not prepared to go ahead on their own initiative. Therefore, if there is a reasonable prospect that authorities will make use of the private sector to carry out an activity more efficiently and effectively, without the need for legislation, we would welcome it.

In the case of search inquiries, there is a complication. The nature of the activity is to collect information from various departments of the authority. Therefore, it involves a small time input from a large number of staff scattered through various departments. That makes it difficult to disentangle as a function. The delays, by and large, seem to occur not in the land charges department of the authority, but in the other departments. Unless the tenderers took over a wide range of local authority activities, the reduction in delays would probably not be significant.

For those reasons, we do not put local authority searches at the top of our list of activities to be brought within the regime laid down in part I of the Local Government Bill. However, there is a prospect of privatisation in the process and it has to do with computers. The idea of computerising the system has found widespread favour in recent years. I share the view that it has a lot to offer. There are two main reasons why it has not happened as quickly as it might.

First, there have been proposals for a nationally co-ordinated move towards computerisation. But quite a number of authorities have perfectly good manual systems and are able to reply to search inquiries in reasonable time. They have seen no need to computerise. That feeling has been reinforced by the fact that computerisation involves an initial capital outlay. Many authorities have not been prepared to make the outlay because they place a higher priority on other competing demands. However, the cost to the local authority need not be an obstacle. In many areas, I feel sure that house buyers would be willing to pay a little more if that would give them a quick and reliable service. The cost of developing and installing a computer system could be borne by a private company and recouped by that company over a period of time. This has provided enough incentive for at least two companies, which, I understand, are at an advanced stage in developing computer systems to offer to local authorities. The advantage of that approach is that the private company could make the capital outlay and provide the staff to computerise the system. The costs could then be recouped through the search fee, so that they fell not on the local authority but instead on those who benefit from an improvement in the service.

My hon. Friend also proposed that there should be sanctions against local authorities who continue to respond slowly to search inquiries. The Government have not closed their mind to that idea, but it would be important to ensure that sanctions were effective. I doubt, for instance, whether it would do much for the cause if the sanction was merely to deprive the local authority of its search fee. We would hesitate before going down that sanctions road.

The main reason for hesitating is that we would then have to legislate to give a statutory basis to the supplementary inquiries. As I have already said, they are currently drawn up by agreement between the Law Society and the local authorities. We would have to decide which inquiries should be statutory; we would have to allow in some way for the minority of inquiries, which genuinely require a longer response time; and we would lose some of the flexibility of the present system. There are difficulties, but we retain an open mind and we look forward to the conveyancing standing committee's conclusions on this option.

The debate has been a timely contribution to the discussion launched by the conveyancing standing committee's paper in December. Delays of many weeks in processing search inquiries are a serious disservice to the public and I hope that the authorities concerned will start taking steps now to put things right. I repeat my exhortation to authorities to look seriously at computerisation. There are ways in which they can improve their service to the public.

In conclusion, I say to my hon. Friend that we shall look carefully at what the standing committee concludes and bear in mind his representations not only of tonight but in the other forums in which he has taken the opportunity to drive home the important points that he summarised. They will be taken into account.

I think that there is a prospect of making progress in this regard. I hope that the Government's policy of encouraging local authorities to improve their performance will start to yield results. If it does not, we may have to think again.

I hope that my hon. Friend will accept my apologies for speaking so rapidly in response to the comments that he made. However, he made so many important points that I wanted to ensure that as many as possible were covered.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at one minute to Twelve midnight.

House of Commons

Tuesday 2 February 1988

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

ASSOCIATED BRITISH PORTS (NO. 2) BILL *(By Order)*

BRITISH RAILWAYS (NO. 2) BILL *(By Order)*

CARDIFF BAY BARRAGE BILL *(By Order)*

CITY OF LONDON (SPITALFIELDS MARKET) BILL *(By Order)*

FALMOUTH CONTAINER TERMINAL BILL *(By Order)*

INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT CENTRE FROM BUCKINGHAM BILL *(By Order)*

NORTH KILLINGHOLME CARGO TERMINAL BILL *(By Order)*

ST. GEORGE'S HILL, WEYBRIDGE, ESTATE BILL *(By Order)*

SOUTHERN WATER AUTHORITY BILL *(By Order)*

Orders for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time upon Thursday 4 February.

Oral Answers to Questions

EMPLOYMENT

Young Persons (Training)

1. **Ms. Mowlam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of young people entering employment for the first time receive training from their employers.

The Minister for Employment (Mr. John Cope): The latest evidence that we have on the training of 16-year-old school leavers in full-time employment shows that 65 per cent. receive training in their jobs. That figure comes from the 1986 youth cohort study.

Ms. Mowlam: I thank the Minister for that information. Will he provide similar details for 16 to 18-year-olds starting in September? The Minister assured us that there would be sufficient places for 16 to 18-year-olds in Cleveland when I last asked this question in the House. What plans have been made to make those places available? If those places are not available—and we in Cleveland believe that they will not be available—will benefit be available to those youngsters if there is no training?

Mr. Cope: The original question referred to young people entering employment for the first time. I think that the hon. Lady is referring to the youth training scheme. At present there are more than 100,000 vacant places on the youth training scheme all over the country. With regard to the Christmas guarantee, well over 99 per cent. of young people who required a YTS place had one by last Christmas. We have every reason to suppose that we shall do better this year.

Mr. Burns: Is my hon. Friend aware that business men in Chelmsford have a record second to none in training their young workers? Is he also aware that young people in Chelmsford warmly welcome YTS because it provides them with training and valuable work experience?

Mr. Cope: Yes, and that is the experience of YTS trainees all over the country. More than 80 per cent. of them find it very worth while.

Mr. Sheerman: Is the Minister not worried that, as some young people experience more employment opportunities, the bad old days are returning, because employers are taking 16-year-olds off YTS and offering them no training? If we have to make it compulsory for young people to enter youth training, is it not about time that we compelled employers to train every 16-year-old, at least until the age of 18? When will we enter that kind of league?

Mr. Cope: I thought that the Opposition were against compulsory training. The number of 16 and 17-year-old unemployed school leavers is at its lowest level since 1974, and that is a good thing. As I have just told the hon. Member for Redcar (Ms. Mowlam), two thirds of those in employment are being trained.

Mr. Devlin: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the proportion of young people receiving training in their first job is higher in the north of England than elsewhere? Will

he also confirm that the proportion of people on YTS who enter jobs, and so on, after leaving the scheme is about 75 per cent.?

Mr. Cope: Yes, both those facts are correct.

Job Training Scheme (Child Care)

2. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many single parents are now receiving payments under the pilot job training scheme child care provisions.

Mr. Cope: There are seven single parents on the new job training scheme who are receiving payments for child care provision under the pilot scheme.

Mrs. Mahon: What does the Minister intend to do about this disgraceful con trick that has been perpetrated on single parents? He knows full well that to qualify and be available for work they must lose £9 in long-term benefit. Will he change that disgraceful situation?

Mr. Cope: We shall review the pilot scheme when it ends later this month. I stress that it is only a pilot scheme at the moment. The hon. Lady's question relates to the eligibility for the new job training scheme. We have placed those who have been looking for work for six months or more at the head of our priorities. Those are the right priorities.

Ms. Richardson: Why is it a pilot scheme? The pilot scheme is operating in 10 JTS areas. A large number of single parents and other single people are on JTS. What are the Minister and his Department doing to ensure that single parents, whether women or men, know about the availability of child care payments? Seven is an appallingly low figure. What will happen when JTS is merged with the community programme? The Minister said that he would not extend the payments. Does that mean that he is against helping single parents to work and train?

Mr. Cope: I did not say that. I said that we will review the pilot scheme when it finishes at the end of this month, and look into the valid questions that the hon. Lady has asked. As for the new scheme, the hon. Lady must await the White Paper, which my right hon. Friend will publish shortly.

Job Vacancies

3. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the current level of job vacancies in England and Wales.

The Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Norman Fowler): On 4 December 1987 the number of unfilled vacancies registered at jobcentres in England and Wales was 219,100. That was an increase of 23 per cent. on the figure for December 1986. Vacancies notified to jobcentres have increased each year since 1981.

Mr. Thompson: Bearing in mind that the substantial increase in job vacancies must demonstrate the success of the Government's economic policies, does my right hon. Friend agree that more people would find jobs, and more vacancies would be filled, if the Government and industry together took vigorous action to deal with skill shortages —particularly in areas such as Norwich, where they are a real problem?

Mr. Fowler: I agree with my hon. Friend that there are still skill shortages in some areas, although they are not as bad as they were in the 1970s. I also agree that that shows the need for skills, particularly among the long-term unemployed, and underlines the importance of the new adult training programme that we are about to launch.

Mr. Cryer: Are not the majority of vacancies in the service industries—in low-paid jobs—and does that not hide the fact that we have lost 2 million jobs in manufacturing industry since 1979, which accounts for the massive balance of trade deficit in manufactured goods that the country now faces as part of the current economic crisis?

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Gentleman, not untypically, has got the position entirely wrong. Vacancies in manufacturing industry increased by 39 per cent. between November 1986 and November 1987. The equivalent increase for service sector vacancies was 23 per cent.

Mr. William Powell: Will my right hon. Friend bear in mind that in Corby the number of job vacancies advertised each month is comfortably in excess of 500, which is more than 20 per cent. up on a year ago? Will he also bear in mind that virtually all those vacancies are in the manufacturing sector and carry high pay with good prospects? Will he do all that he can to see that what has happened in my constituency is extended to other areas?

Mr. Fowler: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. Vacancies have increased in the service industries — which, of course, are very important to the country— but they have also shown a welcome increase in manufacturing industry. The challenge now is to find the skilled people to fill those vacancies.

Mr. Meacher: I wonder whether the House is aware that today is the Secretary of State's 50th birthday and that the Opposition offer him their congratulations on this important milestone on the way to his early retirement?

Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm the story in *The Guardian* today that, in four inner London boroughs, if an unemployed person refuses a job, his benefit will be withdrawn? Does that not take us a big step further down the road towards American Workfare in Britain? Does that not indeed follow from the creeping compulsion that we have already seen over Restart, YTS benefit withdrawal and the powers in the current Employment Bill to force people on to the adult training programme? Will it not simply encourage the worst employers in the dregs of the market to offer skimpily-paid jobs with no prospects to a captive labour force?

Mr. Fowler: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his good wishes. I have always regarded 50 as an age when young men have their careers entirely before them.

It is sad that, even on my birthday, the hon. Gentleman is typically getting his facts entirely wrong again. *The Guardian* story that he has quoted is wrong. No instructions have been issued to compel people to take jobs in the boroughs of Camden, Kensington or Chelsea. There are no pilot schemes in operation and none is contemplated for those boroughs. The law has always provided that unemployed people may lose their benefit, or have it reduced, if they refuse a suitable job. That law was confirmed in the Social Security Act 1975, which was

passed by the previous Labour Government, in which the hon. Gentleman was a Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security.

Mr. Marlow: Given the growing number of jobs available, and given that there are a large number of idle and indolent people who are not prepared to take those jobs, will my right hon. Friend make sure that the law that he has just announced to Parliament is more strictly and effectively put into effect?

Mr. Fowler: The law on availability for work will be, and has been, enforced in the lifetime of this Government. I certainly agree with my hon. Friend and, indeed, with what the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) said. There can be no excuse for people who refuse jobs when jobs are available. Availability for work is a simple condition of benefit, and the Government will continue to enforce it. However, I deny the report in *The Guardian*, which is plainly wrong.

Mines (Women)

4. **Mr. Rogers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many responses to "Restrictions in Employment of Young People and the Removal of Sex Discrimination in Legislation" have called for the repeal of section 124(1) of the Mines and Quarries Act 1954 and section 21(1) of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, which prohibits the employment of women below ground in mines.

6. **Ms. Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many responses to "Restrictions in Employment of Young People and the Removal of Sex Discrimination in Legislation" have called for the repeal of section 4 of the Factories Act 1961, which prohibits the employment of women and young persons in certain processes connected wilth lead manufacture in factories.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Patrick Nicholls): No responses have been received to date concerning section 124(1) of the Mines and Quarries Act 1954 and section 21(1) of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975.

The relevant section of the Factories Act 1961 is section 74. No responses have been received to date on this either. The closing date for comment on the consultative document is 29 February.

Mr. Rogers: Is the Minister aware that the repeal of those sections, combined with the removal of the protective legislation in the Sex Discrimination Act 1986, could lead to women being employed underground again? We on the Labour Benches have grave fears that that might happen, especially in view of Mrs. Thatcher's espousal of——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We refer to each other by our titles here.

Mr. Rogers: We have grave fears that that might happen, in view of the Prime Minister's espousal of Victorian values and the obvious support of those wet-necked twits that the Minister has behind him.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Not unparliamentary, but I think a sight unnecessary.

Mr. Nicholls: The hon. Gentleman phrases his question with his usual elegance and charm. I am bound to tell him that we are concerned only to ensure that the available protections are necessary and fulfil the task that they set themselves to fulfil. If, at the end of the day, the representations that we receive on the consultative document show that there are no grounds, on the basis of health and safety, to prevent women from being employed underground, I would find it difficult to understand why the hon. Gentleman would deny to women the opportunities that he is prepared to concede to men.

Ms. Walley: In view of the Minister's reply to that question, will he give an absolute assurance that women will not be required to work in areas where their health could be substantially put at risk?

Mr. Nicholls: When we are considering the representations on the consultative document, what will guide us will be whether the exisiting legislation achieves the effect of protecting women. If we find that in particular cases it is necessary to retain legislation, because of the particular health considerations of women, such legislation will be retained. The point is to keep necessary legislation that does protect, not legislation that simply discriminates against women because they are women.

Mr. Forth: Does my hon. Friend agree that we have now smoked out the Opposition? Their posturing in favour of equality for women is simply no longer true, if, indeed, it ever was. Does my hon. Friend also agree that they appear to want to deny to women the opportunities that are available to men? What does he propose to do about that?

Mr. Nicholls: My hon. Friend asks what I shall do. To try to sort out the inconsistencies of the Labour party's position is beyond any of us. The hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) set out the position very fairly. I wondered whether he had cleared that line of question with the Valkyrie tendency in his party.

Mr. McLoughlin: Will my hon. Friend confirm that no females will be required to work underground, unless they apply for the job? Should we assume, from the posturing of Labour Members, that the Labour party is against equal opportunities?

Mr. Nicholls: My hon. Friend draws attention to a strange position. The Labour party has quite properly demanded that there should not be discrimination against women, but it is quite prepared to say, without advancing any evidence for the proposition, that opportunities to work underground will be an exclusively male preserve. It is extremely difficult to understand its attitude.

Job Vacancies

5. **Mr. Kirkhope:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the current level of job vacancies in Yorkshire.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. John Lee): On 4 December 1987 the number of unfilled vacancies registered at jobcentres in Yorkshire was 13,200—a 21 per cent. increase on the past year. However, only about one third of all vacancies are notified to jobcentres.

Mr. Kirkhope: I thank my hon. Friend for that helpful reply. It clearly and conclusively shows that the Government's economic policy is having a strong effect

not only in the south of England but all over the country, and in particular in Yorkshire. Arising from that answer, will he advise us of its effect on the levels of employment in Yorkshire and in my constituency, Leeds, North-East.

Mr. Lee: Unemployment in Leeds, North-East has fallen by about 700 in the past year.

Mr. Duffy: Does the Minister agree that in the main those figures were registered in North Yorkshire and in the area in which the constituency of the hon. Member for Leeds, North-East (Mr. Kirkhope) is located, West Yorkshire? Unemployment remains well above the national average in South Yorkshire and on Humberside. Will the Minister say why, under the Government, South Yorkshire has received more money from Europe for infrastructure projects than it has received through its assisted area status?

Mr. Lee: European funding is not a question for me. With regard to funding under the urban programme in 1987-88, Yorkshire and Humberside received £25 million in total. I acknowledge the hon. Gentleman's earlier point that the problems are worse in certain parts of Yorkshire than in others, but that is because of the decline in traditional industries.

Mr. Jack: Does my hon. Friend agree that if those seeking to fill vacancies in Yorkshire do not find a job of their choice, over the border in Lancashire they would find an equally appetising array of vacancies and training available?

Mr. Lee: My hon. Friend is correct. There are some vacancies in Lancashire, but we are aware of the problem of mobility in terms of house prices.

Mr. Strang: Surely the Minister is aware that at present there are 250,000 unemployed people chasing 16,000 vacancies in the Yorkshire and Humberside region. Is he suggesting that that is a satisfactory state of affairs?

Mr. Lee: I am suggesting that the position is steadily improving, and that over the past 18 months it has done so nationally as well as in Yorkshire.

Confectionery Industry

7. **Mr. Gregory:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement about the trend in the numbers of employees in the confectionery industry.

Mr. Lee: Over the 12 months to September 1987 the number of employees in the confectionery industry fell by 1,000 to 180,000.

Mr. Gregory: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the trend in employment was considerably higher when confectionery had the same VAT rating as other foods? Will he hold discussions with his right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer before the Budget so that consideration might be given to rerating, especially as 6 or 7 per cent. more people could be taken on in the confectionery industry in efficient firms, such as Rowntree, Terry and Craven?

Mr. Lee: I know how important the confectionery industry is to my hon. Friend's constituency. I am sure that Treasury Ministers will be made aware of the points that my hon. Friend has made about VAT.

I recently discussed with Rowntree its planned tourism attraction—the chocolate experience. I discovered that the industry is doing pretty well and that no fewer than 40 KitKats are consumed in Britain every second.

School Leavers

8. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the latest unadjusted unemployment figures for school leavers; and if he will give the equivalent figure for 1979 on the most nearly comparable basis.

Mr. Fowler: On 10 December 1987 the number of unemployed claimants aged under 18 who had not entered employment since leaving full-time education was 63,700. This is the lowest December figure since 1979, when it totalled some 30,500.

Mr. Hughes: Does the Secretary of State appreciate that YTS places are not regarded as real jobs? The pay is certainly paltry and the places seem to be a mere device to keep young people off the unemployment register. In those circumstances, why threaten those same young people with loss of their supplementary benefit if they fail to take up the places?

Mr. Fowler: Frankly, the hon. Gentleman is rather out of date in his view of YTS. YTS now leads to about 60 per cent. of people going into jobs and a further 15 per cent. are going into training and education. On supplementary benefit, the Government intend to guarantee that anyone leaving school can go into a job or have a YTS place. It seems to us that it is not realistic or sensible to allow supplementary benefit to be a further option.

Mr. Simon Coombs: Will my right hon. Friend compare the figure that he has given to the House with the equivalent figure for 12 months earlier—December 1986—and the corresponding figure of five years ago?

Mr. Fowler: As I said, the figures have been coming down. In December 1986 the figure was 88,000 and five years before, in 1981, it was 122,000. The trend is unquestionably downwards.

Ms. Short: Does the Secretary of State agree that there will be zero unemployed school leavers next year because, cynically and dishonestly, the Government are abolishing the right to benefit for 16 and 17-year-olds? Therefore, unemployment in that age group will disappear. Young people will be forced into YTS places which will sometimes be inappropriate. They will be unable to wait for a real job or choose to study for O and A-levels while on benefit, which 30,000 young people did last year. How can the Government possibly justify this crude abolition of freedom of choice in career and life for young people at the beginning of their working lives? Is it part of the Government's master plan to abolish unemployment by forcing the unemployed to work for their benefits?

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Lady has been rehearsing those arguments in Committee for the past two months and she is being equally absurd this afternoon. The worst way of starting one's adult career is by going down to the supplementary benefit office and drawing social security.

Mr. Wigley: Will the Secretary of State now give a guarantee to all young people on YTS that there will be a real job for them when they finish?

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Gentleman knows that we can guarantee a place on YTS to every school leaver. He also knows that the number now going into jobs is increasing and that in many places it is now more than 80 per cent. That is the progress that is being made and that is the commitment to YTS.

Mr. Bill Walker: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the Royal Air Force is taking many young boys on YTS? Thousands of them have been accepted. A substantial number of them would not normally have been up to the standard acceptable to the RAF, but events have shown that many of them reach the acceptable standard, get a good training and end up with real jobs.

Mr. Fowler: Yes, that is a good scheme, and there are many other examples all round the country. We need to develop schemes in the public sector, but the armed forces scheme is already making substantial progress.

Labour Statistics

9. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the present rate of unemployment within the Rotherham-Mexborough travel-to-work area.

Mr. Lee: On 10 December 1987 the number of unemployed claimants in the Rotherham and Mexborough travel-to-work area, expressed as a percentage of employees in employment plus the unemployed, was 18·9 per cent.

Mr. Hardy: Given the deplorable situation in the area, the fact that official statistics seem particularly inaccurate or irrelevant in the Dearne valley area, the approach of further and horrendous job losses through colliery closures, and particularly through the deceitful and deplorable closure of the Canning Town glassworks at Swinton in my constituency, what action will the Minister take to ensure that the supposed economic miracle being experienced by Britain does not pass this area by entirely unremarked?

Mr. Lee: I acknowledge that unemployment in the hon. Gentleman's travel-to-work area and constituency is worse than in the region generally. I acknowledged that when I replied to his recent Adjournment debate. Nevertheless, things are improving. There has been a fall in the number unemployed of 3,057 over the past 12 months, and there has also been a 30 per cent. rise in jobcentre vacancies. There have been several encouraging features in the area, such as the Rotherham enterprise zone, which has been a great success.

Long-term Unemployment

10. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what further steps he proposes to reduce the numbers of long-term unemployed.

14. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he will next meet the chairman of the Manpower Services Commission to discuss programmes for the long-term unemployed.

Mr. Fowler: In the 12 months to October 1987 there was a fall in long-term unemployment of 169,000, the biggest fall of long-term unemployment on record. The Government will continue to give high priority to helping the long-term unemployed and I plan to meet the chairman of the Manpower Services Commission later this month to discuss the new adult training programme which will offer improved training opportunities to some 600,000 unemployed people each year.

Mr. Kirkwood: Although these falls in unemployment are welcome, does the Secretary of State accept that the proportion of unemployed who have been unemployed for a long period is increasing and that something must be done about this in the longer term? Will his Department consider targeting long-term unemployment black spots, even on a pilot basis, by reducing national insurance contributions?

Mr. Fowler: We have reduced national insurance contributions for the lower paid, but this is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. I accept the hon. Gentleman's concern about the long-term unemployed. I hope that he and his party will back the new adult training programme, which aims to get the long-term unemployed back into work.

Dr. Godman: At his proposed meeting with the chairman of the Manpower Services Commission later this month, will the Secretary of State discuss the case made by many community programme providers that there should be an increase in the average wage for those on community programme schemes? Is it not the case that, if these wages had risen at the rate of inflation, those on such schemes would be earning an average weekly wage of approximately £85, instead of the current wage of approximately £67?

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Gentleman will understand that we are moving to a new system of payment in the adult training programme, which will come into being in the autumn. People will be paid a premium over and above their benefit entitlement, and for the first time, therefore, there will be an incentive to family men with children to come into the adult training programme.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the main hope for the long-term unemployed is an increase in job opportunities? Will he tell the House the increase in the number of people employed since 1983, and does he agree that one of the biggest menaces for job opportunities is unnecessary strikes in British industry?

Mr. Fowler: Almost 1·5 million new jobs have been created. The House will agree with my hon. Friend's second point. A formidable industrial recovery has taken place in this country, but such advances will be put at risk if we go back to the appalling days of the 1970s when industrial strife reached its culmination in the winter of discontent of 1978-79.

Mr. Boswell: Will my right hon. Friend assure the House that he will continue to refine the mechanisms for sorting out those who have genuine difficulty in finding work from those who are less intimately motivated to look for it?

Mr. Fowler: As I said in reply to an earlier question, certainly in regard to availability for work, such checks will continue, but the purpose of the adult training programme is to provide good training opportunities for long-term unemployed people who, in many cases, have been out of work for many months and whom we want to bring back into work.

Mr. Leighton: Has the Secretary of State yet had a chance to read the report of the Select Committee on Employment in the previous Parliament, which made recommendations which would have guaranteed a job to all long-term unemployed people?

Mr. Fowler: I must confess that I have not gone through it in the detail that I would have liked, but, as I spent two hours with the Select Committee on Employment last week, I think that I am aware of the proposals that the Select Committee made then. I do not think that that particular proposal is practical. What is practical are the kind of opportunities that we shall be able to offer under the adult training programme. I hope that the Select Committee, of which the hon. Gentleman is Chairman, will give our adult training programme unanimous backing, just as the Manpower Services Commission did.

Mr. Harry Greenway: How many of the long-term unemployed does my hon. Friend estimate to be virtually unemployable? Does he share my sense of congratulation that more of those eligible for employment are employed in Britain than in any other EEC country—66 per cent.?

Mr. Fowler: It is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to make such an estimate, but, as my hon. Friend points out, it is certainly the case that in Britain a high percentage of the population are in work and that that bears good comparison with virtually all our European partners.

Mr. Meacher: Is the Secretary of State aware that, contrary to the complacent assurances that he has given the House, the hard core of long-term unemployed who have been out of a job for over five years has trebled in the past three years and there are now well over 250,000 of them? Is he also aware that in the past year, when the number of short-term unemployed was falling, the number of long-term unemployed increased by over 20 per cent.? In view of that, since all else has failed, are the Government now proposing to use compulsion to take those people off the unemployment register?

Mr. Fowler: We have already replied to the hon. Gentleman's point about compulsion, and we have emphasised that we have accepted the Manpower Services Commission's report on that. The number of those who have been unemployed for over five years has increased, and it is because of such developments that the new adult training programme is being put forward. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will recognise that unemployment in Britain has now come down dramatically, and it has come down in each of the past 18 months. The hon. Gentleman and the Opposition should acknowledge and praise that progress.

Job Clubs

11. **Mr. Sackville:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many job clubs are now open.

Mr. Lee: At 20 January 1988 there were 1,159 job clubs in operation.

Mr. Sackville: Does my hon. Friend share the encouraging impression that I have received in Bolton, where six such schemes are now in operation, that those entering job clubs, who have often lost all hope of obtaining a job, within a few weeks recover the confidence and motivation that they need for success in the job market? How many people have been referred to jobs or training as a direct result of job clubs?

Mr. Lee: I am delighted that my hon. Friend shares the experience that I have found in talking to those in individual job clubs, of which I have visited many throughout Britain. This has been one of our most successful programmes. About 72 per cent. of participants in internal job clubs that we run, and about 62 per cent. of participants in external job clubs, have gone into work or training or on the enterprise allowance scheme—an excellent overall figure.

Mr. Corbett: What contribution does the Minister expect the job clubs to make to getting unemployment down to the level at which it was when the Government took office?

Mr. Lee: The job clubs are playing a part. I gave my hon. Friend. the Member for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville) percentages, but in terms of absolute numbers about 45,000 people have been through our internal job clubs and nearly 30,000 have been through the external clubs. The percentages of those going to training or work are, as I said, 72 per cent. from the internal job clubs and 62 per cent. from the external ones. That is a substantial contribution.

Mr. Bowis: Does my hon. Friend accept that the job clubs are widely welcomed by all who are looking for work? To what extent can he speed up the establishment of new job clubs? Does he accept that if those seeking higher paid employment could receive assistance to travel to interviews for those jobs, the job clubs would be even more successful than he has said they are?

Mr. Lee: We certainly have some schemes to enable people to travel to interview if they live further than a certain distance from the potential vacancy. Our plan is to increase the number of job clubs from the 1,159 that we now have.

Mr. Pike: Will the Minister accept that job clubs do not create real new jobs, that their achievements are illusory and that they do not get people back into real jobs?

Mr. Lee: They provide a real job for the job club leaders, but, of course the hon. Gentleman is not right. The whole point about job clubs is that they try to bring people who are unemployed into the jobs and vacancies that are available. The figures that I have given to the House are extremely good and show the success of the programme.

Accidents at Work

12. **Mr. Madel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he is considering any additional measures to try to reduce accidents at the place of work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: These are matters for the Health and Safety Commission and Executive. My right hon. Friend has made available to it an additional £6·7 million for next year, which it will apply as it thinks best to further improvements in work-related safety and health.

Mr. Madel: When will new regulations come into force on the use of chemical compounds and the monitoring of dust and fumes in factories? Will regulations come in which will reduce permitted noise levels in factories, bringing them down from 90 to 85 decibels?

Mr. Nicholls: A consultative document on the COSHH regulations is now with the Health and Safety Executive. It is considering its position on the matter and will shortly report to Ministers. The Health and Safety Executive published a consultative document on noise regulations on 15 December 1987. Representations can be made until 30 June. As my hon. Friend said, the effect of that will be to implement the European directive.

Mr. Heffer: Does the Minister agree that the construction industry has one of the worst records of accidents and deaths at work? Does he further agree that that is due to the growth in self-employment of lump labour in the construction industry? Is it not time that the Government took some action about that and began to increase the number of factory inspectors, instead of reducing their numbers as they have done over the past few years?

Mr. Nicholls: I cannot agree with the hon. Gentleman's view of the virtues of self-employment or otherwise. Fatalities among employees at work are at an all-time record low. Factory inspectors' numbers will be increased by 60 in the current year. The number of inspectors as against the number of those who are to be inspected has remained roughly constant under this Government, as it did under the previous one.

Chemical Industry

13. **Mr. Stern:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on employment trends in the chemical industry.

Mr. Lee: Over the 12 months to September 1987 the number of employees in the chemical industry was unchanged at 339,000.

Mr. Stern: Does my hon. Friend agree that the prospects arising for exports in the chemical industry during 1987, together with the on-going investment in it —particularly in my constituency—hold out a strong prospect for a further fall in unemployment through the creation of jobs in that industry this year?

Mr. Lee: I agree with the general comments of my hon. Friend about the chemical industry. It has achieved significant increases in output and is our fourth largest manufacturing industry. But I make a general point to my hon. Friend and to the House, that we increasingly have to differentiate between the prosperity of manufacturing industry and the numbers actually employed in manufacturing.

AIDS

16. **Mr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will introduce legislation to protect those people who are HIV positive from discrimination at work.

Mr. Nicholls: I have no plans to do so.

Mr. Strang: Is the Minister aware that there are a number of recent cases which make it clear that employees can be dismissed for being HIV positive? Will the Government consider this again?

Mr. Nicholls: I understand the hon. Gentleman's concern, but the two cases to which I believe he is referring were not directly concerned with that matter. Indeed, an industrial tribunal will take a decision on its review of the facts and it is not directly a matter for Government.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 2 February.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others, including one with Chancellor Kohl. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Jones: Will the Prime Minister find time today to look at a report in *The Liverpool Daily Post*, which confirms that district nurses in my constituency are using their free time to organise fund-raising activities to purchase medical equipment for the use of patients in their homes? Does that not demonstrate to the Government that, far from moonlighting, as suggested by the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbitt), nurses are concerned about cuts in the Health Service?

Mr. Speaker: Briefly.

Mr. Jones: Will the right hon. Lady give an assurance to the House that the nurses' pay award to be announced by the review body will be funded in full by the Government, with no strings attached?

The Prime Minister: I have no doubt that the nurses in the hon. Gentleman's constituency are doing extremely well and are carrying out their duties to their patients. With regard to revenue provision for the Health Service, in the hon. Member's constituency in 1978-79—[HON. MEMBERS: "Here we go."] Yes, here we go with the facts. The hon. Gentleman was complaining about revenue provision. In 1978-79 it was £19 million; in 1988-89 it will be £58·1 million; an increase in real terms of 45 per cent.

Mr. Soames: Will my right hon. Friend commend those nurses who tomorrow will stay at their posts and do their duty? Does she agree that the suggestion that a strike will not gravely damage patient care is dangerous nonsense?

The Prime Minister: A strike would gravely damage the patients and increase the waiting lists, which we have been strenuously trying to get down and for which, in this financial year, there has been some £25 million allocated specially to get them down. Another £30 million has been allocated for next year especially to get waiting lists down. A strike would increase waiting lists. It would also increase the burden on the nurses who would not dream of striking because they would never desert their patients.

Mr. Kinnock: When Mr. Trevor Clay of the Royal College of Nursing left the meeting with the Secretary of State yesterday he clearly had a strong impression that this year's pay award to the nurses would be fully funded by the Government. Will the Prime Minister tell us whether that impression was accurate—yes or no?

The Prime Minister: There has been a statement—[HON. MEMBERS: "Yes or no."]—issued since by the Royal College of Nursing. The position is as follows. The

implementation of the review body's award comes under an undertaking given by Lord Carr, when he was in this House, when the Top Salaries Review Body was set up, together with the review bodies for the armed forces and for doctors and dentists. Lord Carr announced to the House that the Government would not modify their recommendations

"unless there are clear and compelling reasons for . . . doing so".—[*Official Report*, 2 November 1970; Vol. 805, c. 672.]

That has remained the practice. That is quite different from the funding of the implementation. The press statement by the Royal College of Nursing consists of four paragraphs, and I am quite happy to read out the whole lot.

Mr. Faulds: Yes or no.

The Prime Minister: The hon. Member should listen to what the press notice said. I had better read out the whole press statement by the Royal College of Nursing:

"During the meeting between the Royal College of Nursing and the Secretary of State, he stated clearly that the nurses' pay award would be fully implemented 'unless there were clear and compelling reasons for the Government not to do so'.

This is the language which has been used in the past when the awards have been interfered with or underfunded.

The Royal College of Nursing fully understands that the Secretary of State cannot give a firm assurance on implementation and funding. This view is clearly reflected in a number of newspaper reports.

The Royal College of Nursing does not believe that there can be any clear and compelling reasons for not implementing or fully funding the award in 1988."

That is the full statement by the Royal College of Nursing, and that is the answer to the right hon. Gentleman's question.

Mr. Kinnock: Given the number of nurses leaving the Health Service, the widespread dissatisfaction and the wide scale of public support for proper pay for nurses and full funding, will the Prime Minister tell us what in her opinion would be the clear and compelling reasons for not paying the nurses properly?

The Prime Minister: I stand by the comments, remarks and traditional practices that we have already adhered to. The pledge given by Lord Carr and the practice to which the Government have adhered, which has led to increases in pay for nurses of the order of 30 per cent. in real terms, is in contrast to the right hon. Gentleman's record. In the five pay years between 1974-75 and 1978-79 Labour cut nurses' pay in real terms in four of those years.

Mr. Kinnock: Just to be absolutely clear, is the Prime Minister saying to the nurses today that she will not offer an undertaking to make full funding of the nurses' pay award this year, just as she has never made full funding of nurses' pay awards?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman has asked this question in different terms three times. The answer is the same: that we have never undertaken to fund in full a pay award before we know what it is and what the structure is. Nevertheless, our total record on nurses' pay —[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh".]—is absolutely excellent, as I might remind him.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

The Prime Minister: A ward sister on the maximum of the basic scale under the Labour Government was paid £4,900 and is now paid £12,000. That is the result of the Government's stewardship.

Mr. Dykes: Now that my right hon. Friend has fully, comprehensively and satisfactorily answered those points, does she agree that we can use Prime Minister's Question Time for other important subjects? Bearing in mind the United States' position, announced last night, on the Security Council resolution, does she agree that this is a disappointing decision by the United States in view of the importance of that resolution and the gradual approach of the international peace conference in the middle east?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend knows that we support the resolution. My hon. Friend is aware that we have quite clearly come out in favour of an international conference as a framework conference within which bilateral negotiations should take place between King Hussein of Jordan and Israel. I hope one day that other people will come round to that viewpoint and it will make possible further negotiations, which are urgent.

Q2. **Mr. McKay:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 2 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. McKay: Will the right hon. Lady take into consideration the fact that the nurses down from Yorkshire today will listen very carefully to her failure to give clear and compelling reasons for not funding their increase and increasing underfunding? Is it not, in fact, in line with the fiddling of the payment of £8 for welfare benefits, where people are paid a single payment and not on each welfare benefit? That must be taken into account too.

The Prime Minister: May I assure the hon. Gentleman that any clear and compelling reasons would not consist of the prices and incomes policy which hon. Members at present in opposition used to depress nurses' and doctors' pay year after year and, because of their economic stewardship, used to cut the National Health Service.

Mr. Redwood: Does the Prime Minister agree that the position of the Health Service would be greatly improved if the Leader of the Opposition would categorically condemn strike action in the Health Service before we see the recommendations of the pay review body? Would she agree, further—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must ask a question of the Prime Minister for which she has responsibility.

Mr. Redwood: Would the Prime Minister in the course of her busy day think of a way of persuading the Leader of the Opposition—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."]

The Prime Minister *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Prime Minister must be asked questions on matters which are her responsibility, and for that, I am afraid, she has no responsibility.

Westland

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to her answer of 3 December 1987, *Official Report*, column 1100, what representations she has received seeking an amendment of the Public Record Acts so as to facilitate the early release of non-classified material relating to the Westland affair.

The Prime Minister: None, so far as I am aware.

Mr. Dalyell: Who brings the greater dishonour on Parliament? A Back-Bench Member who resorts to unparliamentary language, or a Head of Government who misuses a Law Officer's letter and then displays a shameless lack of candour about what she has done?

The Prime Minister: I totally reject what the hon. Gentleman has said. The many, many statements and speeches that I made on the subject were checked meticulously with the records.

Mr. David Shaw: Would my right hon. Friend agree that the ferry workers of Dover should not be——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Engagements

Q4. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 2 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Smith: Is my right hon. Friend aware that, according to Trevor Clay, RCN members are being manipulated and intimidated by extreme Left-wingers, that strike vote meetings are being held which have no constitutional basis inside a union, and that at University College hospital RCN members were challenged by pickets at the door to state their points of view? Does not this despicable behaviour on the part of the hard Left show that they have no interest in the welfare either of the nurses or of the patients, but are cynically using both to further their own political ends?

The Prime Minister: I find it astonishing that some of the nurses' unions should attempt to use a strike weapon at a time when there is a pay review body—which was given to the nurses because they did not go on strike—sitting to consider how much they should be paid. I find it even more astonishing that right hon. and hon. Members of the Opposition do not utterly condemn the intimidatory tactics that Mr. Trevor Clay reported upon.

Mr. Beith: What was yesterday's half per cent. rise in interest rates meant to signal, and to whom? Was it a warning that the Budget is going to be highly inflationary rather than one that will tackle the problems that have occupied the House this afternoon?

The Prime Minister: I think that, as usual, the hon. Gentleman has got his economics upside down. The half per cent. increase in interest rates was decided on because we are determined to keep inflation down and not let it go up, as did the Government whom he supported.

Q5. **Mr. Thorne:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 2 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Thorne: Does my right hon. Friend not consider it hypocritical of those trade union leaders in the National Health Service who have criticised waiting lists in the Health Service in the past to encourage their members to go on strike now, thereby considerably lengthen waiting lists, to the detriment of patients and everybody else?

The Prime Minister: All those who are interested in giving a better service to patients and shortening waiting lists must condemn the strike activities that we are witnessing now. Not only will they increase waiting lists, but they will put an increasing burden on people in organisations such as the Royal College of Nursing, who will not leave their posts. We should all be very grateful to the nurses who put the patients first.

Racal-Tacticom (PLO Contract)

3.32 pm

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham) *(by private notice)*: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the granting of an export licence for Racal-Tacticom for the sale of military radio equipment to the PLO.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate and Consumer Affairs (Mr. Francis Maude): It is not the practice to comment in detail on individual cases, but I have no evidence from the Department's records to suggest that such equipment was licensed for export to the PLO. In view of the allegiations, however, the matter is under investigation by the various Departments concerned.

Mr. Gould: Will the Under-Secretary assure the House that he will return to the House to give an account of the outcome of those investigations? Will he further assure the House that there have been no similar instances in other cases, and that they will not occur again? The Minister must be aware of the great concern that equipment of this sort might reach armed forces in South Africa, Argentina, parties to the Gulf war, and especially the Contras in Nicaragua. Will he guarantee that none of those has benefited in the past, or will benefit from similar mistakes by his Department?

Mr. Maude: I do not accept for a moment that a mistake has been made by the DTI, but investigations are being carried out to find out exactly what, if anything, untoward has happened. It is not clear by any means that something untoward has occurred.

We have a very good system in this country for ensuring that any exports of sensitive material are cleared in relation to their ultimate destination. Great care is taken by all Departments concerned before granting export licences for sensitive equipment. I believe that our system is as good as any.

More than 100,000 applications for export licences are made every year. Clearly it has not been possible to check through every one of those to see what has been going on.

Mr. Dennis Walters (Westbury): Is not the position with regard to the PLO as stated by my noble Friend Lord Carrington when he was Foreign Secretary when he said that Her Majesty's Government did not regard the PLO as a terrorist organisation? In the circumstances, what is all the fuss about? It is not as if we were supplying truncheons to Mr. Rabin to break the bones of Palestinian civilians.

Mr. Maude: I hear what my hon. Friend says, but clearly we would not do anything to enhance the capability of any element within the PLO to carry out acts of violence. I stress again that any application to export sensitive military equipment is cleared by all of the relevant Departments of Government, including the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Ministry of Defence.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): Does the Minister accept the accuracy of the statement that was put out by 10 Downing street on Sunday, that certain elements in the PLO have an appalling terrorist record? Bearing that in mind, and that there is an embargo on the sale of military equipment to Israel, which some of us deplore, can he give an assurance that no arms or other military or sensitive equipment will go to the PLO with the knowledge and consent of Her Majesty's Government?

Mr. Maude: I can certainly give the hon. and learned Gentleman the assurance that we have no evidence from our records to suggest that any items of that sort have gone to the PLO. However, we need to continue our investigations because allegations have been made in pubic newspapers and we want to know exactly what lies behind them. If anyone has any papers which controvert what I have said to the House, I should be grateful if he would produce them.

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): Is my hon. Friend aware that Racal, which has its headquarters in my constituency and has a distinguished record of exporting all over the world, has a clear policy of not selling to any overseas country or overseas political organisation without the full consent of Her Majesty's Government?

Mr. Maude: I hear what my hon. Friend says, and I am sure that that is right.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Will the Minister state what steps his Department takes to ensure that, as he said, the ultimate destination is properly and accurately recorded on applications and that the items subsequently go to that destination? Will he also state whether the equipment that we are discussing falls into the category of lethal or non-lethal equipment for those purposes?

Mr. Maude: The type of equipment that we are talking about has not been made absolutely clear. The sort of equipment that has been described in some of the newspaper reports is not the same as the broad description in the question put to me at the outset by the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould). For sensitive military equipment, information of various sorts has to be provided about its ultimate destination and proposed use. The handling of export licence applications varies according to the type of goods and their proposed destination. Sensitive items are considered by all the relevant Departments, including the Ministry of Defence and the Foreign Office. It is not possible to have an absolutely foolproof system which makes it clear beyond the peradventure of a doubt that the items go to their stated destination. However, we do everything humanly possible to ensure that that is the case.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Given the level of state terrorism being meted out daily by the Israeli authorities on innocent Palestinians, and given the public perception that in current affairs in that part of the world the Israelis are very much cast in the role of the baddies, is there anything wrong in allowing the Palestinians to have equipment which we would allow the Israelis to have?

Mr. Maude: I hear what my hon. Friend says, but I cannot get involved in that. My Department is concerned solely with the granting of export licences and we clear those applications, through the Government, in the usual way in the appropriate Departments.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): What is the Government's attitude to Members of Parliament of all political persuasions, including Conservative Members and hon. Members who are now Ministers, who have made visits to the middle east that have been sponsored by the PLO——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is very wide of this question which I should not have thought had anything to do with it.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Can my hon. Friend say unequivocally that there is no intention on the part of Her Majesty's Government to allow the sale of arms to the PLO?

Mr. Maude: I say what I said before—that we would do nothing that would enhance the capability of any element within the PLO to carry out acts of violence.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): If the proscription of such equipment being supplied to liberation movements such as the PLO, the ANC and SWAPO is to be morally valid, why should not the supply of such equipment to countries that practise state terrorism, such as Israel against the Palestinians, South Africa against her own people and the United States against Nicaraguans, be proscribed for those countries? In view of the appalling conduct of the Israeli Army, should not Israel's shameless apologists adopt a somewhat more contrite and lower profile on this issue?

Mr. Maude: The hon. Gentleman has raised a number of wide-ranging issues which are certainly beyond my responsibilities and those of my Department. If he pursues them in the usual way, no doubt he will receive a satisfactory answer.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): Can my hon. Friend explain the logic of those who oppose the supply of arms or anything else to the PLO, which is opposing the state terrorism of Israel in the middle east, while at the same time supporting the supply of arms to the Afghan rebels who are opposing the state terrorism of the Soviet Union in their country?

Mr. Maude: My hon. Friend airs his point of view. It is interesting and useful, but I cannot add to what I have said already.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): I oppose the sale of arms by the British Government to any country. Is it not clear that there has been Israeli terrorism against Britain in the past, and that the real issue is whether we are in favour of the Palestinian people having their own homeland and their own state? Should not this Government, and every other progressive Government, be concentrating on that issue?

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is very wide of the question. This is a private notice question and not an extension of Question Time.

Sri Lankan Tamils (Deportation)

3.41 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the decision of the Home Secretary to deport six Sri Lankan Tamils from Britain."

This is a serious and important matter. Yesterday the Home Secretary sent a letter to the solicitors acting on behalf of six Sri Lankan Tamils who sought political asylum in Britain to the effect that he now intends to deport them back to Sri Lanka because he considers the situation there to be safe. The situation in Sri Lanka is not safe. Many Tamils are still being killed because of the communal disturbances there. Many Tamils have lost family. Many of my constituents have lost family in Sri Lanka.

An additional consequence of the Home Secretary's decision is that a further 2,300 Tamil people with temporary exceptional leave to remain in Britain are threatened with removal under his decision. It is wrong that such a decision should be made known only by letter and not by a statement to Parliament. It is doubly wrong because the organisations with the best knowledge and ability in regard to Sri Lanka are opposed to that decision. Amnesty International and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees are concerned about it.

The Home Secretary appears to be trying to run a regime that is the worst in Europe in regard to asylum applications. He is turning his back on the safety of those people and insisting that they be removed from Britain. The matter is urgent and important on humanitarian and legal grounds. It is incumbent on the House to discuss the plight of refugees and demand that the Home Secretary, instead of hiding behind his office and writing letters, comes clean and explains to the House why he has taken such an inhuman attitude towards these sad and desperate people.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) seeks leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the decision of the Home Secretary to reject the asylum applications of six Sri Lankan Tamils."

I have listened with care to what the hon. Member has said, but I regret that I do not consider the matter that he has raised to be appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 20. I cannot therefore submit his application to the House. However, I hope that he may find other legitimate ways of raising the matter in the House.

Points of Order

3.43 pm

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax) *rose*——

Hon. Members: A point of order.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I can see without any help.

Mrs. Mahon: Today I was contacted by the parents of a two-month old constituent who was not able to have a vital heart operation at Killingbeck hospital.

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is a little unfair of the hon. Lady to raise this matter. She may have been informed about it today, but the event took place last Wednesday. The hon. Lady must find legitimate ways to bring the matter before the House, not by way of a point of order.

Ms. Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. As a new Member of Parliament, I should be grateful if you could advise me on how it might be possible through parliamentary procedure to raise the important point that throughout the country there is support for an extra 2p on tax being put towards the National Health Service.

Mr. Speaker: If the hon. Lady would like to come and see me one evening with a friend, I should be delighted to tell her.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. My hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) had not progressed very far in her point before you intervened, Mr. Speaker. Would it not be right for you, Mr. Speaker, at least to hear my hon. Friend's point of order before intervening? My hon. Friend may have been asking whether she could raise a debate in the House and how should she do that. You did not give her that chance.

Mr. Speaker: I do know about this. Has the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) asked his hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) whether she has received any advice about the matter?

Mrs. Mahon *rose*——

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. We have relatively new hon. Members in the Chamber who have been here for only six months, who have never raised a point of order—or very few—and certainly have never made a Standing Order No. 20 application. These matters can be more than a little difficult for such Members. Sometimes they make their representations to you, Mr. Speaker, and others to try to raise a matter. Some of us know that my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) was concerned about the plight of a baby who had been in hospital and was subsequently refused admission——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not need any help. I know more about this matter than the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). I accept that hon. Members who have not been Members for very long need a little guidance and advice. I am always willing and prepared to give it, and in this case I did give it.

Mrs. Mahon: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: No.

Mrs. Mahon: Disgraceful.

Mr. Heffer: It is disgraceful.

Ms. Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. As a new Member of Parliament, and without having an evening engagement with you, will you advise me about how to raise the question of the Confederation of Health Service Employees' National Health charter that was launched today?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Lady does not need to seek advice from me on that matter.

Mrs. Mahon *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is an abuse of our proceedings.

Mr. Heffer: It is your abuse.

Mr. Speaker: That is reprehensible of the hon. Gentleman, who knows nothing about the background to this matter—or perhaps he does.

Mrs. Mahon *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. So that there will be no mystery about this, I must tell the hon. Lady that I was unable to accept her application for a Standing Order No. 20 debate because in her letter to me she said that she was raising the matter of an operation that was cancelled last Wednesday. If the hon. Lady consults Standing Order No. 20—which binds me and all other hon. Members—she will discover that the matter to be raised must be urgent, specific and important and must be raised at the first opportunity. The hon. Lady may have only just heard about it, but the truth is that nearly a week has passed. I can only go by what the hon. Lady states in her application.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North) *rose*——

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Very well——

Mr. Corbyn: Him or me?

Mr. Speaker: Him.

Mr. Battle: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. As a relatively new Member of Parliament, may I state that, as I have listened to you this afternoon, I have become increasingly confused about what Standing Order No. 20 refers to. If it is not urgent and specific to raise the case of a child needing an operation——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let me say to the whole House that when I was chosen to be your Speaker I was expected to ensure that our Standing Orders were kept. I am doing that today. I do not think that the hon. Members who are rising now would wish the Speaker to bend the Standing Orders. I cannot do that.

I am afraid that I have said more than I wanted to say, but, as the matter has been raised in this way, let me repeat that the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) has been to see me. The position has been fully explained to her, and she has been advised what she can do about it. I have sought to help her, but I cannot allow her to raise the matter by way of a point of order.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am not prepared to take any more points of order on this matter.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am not prepared to take any more points of order on this.

Personal Income (Ending of Higher Rate Taxation)

3.50 pm

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams (Kensington): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to end the taxation of personal income at higher than standard rate.

On a number of occasions the House has allowed me to introduce a Bill under our old-established First Reading procedure, which afterwards has been put into effect by the Government. I hope that this may be another such occasion.

At this time of year the attention of hon. Members is particularly directed to matters of taxation. It is the particular responsibility of the House of Commons to resist taxation which is arbitrary, unfair or adverse to the health of the economy.

I think that the House knows that I am concerned that we have so many millions of people at the lower end of the income scale who are inhibited from working and saving, for the good of themselves and the economy as a whole, by our obsolete and unpopular system of income support. I believe in Sir Winston Churchill's policy that we should ensure that every citizen has an adequate basic income, but that above that level every citizen—male and female—should be encouraged to rise as high as they can.

I believe that it is quite wrong to use the system of taxation and benefit in such a way as to inhibit effort and thrift at any level of society. I have accordingly written to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor to suggest that in his Budget he should end the long-term capital gains tax; that he should reform the transfer-and-inheritance tax so that no one incurs a capital levy at a higher rate than the standard rate of income tax; and, in particular, that he should take this opportunity to end the higher rate taxes on income altogether.

It is wrong in principle to use the tax system to punish success. The British economy is not so successful that we can afford to restrain our most active entrepreneurs, or to drive them offshore. The countries of the Pacific area are streaking ahead of us. We cannot allow that situation to continue; but we should ask ourselves why. It is not because the British people have become inert or incompetent, but we do have systems which are inhibiting the growth of the economy, and they need urgent attention.

Higher rate tax was introduced in 1909. The 80 years that have followed have been years of relative economic decline for this country. The yield of personal tax, if the higher rates were abolished, would soon increase to overcome the possible loss of 1 or 2 per cent. of total revenue which might occur in the first year. Everyone in Britain would stand to gain from the reform, from the highest to the lowest, if the economy were set free to grow faster.

I would not be seeking leave to bring in this Bill if there were anyone in Britain who would suffer from it—except, of course, the armies of professional people who advise on tax avoidance. They could well be turning their agile minds to something more constructive. The higher rate tax is a survival of class-war attitudes which have no place in modern Britain; the reform that I am suggesting is one from which everyone would gain and no one would lose.

We know what is needed to make a free enterprise capitalist economy really fruitful. All that we need is the will power to do it. I have written accordingly to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer as follows:

"The vigour of the people who are capable of earning the highest incomes and the discernment of the most far-seeing investors are the most precious assets of the economy. It is senseless to weaken their motivation and diminish their effectiveness by incorporating a discriminatory punitive mechanism in the tax system. Even if the sole object were to raise revenue, it would in a short time prove to be better attained by removing the limitations on the most active entrepreneurs, rather than by forcing them to adopt time-consuming tax avoidance routines or to take their energies and fortunes abroad. Britain should be a tax haven for its own citizens and a magnet for the best brains of other countries."

I believe that the extreme simplification of the taxation and benefit system, for ease of comprehension and administration in the private as well as in the public sector, should be a major Treasury objective in its own right. Computers now make that possible, but I would prefer that everyone should be able to calculate their tax bill in their heads.

At present the national insurance contribution raises the marginal rate of tax for the majority of earners to 36 per cent. I would like therefore to suggest that the new standard rate of tax should include the national insurance contribution and should be set at not more than 35 per cent. I believe that that would be in line with other countries that are also contemplating considerable reductions in the higher rates of taxation for their citizens. There should be suitable exemptions to compensate those people whose investment income is not large enough to make them liable for higher rates of tax.

I hope that the House will see the logic of what I am suggesting and that my Bill will not be opposed. If there is a Division, I trust that there are enough true Thatcherites here to enable me to carry my Bill.

3.57 pm

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): I do not really want to make a speech on this matter, but I wish to divide the House.

I find it strange that the hon. Member for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams) is seeking to introduce this Bill in the light of his previous comments on child benefit when there was some consensus.

I believe that the proposed Bill would clearly signal the time when the tax system increasingly favoured the rich. For those who have a good job the effect of the Bill would be that they would be rewarded even more, but those with low-paid, part-time jobs would have to work even harder for even less. In other words, the tax system is clearly stacked in favour of the rich. The wealthier will get wealthier—as they do now—and the Bill will perpetuate that situation. Therefore, with the leave of the House, I seek to divide the House on this issue.

Question put, pursuant to Standing Order No. 19 (Motions for leave to bring in Bills and nomination of Select Committees at commencement of public business):

The House divided: Ayes 58, Noes 180.

Division No. 160] **[4 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard	Bevan, David Gilroy
Arbuthnot, James	Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Ashby, David	Blackburn, Dr John G.
Aspinwall, Jack	Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*	Boswell, Tim

Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Burns, Simon
Carrington, Matthew
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dover, Den
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fookes, Miss Janet
Gill, Christopher
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jessman, Timothy
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kilfedder, James
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Lawrence, Ivan
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Paice, James
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Riddick, Graham
Rost, Peter
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Keith
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Warren, Kenneth
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Woodcock, Mike

Tellers for the Ayes:
Sir Brandon Rhys Williams and Mr. Edward Leigh.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Ms Hilary
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blunkett, David
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brazier, Julian
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George
Cabom, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, J.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Day, Stephen
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, James
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Forth, Eric
Foulkes, George
French, Douglas
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Galbraith, Samuel
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Ms Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Douglas
Hinchliffe, David
Hood, James
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jack, Michael
Janner, Greville
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Tom
McFall, John
McGrady, E. K.
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
McTaggart, Bob
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martlew, Eric
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ruddock, Ms Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'de E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerald
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tredinnick, David
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Ms Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Anthony
Wray, James
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Harry Barnes and Mr. Harry Ewing.

Question accordingly negatived.

Public Utility Transfers and Water Charges Bill

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

New Clause 1

INTERESTS OF CONSUMERS PRIOR TO TRIALS

'(1) Prior to the commencement of all water metering trials, representatives of water undertakers shall contact all households and explain to them the nature of the trials and the rights the household has under existing consumer law and any other matter determined by this Act.

(2) The contact with the householder can be by telephone or visit.

(3) Trials shall not commence until all households in the trial scheme have been contacted.

(4) Should any household not have been contacted prior to the commencement of the trial, then that household shall have the right not to take part by notifying the water undertaker of their intention. This right shall be indicated to the households in writing one week before the trials commence and the householders shall be given one week to notify the water undertakers.'.

Brought up, and read the First time—[Mr. Boyes.]

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take new clause 3—

Provisions relating to redress for consumers etc.

'(1) During the period of a metering trial scheme, a person subject to a charge from a water undertaker, under the latter's powers, conferred under this Act or under any other enactment shall be entitled to redress in the form of financial compensation if—

(a) that person's water supply falls below the standard as set by the EEC;

(b) the supply of water to that person is cut off for a period of a minimum of 12 hours resulting from circumstances which are in no way attributable to that person; and

(c) the drainage of sewerage from the residence of that person is rendered inadequate so as to interfere with that person's enjoyment of his residence.';

and amendment No. 4, in clause 4, page 5, line 34, at end insert

'and consumer bodies representing their interests'.

4.8 pm

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

We are now entering the final stages of a shoddy and undesirable Bill. It provides for trials to take place in the use of water meters so that water is charged for by consumption rather than by rateable value. The Bill has not provided for any consultation with the people who will take part in the trials; they will have no choice in the matter. Even if they do not consent to participate, the premises may be entered by force.

For many years, it has been possible for households to opt freely for water meters. When requested, they are fitted by the water undertakers. However, the data available show that only 0·67 per cent. of domestic users — 126,000 out of 18,000,737 households—have taken the opportunity. That hardly proves that there is a demand for universal water metering. Furthermore, it shows that the Bill is unnecessary because the metering facility that it seeks to test is already available. In addition, a number of reports on the advantages and disadvantages of water metering have been prepared, both in this country and abroad. All this suggests that the further trials have nothing to do with the interests of the consumer.

Opposition Members have spoken to a number of people who have argued strongly against the introduction of meters, principally because it will result in increased water costs for many people on low incomes. Those particularly affected will be large families and those who work in dirty conditions and have abnormally large washing and laundry needs. People are also concerned about the group of people who will worry greatly about using water if it is metered. We all know of elderly people who sit in the dark or do not switch on their electric heaters because they fear large bills. Exactly the same people will worry about running the bath or flushing the lavatory.

On 2 June 1986, Rosemary Collins reported in *The Guardian* on the national conference of water consumer consultative committees. She said that the delegates were almost unanimous in their dislike of compulsory metering. They thought that, in areas of high unemployment, metering would lead to a woman with six children bathing them all once a week and pulling the chain once every four days and that the implications for public health were frightening.

That point of view was supported by an editorial in the *Western Mail* on 16 May 1986:

"many large families, supported by only one income earner, are liable to be heavily hit badly if metering is made obligatory. This, along with the fear that pensioners would economise on the use of water to the detriment of health and hygiene, is one of the objections now advanced by the consumer council."

It is clear that there is no interest in, or support for, the Bill among the consumer organisations.

Normanton is one of the areas in which trials will take place. My hon. Friend the Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) is the only hon. Member who served on the Standing Committe in whose patch a trial is due to take place. Not one of the 10 Conservative Members in whose constituencies trials are to take place saw his way to serving on the Committee. That is curious, and it is equally curious, given that the trials are supposed to be conducted scientifically, that 10 of the 11 constituencies to be used are Conservative constituencies. I presume that the Government wished to reduce the number of complaints from Members of Parliament. That is the only conclusion that we can draw.

Midweek Extra, the local newspaper that circulates in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Normanton, recently carried the headline:

"Residents plan water 'lock-out'. Meter trials under threat."

The article states:

"Normanton residents are threatening to refuse Yorkshire Water Authority access to their homes to instal water meters.

Around 750 homes in the Queen Elizabeth Drive and Warmfield areas of Normanton have been chosen to take part in water metering trials over an estimated three years.

However local district councillor Paul Barrett claims people are talking among themselves about refusing workmen access to instal the necessary equipment."

The interests of the consumer are not the interests of the Government. The Government are treating the consumer shoddily in peddling this Bill.

4.15 pm

In Committee, Opposition Members argued strenuously and at length on behalf of the consumer, who has been largely ignored by the Government. On all occasions, we showed that our amendments were designed to safeguard the interests of the consumer taking part in

[Mr. Roland Boyes]

water trials and, in the longer term, of all those who may be subject to the introduction of compulsory water metering.

We know that the real purpose of the trials has nothing to do with the interests of consumers. They are designed to determine and establish the conditions that will prevent consumers from opting out. We spent 75 hours or more in Committee questioning the Minister about how he would measure the results and what result would lead the Government to make a firm decision to introduce compulsory metering or abandon the idea completely. At this last opportunity, I ask him that question again. Perhaps he will come up with a comprehensive reply. If the experiment cannot fail, it is not an experiment.

The new clauses and the amendment are an extension of our argument for more consumer rights. That means rights before, during and after the trials take place. Incidentally, it also means rights for Members of Parliament. Before the Committee stage the Water Companies Association circulated an astonishing letter, and it is important that its contents should be on the record. It was dated 21 August 1987 and was marked "confidential":

"It is understood that Ministers are nervous about the passage of the Public Utility Transfers and Water Charges Bill through Parliament (especially through the Lords). As a result you are asked in particular *not* to give MPs, the press or the public the impression that:

(a) it is a foregone conclusion that compulsory trials will take place;

(b) the areas have already been selected and cannot be altered; and

(c) whatever the outcome of the trials, universal metering will be introduced."

I am sure that you, Mr. Speaker, as the guardian of this House, will agree that it is drastically wrong, and undesirable, for people to write letters which say that hon. Members must be denied information.

Opposition Members believe that every household taking part in the trials should be aware of its rights under existing consumer law before the trials begin. This should be achieved by the water undertakers contacting the consumer directly — preferably by visit or, if that is inconvenient for the consumer, by telephone. The right of the consumer to question the water undertaker, to have the meter explained in detail and to express an opinion should be fundamental to the trial process. That is vital because many people cannot understand, and are frightened by, the mumbo jumbo of official letters. Equally, the small print of the exclusion clauses must be carefully explained because they are worded in jargon understandable only to a small number of specialists.

We believe that an exercise of properly informing consumers before the trials begin is an absolute necessity. New clause 1 prevents trials from taking place until every household has been fully informed and its members have had their rights explained to them. The very least that the Government can do is to promise to instruct water undertakers involved in the trials to ensure that every household taking part knows its rights. Until that has been done, the trials have no right to start and they should be delayed until that exercise has been completed. If a householder is not contacted, he should have the legal right to opt out of these squalid, unnecessary, undesirable and unwanted trials.

Ms. Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): I rise in support of new clause 1. The main purpose of the new clause is to make it clear that water is basic to public health and that, for far too long, we have taken water supplies for granted. In view of the proposed poll tax, there is an urgent need to provide an alternative way of charging for water and metering appears to have become that alternative.

The Bill proposes to introduce compulsory water metering in selected areas. We have considered the Bill over the past few weeks and it has become clear that consumer protection and consumer rights will not be safeguarded when compulsory meters are installed. The money which will be invested in water meters could be much better invested in ensuring safer and purer water supplies and in dealing with nitrate and nitrite problems. Although water meters will be compulsorily introduced only in experimental areas, when the proposals for privatisation, rather than nationalisation, of the water industry come before the House, consumer rights will become a much more important issue as water consumers will have to pay much higher charges on the basis of volume of water used.

For all these reasons, it is more important than ever to have a proper consumers' charter. Under the provisions of new clause 1, consumers will be better safeguarded and will have a better chance to ensure that the amount they pay for their water is correct. It will also give them the right to check on the quality of the water coming through the taps into their homes.

My hon. Friend the Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) drew attention to the many families who will be seriously affected because they will be unable to afford baths and to use all the water facilities in their homes. Like many gas and electricity consumers, water consumers, without proper safeguards, will not get proper service. We should support the new clauses in the hope of safeguarding consumer interests.

Mr. Doug Henderson (Newcastle upon Tyne, North): I am grateful for the opportunity to endorse the comments of my hon. Friends the Members for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) and for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley).

In Committee, the Minister was at pains to show how open and informative he wanted to be in presenting his case for selling off the water industry. I hope that he will recall that and will accept that new clause 1 can add to the coherence of the Bill. I hope that he will recognise that it is unreasonable to make major changes to an essential household utility without fully informing the residents of the household. I hope that he will understand that it is natural for people to worry about changes that might be made to their domestic set-up. It is a worrying prospect for people to have a meter installed in their homes. Like me, I am sure that the Minister and Conservative Members have constituents who will fret for weeks at the prospect of having their water cut off while a meter is installed, perhaps in a very cold part of the winter.

There was a recent case of this in my constituency concerning the residents of Westwood road in the Brunton park estate. Those residents got in touch with me to express their concern about matters involving the water board. According to street gossip, the street and gardens would be dug up and water would be cut off in the middle of winter. Some residents claimed that they did not know

why the the water board wanted to do that. They were not sure whether special arrangements had been made to provide water storage or supplies on very cold days. I contacted the Newcastle and Gateshead Water Company which told me that, because of corrosion in pipes, 100m. sections had to be removed before a new lining could be installed, and that this process could take up to 30 hours.

The water company also confirmed that residents would be warned in advance. It confirmed that special arrangements could be made to advise people how to store water and that board personnel would be available to assist elderly residents who could not carry water to the place where it was needed or prepare for water storage before the water was cut off. I do not know whether the Newcastle and Gateshead Water Company publicised properly what it intended to do in this case. I suspect that it did its best to advise people, but it has emerged from my investigation that the residents did not understand what was about to happen. No matter how hard the water board had tried to inform people, the message had not got across.

It would be most alarming if a similar situation were to arise when water meter trials take place. The example I have cited and other examples which my hon. Friends will be able to cite show the need for individual contact with consumers. I relate my remarks specifically to new clause 1(2) where we refer to telephone contact or individual contact. I should prefer individual contact. I am not sure whether it is proper to pick up the phone and get in touch with people throughout an area. Some people may be alarmed by that approach. It would be better to have individual contact via a water board officer.

Consumers will want to know how long they will be without water when the meters are installed. They will want to know where the meters will be fitted. We heard in Committee that there are several options and that meters can be fixed at the gate or at least two other places in domestic premises. Many consumers will say, "The water board may know where it wants to install the meter, but will I have a choice?" Consumers will also want to know what happens if their decorations are damaged when the meter is installed. Who would be responsible for putting right the damage? Would the water board be responsible or would people be expected to do it themselves?

We have heard from my hon. Friend the Member for Houghton and Washington about some consumers in Normanton being so much in the dark that they might refuse access to board officials. Whatever our views on the desirability of installing water meters, no hon. Member would want that to happen. Consumers will inevitably want to ask whether there will be a mess. I must be careful not to make a sexist point, but we all have mothers and grandmothers who will want a cast-iron guarantee from the water board, as they would from the gas board, the electricity board or painters and decorators, that there will be no mess before giving free access to their homes. Those who face the prospect of the installation of a water meter have the right to be told by the water board whether there will be a mess in their homes.

4.30 pm

Those Conservative Members whose constituencies are involved have not taken the time to be with us this afternoon. I wish that they had because if the Government do not accept the new clause they will be inundated by demands from constituents who want the answers to such questions. I see the Minister checking the Opposition Benches, but we are all here. Hon. Members will all have been shown the mess left by council officials and others. I have visited attics, cellars, under the stairs and rooftops to see the mess that has been left. Conservative Members will be inundated with such requests and the Government would be wise to accept the new clause.

Consumers will also want to know when the job will be started, how long it will take and who will pay for it. They will want to know whether their water bill will be affected after the meter is installed, who will take the readings, when they will be taken, and so on. Consumers will also want to know what will happen if the trial is a flop. They will rightly want to know the answer to such questions and to many others.

If the Government can spend £23 million advertising the sale of British Petroleum, surely they can provide the finance necessary to enable the water board to approach directly every consumer faced with the prospect of the compulsory installation of a water meter.

People have a right to know. Two weeks ago the Government whipped Conservative Members to curtail the public's right to know what was happening in government under the Protection of Official Information Bill prepared by the hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd). I appeal to the Minister to refrain from whipping Conservative Members this afternoon to prevent water consumers having the right to know.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley (Surrey, South-West): It is an example of the unreconstructed, blinkered, backward-looking attitude of the Labour party that the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) should refer to only mothers and grandmothers being so worried about the mess. We all know where the Labour party stands on the roles of men and women in the household. If he were worried about the mess, he should be just as worried about the attitude of fathers and grandfathers. I take that as a basis upon which to respond to the new clause.

To hear the comments from Labour Members, anyone would think that we had not had meters for electricity and gas for many years. It is ludicrous to suggest that meters are an alien and new way of measuring supplies of vital necessities. Furthermore, most European countries meter their water.

I speak as a director of a water company in whose area one of the trials is to take place and I would respond with some amusement to the reaction of Labour Members to the cynical attitude of the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) to those who are volunteering for the trials. I had no idea that hon. Members were thought to have been press-ganged where there might be some difficulty with the public. With the Local Government Finance Bill and a fairer system for paying for local government, it is right to find a fairer, more appropriate and modern way to pay for water.

It is also important to move on with the trials with some speed. Before long-term solutions are found for the paying for water locally, we need to learn the lessons of the trials. Therefore, I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to take no notice of the new clause, which will lead to greater delays, bureaucracy and difficulty. The water company of which I have the privilege to be a director takes great trouble over its customer relations, as I am sure do all the others. If there are any difficulties with people's uncertainty about

[Mrs. Virginia Bottomley]

what is involved in the metering trials, I am sure that they will have no difficulty in explaining it. I urge my hon. Friend to reject the new clause hastily.

Ms. Joyce Quin (Gateshead, East): I want to address my remarks specifically to new clause 3. However, before doing so I want to support my hon. Friends in the arguments that they have been putting forward in seeking to amend the Bill, which, as my hon. Friend the Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) pointed out, is a shoddy, ill-thought-out piece of legislation—perhaps the most madcap privatisation of all. Not surprisingly, a recent opinion poll has shown that the public oppose more Government sell-offs. I am sure that the prospect of the privatisation of the water industry was uppermost in their minds when they were asked to participate in that particular poll.

I agree with my hon. Friends that new clauses 1 and 3 show that throughout our discussions the interests of the consumers have been paramount for us. Consumers have not been taken much into account in the Bill. I do not know whether the water company that was referred to by the hon. Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) consulted the consumers in its trial area, or how many questions it asked them about whether they wanted to be involved in such a trial, but the information that we have, in particular from the area represented by my hon. Friend the Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien), is that the public strongly oppose being dragooned into a trial in which they do not wish to participate. The general public are worried not only about the principle of water metering but about many of the practical issues relating to the installation of meters, and so on, which were referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson).

New clause 3 specifically lists various conditions under which a customer in the metering trial areas can have redress and financial compensation. That is important. New clause 3(1)*(a)* refers to the fact that such compensation shall be given if a

"person's water supply falls below the standard as set by the EEC".

The Government have freely agreed to implement that standard but have been slow to do so in practice. There is much public concern about that and the European Commission is considering many cases concerning various parts of Britain where our water quality does not meet EEC standards. We do not want to see people pay more for inferior water, and that point needs to be made clearly.

The cost of complying with the EEC directive has not been clarified during the long hours we have spent on the issue in Committee. It has been claimed that it will cost about £6 billion to ensure that our water quality comes up to the required standard. That figure has been disputed by the Government, but so far we have no clear figure that we can tell people is the right one. Nor do we have a figure for the different water authorities, some of which will be involved in the metering trial schemes.

New clause 3(1)*(b)* refers to the fact that we believe that consumers in the trial areas will think that they have already been put to considerable inconvenience, and we want to ensure that we do not inconvenience them even more—hence the specific points of redress in the new clause, especially in the eventuality of the water supply being cut off during the trial period. New clause 3(1)*(c)* also gives consumers the possibility of redress if problems are experienced with drainage and sewerage in the trial period.

Amendment No. 4 is part and parcel of our concern for the consumer. In it, we refer to the consumer bodies that may represent the consumer. That is important, because it is likely that consumers in the trial areas will be worried about the trial but may not have the time to write letters and make telephone calls and all the other sorts of representations that they might otherwise want to make. That is why groups formed to represent their interests need to be taken into account. So far, we have had no clear evidence from the Minister that he has engaged in in-depth consultations with such consumer bodies, or that he has even made an effort to contact them. We recommend that he does; otherwise, there is no doubt that public discontent in the trial areas may become great, as has already happened in Normanton.

The amendments are important. They would bring in an element of safeguarding the interests of the consumer. They form part of the background of our discontent with the Bill. We think that the priority now should be to bring our water up to EEC standards and to ensure that the infrastructure is of a good quality throughout the country, so that consumers receive the clean and safe water supplies that they need. Then, and only then, if the Government still insist on embarking on privatisation, should they do so. Privatisation is not the priority; even the Government should not consider it as such now.

Mr. Tom Pendry (Stalybridge and Hyde): I had intended to begin by congratulating the hon. Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) on putting her head above the parapet and making a contribution. She declared her interest; no doubt she has a vested interest in the legislation. She did her two minutes and vanished from the Chamber, so perhaps I should not dwell on my congratulations to her.

I want to speak mostly to new clause 3 and amendment No. 4. Throughout the Committee stage of the Bill my hon. Friends and I have been concerned with consumers' interests. We have battled for them, but we have not had too much to show for our pains, for the Minister has not responded positively. We are anxious to ensure that those who must take part in compulsory trials are not significantly inconvenienced. They should be protected, not least because, as has already been said, the trial areas have been selected in constituencies represented by Conservative Members, with the exception of Normanton. It was explained, and not refuted, in Committee that that was a mistake by the Government. They thought that they were getting another Member of Parliament, but it turned out to be my hon. Friend the Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien), who is clearly an expert on these matters. The Government must have regretted that mistake.

4.45 pm

We have no faith that hon. Members representing these constituencies, with the exception of my hon. Friend, will actively represent their consumers' interests. So we think we should take time on Report to speak up once more for those consumers. It is axiomatic to us that any householder who finds that the quality of water supplied has deteriorated to below the EEC standards mentioned

by my hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin) should receive compensation, and we say so in new clause 3.

The quality of water is, more than ever before, a real issue today. We want to ensure that the Government do not use the trials as an excuse to squeeze money out of consumers while failing to supply them with a quality product. The purpose of the standards set by the EEC is to provide a decent quality of water nationwide. Yet it was only in 1987 that the Government accepted the 1985 directive on water standards. That is disgraceful testimony to the Government's regard for water quality.

My hon. Friends the Members for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley) and for Gateshead, East spent a great deal of time in Committee explaining the problems of nitrates in our water. The Government did not respond positively to ensure that the levels would be eliminated in the short term.

We are also concerned about the problem of the cowboy contractors. It is a pity that the plumber's mate, the hon. Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire), is not here today. It was bad enough that Conservative Members in Committee said nothing, but now they seem to have deserted the Minister completley on Report, and are not to be seen—except, I suppose, in the Division Lobbies tonight. We know that the hon. Member for Hornchurch represents plumbers in the House and he should be here to take part in the debate, because he intervened shortly in Committee to say that he was concerned that the Minister was not doing enough. We are worried that the cowboy contractors will get into the act as a result of the Bill.

The water industry does not have the sort of safeguards that the gas industry has, and I asked the Minister a question about that in Committee, to which he promised to respond. Perhaps he will do so tonight. The gas suppliers have CORGI — the Confederation for the Registration of Gas Installers—to maintain standards. The water industry should have such a safeguard, because many authorities, including mine in the north-west, have sent out leaflets to alert consumers to the dangers of certain private contractors who are not qualified. Now, when the water meters are installed, things will be far worse, and people will use anyone who can thread a pipe —or conduit or whatever—or work with lead piping. Anyone who can do so will be allowed, if the Bill is passed, to install meters. The Minister has a responsibility to guarantee to us and people in the water meter areas that their meters will be installed by registered plumbers of an acceptable calibre.

Amendment No. 4 has been referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East. The Government cannot ride roughshod over reputable consumer bodies. The National Consumer Council has said clearly through the redoubtable champion of consumer rights, Miss Day, to whom I referred many times in Committee:

> "The first thing we noted about the study was that it was a report whose members were drawn entirely from the industry itself. There was no consumer representation or participation, and it shows."

I am glad that the hon. Member for Surrey, South-West is back in her place. That was the point that she missed. There has been no consumer representation. Consumers have not been asked for their views and they have not participated in the thinking. We understand that the hon. Lady has a vested interest; at least she was brave enough to say so.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: It would be improper for me not to say so. As to service to the consumer, I want to point out that trials are a good idea before moving forward generally. I have established in regard to the water company with which I am associated that letters have already gone out to every consumer in the area. Public meetings have been offered. Even a mini survey has been embarked on to test how people are reacting to the prospect of metering trials. Visits have taken place in the evenings and at other times, if necessary. I have every reason to believe that the other companies and authorities have behaved in the same way. The hon. Gentleman should think again before suggesting that there is not the highest standard of service to customers and concern for their interest.

Mr. Pendry: It is clear that the hon. Lady's company has done something to bridge the gap. It is a pity that she and other Conservative Members did not press the Government to do a similar exercise throughout the trial areas. The Government and the Minister stand condemned. The hon. Lady should have spoken up loudly in the past and should, with other hon. Members, have pressurised the Government. Representatives of consumers need to be involved in the decisions or at least in the discussions. We urge the Government, even at this late stage, to state clearly that they will be involved from now on.

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): The amendments concentrate precisely on the area that has been most neglected by the Government—the rights of consumers, consultations with consumers and ensuring that the best interests of consumers are defended. That was evident throughout the proceedings in Committee from what the Minister said, or, rather, from what he did not say. We did not get long speeches about how much the consumer would benefit from metering. We did not get long explanations about the benefits to consumers of the privatisation that the metering scheme presages. What we got was a series of detailed and not very stimulating speeches from the Minister about the specifics of metering trials, whether a certain type of meter was the most appropriate, and so on. The interests of the consumer did not feature, except in reply to detailed questions as to whether the best specifics were being adopted.

In new clause 1 we have the first essential — consultation with consumers to make sure that they are fully involved and aware of what is going on. I can cite an example of a similar problem that happened to one of my constituents in dealing with the Inland Revenue. The Inland Revenue said that it had written to him, giving him the necessary details to make a return. He said that he had never received the letter. All the evidence is that he did not receive the letter because, as a result of not having responded to it, he lost many thousands of pounds. He now finds it impossible to get the money back because the Inland Revenue says that he never replied to a letter which he says he did not receive.

That is precisely the kind of concern that I have about the proposals in the Bill. There may be better consultation in some trial areas, but that provision should be written into the Bill. New clause 1 is one way of doing it. It is not

[Mr. Matthew Taylor]

necessarily the best or the most adequate way, but the proposal that is before the House would ensure that there is consultation.

I should have thought that new clause 3 was self-evidently desirable and the right way to approach things. If someone does not get a service for which he is expected to pay, he should not have to pay for it. That is what one would expect to happen in the private sector. As the metering trials are the forerunners of the privatisation of water, it makes sense that the consumer should be protected financially. It is a basic principle, after consultation, to have a system of redress, not through the courts, or with extreme difficulty, but as an automatic right for the consumer. Had the Minister presented in Committee detailed and convincing arguments on how consumers would benefit from the proposals, it might be argued that, as they were benefiting so much from metering, they did not need such protection, although I do not think that would wash well with any other private industry. As he did not even attempt to do that, I hope that he, and the House, will see the logic of accepting the new clause.

Amendment No. 4 seeks to involve consumer groups to represent the interests of consumers. I do not understand why the Government oppose the amendment. It is logical and clear. I am sure that the Minister hopes that that would happen, so it should be written into the Bill. Perhaps the Minister will accept it.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Colin Moynihan): Perhaps I will.

Mr. Taylor: "Perhaps I will," says the Minister. This could be an almost unique occasion in the passage of the Bill. It may just be that the Minister is about to accept something. I hope so, because I think that there is no reason to reject it. It would be beneficial to the people involved in the trials if they were represented in the drawing up of schemes.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): It is clear from the contributions from the Opposition side of the House that there is intense interest in the consumer. This is in line with the information and declarations that we had in Committee, that the Secretary of State for the Environment has the interests of consumers at heart and that at all times their interests should be paramount. Those words were used in the explanatory notes that were issued to hon. Members in Committee by the Department of the Environment. On the very question of the interests of the consumer being paramount, the Minister should accept the new clauses that we have proposed, because they would carry out the Secretary of State's intention that the interests of consumers should be looked after and defended.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) referred to standards of metering and of services, Again, we must ensure that any services provided to consumers under the metering schemes are at all times of the highest possible standard.

5 pm

The hon. Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) explained that the company in which she has an interest has contacted consumers, made representations to them in some detail and offered to hold public meetings. Many other companies that are contemplating introducing trial metering schemes would have contacted their customers. That being so, I put to the hon. Member for Surrey, South-West some questions that I have been asked by my constituents who are involved in a trial scheme; questions that I have put to the Yorkshire water authority, to which I am still awaiting a reply; and questions that have been put to the Minister in Committee, which are still awaiting a reply.

Will the hon. Member advise the House and her constituents of the tariffs that will be applied by the water company in which she has an interest? What will the tariff procedure be? Will the North West Surrey water company introduce the scheme in the area? How will people be charged for water following the trials? What standing charges will be attached to the scheme? What will be the increase in standing charges for water supply and sewage disposal? Those questions are relevant to the new clauses that we are proposing. I am prepared to give way to the hon. Member if she will explain to the House and to the people involved in trials what the tariff structure will be and how standing charges will be affected for metering of water and disposal of sewage.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I will not respond at length because the debate is about the principle of having metering trials and how they should be conducted. I drew upon the company with which I am associated as an example, but I do not want to turn the debate into a discussion of its practices, good though they are. I say only that people want information, but that there is no anxiety. People are used to electricity and gas charges based on metering, so there should be no paranoia that there is a conspiracy against the consumer. In fact, many people have requested that their supplies be metered. The purpose of having consultation and a public meeting is that all those matters can be clarified.

Mr. O'Brien: It is clear to hon. Members that the North West Surrey water company has not yet decided how to charge consumers when it introduces metering trials. The purpose of the new clauses is to ensure that people involved in metering trials will be given all the information well in advance of the trials, so that they can ask further questions if they are dissatisfied with the tariffs of the various water companies and authorities.

The document that we received in Committee states:

"The Government intend to monitor each trial very carefully and in particular will be looking at the nature of complaints from customers and how they are dealt with."

If customers are not advised of the charges, how the tariffs will apply and how standing charges will be influenced by the metering trials, how will they be able to make representations to the Secretary of State in line with the directive issued by him? Labour Members consider that it is unfair, unjust and unreal to bring in legislation that does not explain in detail the consequences to consumers involved in trials.

The hon. Member for Surrey, South-West has compared water metering with gas and electricity metering. The difference is that, unlike water, people can choose between gas and electricity, but there is no alternative to water. People can manage without gas and electricity but they cannot manage without water, so we should not compare gas and electricity with water.

Ms. Walley: Will my hon. Friend comment on the information that 80 per cent. of gas and electricity bills

relate to the volume of gas and electricity used, whereas only 20 per cent. of a water bill applies to the water used? That raises the question: how much of a bill relates to the infrastructure and standing charges which must be paid?

Mr. O'Brien: My hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley) introduces an important and pertinent point. Furthermore, the tariff structure is causing concern among people, because every water authority offers people the right to have water meters if they wish. Meters are available to domestic consumers if they want to take advantage of them. Water companies are dragooning people into water meter trials, and that is unfair, undemocratic and alien to what we believe.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): In relation to people having heating or water, I give the example of a working-class family with four children. The family may spend the entire evening in the same room to cut down heating costs, but when it comes to bathing those children, unless they are put into one bath, the family will have to pay more for water. That is the essence of the issue. It is a matter of principle. I shall do very well out of water metering, because I do not always live at my home, but if I had five children I would do very badly out of it. Water metering will cause more burdens to be put on to the shoulders of ordinary working people. That is exactly why we should oppose it.

Mr. O'Brien: The point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) was dealt with at length in Committee. In my constituency, where a trial is taking place, people are afraid of the results of the trial. Some people are refusing to take up tenancies in council houses in the trial area because they are afraid of the consequences. I have received a report concerning council houses, but there could be a blight on private houses. Owners may have difficulty in selling houses in the metering area, because people will not know what is involved in the meter trial areas.

The real issue with which we are concerned is what the tariffs and cost will be to the consumer. In the Yorkshire water authority area people have been advised that the rising block tariff will be used, but no one is prepared to explain how it will apply to them. We are making the point in new clause 1 that, prior to the commencement of a water metering trial, representatives of the water undertakers should contact my constituents, and every other person involved, to explain what the cost and charges will be when the meters are installed. Failing that, my constituents cannot make representations to the Secretary of State before the metering trial starts; therefore, their views cannot be taken into consideration. The aim of the new clause is that, before trials start, contact should be made with the people concerned. They should have the right to make representations through the consumer organisations, or through the local authority, if they are council tenants, or direct to the Secretary of State or the Minister. If consumers do not have that right and are contacted before the metering trials start, they should not be included in the metering trial areas. That is the point that we are making in the new clause.

Finally, as has been explained on more than one occasion, different water companies and authorities are planning different ways of applying the metering trials. I understand that in my area all the meters will be installed in the properties. We have been advised that in other areas meters will be fixed to a stop tap either in the curtilage of the property or on the footpath. If properties and households are going to be disturbed by tradesmen entering to fit the meters, examine the plumbing and perhaps install new pipes to ensure that the meters can work, it is important that this exercise of informing people of the consequences and of the action to be undertaken is carried out. It is important that the people affected should be informed at every stage on what is to take place. That is the purpose of the new clause.

We put it to the Minister and his supporters that the new clause is constructive. It is there to help the people who are going to be compulsorily involved in the meter trial areas. I hope that we shall have their co-operation this afternoon.

I made the point in Committee—and the Minister said that he would look into it—that if consultations are to be effective and constructive they must apply to everyone. When the first scheme was planned the geographical area in my constituency included a large industrial opencast coal working. A few weeks after the declaration by the Yorkshire water authority that the scheme would be carried out, it was found that the opencast coal site had been taken out of the scheme. Clearly, there had been some consultation with a customer who did not want to get involved in the scheme, or that customer made representations highlighting his situation, and he was taken out of the scheme.

If that principle can apply to the British Coal Opencast Executive, why can it not apply to my constituents who do not want to take part in the meter trials? There must be some explanation why the British Coal Opencast Executive can suddenly be taken out of the scheme because it does not want to be included, but my constituents, 90 per cent. of whom signed a petition rejecting the meter trial scheme, cannot be taken out. I put it to the Minister that if it is right for the British Coal Opencast Executive to be taken out of the scheme, it is right for the rest of the people who object to be taken out.

5.15 pm

In the light of the background to the new clauses and the amendment which are before the House this afternoon, I appeal to the Minister to give careful consideration to the points that we have made and to accept these proposals. We believe that they are in line with the declaration of the Secretary of State and that they are for the benefit of consumers in the meter trial areas.

Mr. Moynihan: I shall deal first with new clause 1.

Hon. Members who followed the proceedings of the Committee that considered this Bill will be aware that the Government consider it very important that a full consultation exercise take place in the proposed metering trial areas both before and during the trials. This is why, under clause 4(4) of the Bill, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is required, when considering a metering trial scheme for approval, to have regard to the consultations about the proposal or about the implementation, effect and operation of the scheme which have been or are to be conducted with persons who are likely to be or have been affected by the scheme. My right hon. Friend is also required to have regard to the handling of any representations about the implementation, effect or operation of the scheme. Those water authorities and companies that said that they would like to carry out a trial were asked some time ago to keep records of all

[Mr. Moynihan]

consultation and its results. I can assure the House that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will consider the scope and results of such consultation very carefully indeed when considering schemes submitted for approval.

Many undertakers have already begun this consultation exercise. We have heard from my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) about the position in her constituency. They have done this on an entirely voluntary basis. For example, I have a copy here of a letter which the Bristol waterworks company sent out to various bodies likely to be affected by the trials. Those bodies included local Members of this House, councillors, and local branches of the citizens advice bureau, the Confederation of British Industry, Age Concern, Pensioners Voice, the Department of Health and Social Security, the local trading standards office and many more. This is proof, if proof were needed, of how seriously the industry regards the consultation process and the need to allow good time for it.

The Government are also particularly concerned that individual customers likely to take part in the trials are given full information. This will probably be in the form of an information pack on, for example, the purpose of the trials, customers' legal rights and obligations in relation to metering, how to read and test the meter, what happens if a meter is found to be inaccurate, guidance on typical water consumption, and the name, address and telephone number of someone at the water utility to answer their queries.

Mr. O'Brien: I am grateful to the Minister for allowing me to make one point. Out of all the information that has been put forward — and I made the point that the Yorkshire water authority is in my constituency—where is there any reference to what it will cost the consumers, what tariff structure will be applied — the Minister reported that there are four different structures — and will it increase standing charges?

Mr. Moynihan: I am happy to answer the hon. Gentleman's question by drawing to his attention the fact that before the Secretary of State can approve any trial he must give due consideration to each of the points that have been raised by the hon. Gentleman. He must know the tariff structure that will be used and the method of billing, and he will have to take into consideration precisely how each water undertaker that is involved with the trials wishes to use them. I expect that there will be a range of tariff structures. The purpose of the trials is for the Water Authorities Association to look at a range of meters, charging procedures and tariffs. They will be evaluated. That is why so much attention has been given to the proposed site areas by the association. It has used the ACORN model to make sure that a socio-economic cross-section is studied. It has taken particular account of a variety of infrastructure problems that are faced in rural areas and heavily built-up urban areas. All that is very important.

I take this opportunity in reply to the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) to say that it is vitally important to emphasise that the trial areas have not been chosen on the basis of party political representation. The trial areas have been proposed by the Water Authorities Association to the Government, and the Secretary of State, in making up his mind whether to approve each of the trials, has to take into account all of the points that I have just mentioned, and indeed each and every one of the points that the hon. Gentleman has raised.

Mr. O'Brien: I am grateful to the Minister for giving way. He has said that the Secretary of State will want to know everything about tariff systems and charges, but when will customers know about this, and will they have an opportunity to make representations to the Secretary of State if a tariff structure is alien to them? When will they get to know when the structures will be applied?

Mr. Moynihan: The consumers will know in advance the final proposals that will be put to the Secretary of State, and they will have the opportunity—I stress that —to make representations individually to the Secretary of State about the proposed trials, or they will be able to make representations jointly. They will be able to see in advance of the trial being submitted exactly what the water undertakers wish to put into effect in a trial area. They will have the opportunity to make representations individually, whether they are in favour of the trial, or collectively if they are against it. It saddens me to hear that a mini-referendum or questionnaire has been put out in the trial area that is covered by the hon. Gentleman's constituency, when no firm decision has been reached about holding a proposed trial scheme in that area. That questionnaire has been put out before the people there even know the tariff structure or the cost effect.

Yorkshire water authority, as the hon. Gentleman has rightly pointed out, has yet to calculate the tariff to be used in its trial. I believe that it has been made known to the hon. Gentleman, who has taken up the issue so assiduously, that it is likely to be dealt with by a rising block tariff, with a relatively low standard charge. It is designed to recover the same amount of charges through the trial scheme that is covered by the rateable values. That is the promise and the water authority is now working on the details. It is a matter not simply of considering the details in the Yorkshire area, but of co-ordinating the scheme with other water authorities. I am glad to have this opportunity of reassuring the hon. Gentleman that the views of consumers and of his constituents will be taken into account fully. Consumers will be able to make direct representations to the Secretary of State.

We believe that the best means of bringing the full information about the trials to individual consumers is in the form of an information pack. We believe that that might also be the most cost-effective method. An information pack could be retained by consumers for future reference. That could not be achieved by a telephone inquiry or a doorstep visit, as the new clause proposes. The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) said that some people would be alarmed by a telephone approach, although that was written into the new clause that he proposed. He has a point. It is important to find the best way of reaching consumers. The best way to do so, in the Government's view, is by using an information pack.

Mr. Henderson: Is the Minister aware that polling organisations and other surveyors of public opinion would usually expect no more than a 15 per cent. return from a personalised letter? Does the Minister accept, in the general sense of this point, that people do have some

reservations about a personal telephone approach? Does he therefore guarantee that every consumer will be visited personally by a water board official?

Mr. Moynihan: That is not an undertaking that I can or will give. What I can say is that each and every household in the trial areas will be contacted by post, certainly in the first instance. I expect that some assiduous undertakers will wish to visit each household. That is a decision for them. What is essential is that the Secretary of State is satisfied that an adequate consultation exercise has taken place. If that is not the case, and a number of households in a trial area are not contacted, I would be of the view that that is less than satisfactory consultation. I am sure that the water undertakers will ensure that a comprehensive consultation exercise will take place to make sure that every household is aware of the broad outline and the details of the proposed trial.

Mr. Henderson: Will the Minister say, in the light of that statement, that he will issue guidelines to water authorities on that specific point, to encourage individual contacts?

Mr. Moynihan: We have not just issued guidelines; we have written that requirement into the Bill. We have made it clear in clause 4 exactly what we believe the water authorities should do to satisfy the Secretary of State that the proposed metering trial will go ahead and that the methodology is suited to the particular circumstances. That must be right.

I am confident, not least because of the exhaustive and sometimes exhausting debates in Committee, that water undertakers will take due note of the importance of consultation. Indeed, in response to the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington, who was particularly keen that I should write to the chairman of the Water Authorities Association, may I say that I have done so and brought to his attention the fact that effective consultation was recognised as being very important to those consumers affected by the trials. I am happy to allow a copy of the letter to be sent to any hon. Member who is interested in the subject. It is right and proper that a copy of that letter is sent to every right hon. and hon. Member who served on the Standing Committee.

As a further safeguard to ensure that customers are given adequate information, clause 5 enables the Secretary of State to make regulations supplementing the provisions in relation to various clauses, including metering. Clause 5(3)*(e)* will require water undertakers to include with any demand for payment information about the fixing of charges that may be specified by the Secretary of State. My officials have already held talks with the water industry and consumer bodies, such as LACOTs, on the contents of the regulations. As a result, I expect a full range of relevant information will be supplied on or with each demand for payment. I hope that right hon. and hon. Members will agree that new clause 1 is both unnecessary and unworkable, and I call on the House to reject it.

Turning to new clause 3, let me first deal with drinking water. There has been much misinformed speculation about this in the press and elsewhere. It should not need me to tell the House that our drinking water is perfectly safe to drink; of course it is. Millions of people up and down the land have been drinking the water from their taps all their lives without any harm at all, and they know that perfectly well. There is nothing which passes our lips in the course of a day—hon. Members have experience of many other things which pass their lips—that is more wholesome than the drinking water that is taken from our public supplies.

Let me make two other points about this. First, right hon. and hon. Members would not find many of their constituents who had as much confidence in supplies of water overseas including those of some of our European Community partner nations. If Members have any doubts about that, they should ask their constituents.

Secondly, it is deplorable that some irresponsible organisations have attempted to stir up fears about our drinking water. I am thinking in particular of a recent series of advertisements in the national press showing poison coming out of a tap, implying all sorts of harm came from drinking water. That is exactly the sort of mischief-making that could be deeply troubling some readers, and which casts doubts on the credibility of organisations that spread this sort of nonsense. I must say that such things are strongly resented by the thousands of dedicated people in the water supply industry who work hard to ensure the high standard and reliability of our supplies. We owe them a very great deal.

Mr. Boyes: While recognising the dedication of the people who work in the water industry and putting no blame whatsoever on them, it is still a fact that, according to a written answer of 7 July 1987, the water authorities had been granted 272 derogations under article 9(1)*(a)* of the EEC regulations. In other words, there were 272 derogations to water authorities where the drinking water was not up to the required standards. That has nothing to do with the people who work in the industry. The Minister cannot hedge his bets by suggesting that we lay the blame on them. We are laying the blame on the Government who are not investing properly in the water industry.

5.30 pm

Mr. Moynihan: The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that if one compares investment on water by the Labour Administration with that of this Administration, our investment is much better, particularly in view of the cuts that were made by his Government. However, the hon. Gentleman has raised an important point about the directive and about ensuring that we try to reduce the number of derogations and take appropriate action.

The hon. Gentleman is right about the EC drinking water directive. The directive specifies 44 substances which should not exceed certain concentrations, what are called maximum admissible concentrations, in drinking water. The Government are fully committed to the proper implementation of this directive in the United Kingdom. We did at one time tell the industry that, for some substances, they could interpret maximum admissible concentrations as applying to an average of samples, over a period, rather than to every sample. That meant that occasional instances of samples exceeding the limits for particular substances would not have mattered; and it is important to stress that in no case could that have had any conceivable health implication.

One example is the iron parameter. Iron is, of course, good for one, and at concentrations well above the limit specified in the directive. The iron limit is there because in some circumstances a high iron concentration may colour the water. That happens only infrequently, and where any

[Mr. Moynihan]

damage occurs, for example, to washing, the consumer may be able to claim compensation from the water supplier.

Ms. Quin In view of the different figures that have appeared in the press and those that have been quoted by the Water Authorities Association, will the Minister give the House a clear estimate of how much it will cost fully to comply with the EEC directives?

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): Get out of that.

Mr. Moynihan: From a sedentary position, the hon. Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook) shouts, "Get out of that." However, the hon. Gentleman will know, because, as I am sure the whole House is aware, he is keenly interested in the subject, that extensive discussions are taking place at present with all the water undertakers to make sure that the Government's commitment with regard to the European directives on drinking water quality are met and that appropriate investment is made over a period of time to ensure that those directives are met.

Hon. Members will know that water must be wholesome, which is what the law provides at present. However, in addition, the Secretary of State will have to be able to state by regulation that water falling below certain standards is not wholesome. The House will recognise that our provisions go beyond what is required by the directive by retaining the important British legal concept of wholesomeness.

Ms. Walley: I am grateful to the Minister for giving way. In view of the reply that he has just given, can the Minister confirm that water consumers will be paying the full amount of the investment needed to bring water up to EEC standards? Under those circumstances, would it not be better if the Government spent that money in making the necessary investment rather than calling for money to be wasted in installing meters?

Mr. Moynihan: The hon. Lady knows full well that recovery of the costs to ensure that the water that is provided is of a wholesome nature and within the qualities laid down by the Water Act 1973 and the European directives is, of course, passed on to the consumer. I find the hon. Lady's distinction remarkable — that the Government have money but consumers have a different amount of money. Of course, all the money that is spent by the Government is recovered from consumers through taxation.

The answer about the water undertakers is that they will have to adhere to the Government's policy, which has been clearly defined, about withdrawing derogations from the directive in respect, for example, of nitrate which apply in 48 areas. We shall be considering with the water authorities affected the implications of that withdrawal for their capital programmes. That will mean further investment over several years and those costs will be passed on to the consumers.

Mr. John Garrett (Norwich, South): I am surprised that the Minister referred to iron oxides as being subject to derogations under the EEC guidelines, when nitrates are much more important, especially in the county of Norfolk. Norfolk suffers from substantial pollution from the run-off from nitrogenous fertilisers into the water supply. Does he agree that iron oxide may not be shown to be inimical to health, but that nitrates certainly are, through the "blue baby" syndrome at least? Will he kindly explain by what means the water authorities will be required, under the regime that he is proposing, to comply with regulations in respect of nitrates?

Mr. Moynihan: I can answer the hon. Gentleman's question clearly. He will be aware that we are looking at the role that could be played by protecting certain sensitive areas from further nitrate contamination. There are already instances, both here and in other countries, of protective measures reducing nitrate levels significantly. We need to learn from those. I assure the hon. Gentleman that we are discussing with colleagues in other Departments that have a keen interest, not least the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, means of identifying the best possible methods of ensuring that we reduce nitrate concentrations, especially in water authorities such as his, Anglian. As he will be aware, there is also a problem in the Severn-Trent area. It is important that we tackle that because we intend to deal with the derogations and the new maximum admissible concentrations within the directive and the understanding that we publicly announced in this House on, I think, 12 December when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made a statement on that subject.

Clearly, there will need to be machinery to ensure that water undertakers comply with the requirements, and that customers continue to have adequate redress for any loss they may suffer through failure on the part of the undertakers. One significant element will be the role of local authorities in checking compliance of drinking water with the standards laid down. That exists at present, and it will be maintained.

The next part of the new clause deals with interruptions to water supply. The law on water supply and sewerage was subject to an extensive review, culminating in a consultation paper published in 1986. We shall be incorporating proposals resulting from that exercise in the water privatisation Bill. Questions of relative rights of customers and undertakers were carefully considered in that consultation process.

I do not consider it right to put a blanket liability on water undertakers for all breaks in supply which last more than 12 hours. Water undertakers naturally go to considerable lengths to provide and maintain reliable supplies of water to their customers. Where interruptions to the piped supply are unavoidable, they provide emergency supplies in bowsers or by standpipes. If, however, they fail to maintain supplies, for whatever period of time, without sufficient reason, they are already liable to be sued for damages and prosecuted in the criminal courts. But the law recognises that acts of God or essential works may lead to interruptions and, quite rightly, it exempts undertakers from liability in such cases. That seems an entirely adequate provision and I see no reason to extend it.

The third limb of the new clause is intended to provide compensation for the foul flooding of customers' homes. I have every sympathy with those whose property or land is flooded by sewage and it is tempting to look to compensation as a means of redress. In fact, however, I do not believe it to be either necessary or desirable. It is unnecessary first because if the flooding is the result of water authority negligence, it can already be sued for

damages. In addition, water authorities generally make ex-gratia payments when flooding is caused by the failure of their equipment even though they are not technically negligent. Secondly, it is normally possible to insure against the flooding of property.

Finally, the new clause attempts to make water authorities liable for flooding from the private sewers and drains serving individual buildings even though they are entirely the responsibility of the owners of the buildings. Therefore, I urge the House to reject the new clause.

We are also considering amendment No. 4, which bears on the consultations which undertakers will have to carry out before and during a metering trial. Although I expect that undertakers will in any event wish to consult the various consumer bodies representing consumers in the areas likely to be affected by the trials, I agree that it would be helpful to put the issue beyond doubt. I am therefore pleased to give an undertaking that the Government will table an appropriate amendment in another place. With that undertaking, I hope that the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington will not press the amendment. However, I urge my hon. Friends to vote against new clause 1 and new clause 3.

Mr. Boyes: I am grateful to the Minister for his undertaking that a new amendment will be tabled in another place that will satisfy what we sought to do in amendment No. 4. It reflects the continuous bombardment that the Minister has faced from the Opposition about consumer interests. Nevertheless, it is good that he is changing his mind at the last moment. However, we cannot accept his argument on new clause 1, and we shall have to press it to a Division.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:——

The House divided: Ayes 215, Noes 270.

Division No. 181] **[5.43 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Ms Hilary
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coleman, Donald
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, J.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alastair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, James
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Galbraith, Samuel
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Ms Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Douglas
Hinchliffe, David
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kilfedder, James
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Tom
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon J *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Ms Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerald
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Ms Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Anthony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Frank Cook.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David

Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bigge-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Timothy
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon C.
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Richard Ryder and
Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.

Question accordingly negatived.

New Clause 2

PROVISIONS RELATING TO NEW BUILDINGS

The requirements of paragraph 1 of Schedule 1 shall not apply until the completion of the metering trials and a report on the metering trials has been approved by Parliament.—*[Mr. O'Brien.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. O'Brien: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

When the Bill was published, paragraph 1 of schedule 1 was not included. The Minister later decided to amend the schedule to include paras (1)(*a*) and (1)(*b*) to apply to the provisions relating to the installation of meters. Paragraph 1 contains a new power introduced by the Minister to allow the water undertakers to insist that the people responsible for building, adapting or altering

premises should install a meter in the premises or that plumbing should be arranged to allow a meter to be installed later.

Paragraph 1 substantially alters the Bill as originally drafted. When amendments to schedule 1 were tabled in Committee, the Opposition raised certain issues. However, because there were no explanatory notes and because the information provided on this matter had been inadequate, we wanted to ensure that all the points were covered when the Bill was brought back to the House. That is why the Minister should consider the new clause carefully and seriously before any action is taken.

Paragraph 1(2) enables undertakers to insist on the requirements that I outlined earlier being met, even when there is no immediate intention of charging by measure. For example, some undertakers may want to wait for the results of the metering trials before deciding on a move to more widespread metering. That is the basis upon which we present our case. We believe that it would be in the interests of the contractors and of those people altering or adapting a building to wait until a decision has been taken about the metering trials before taking a further decision on widespread metering. Anything other than that would create the impression that decisions on universal metering and the systems that will be applied by the various water companies and authorities have already been made. The impression might also be created that metering trials were introduced to provide information that would be available if universal metering was applied.

I believe that decisions have already been taken about the application of universal metering, on how the meters will be installed in properties and how the law will apply to contractors building new properties. In other words, paragraph 1 means that all new properties will have a meter or facilities to enable a meter to be installed.

It was made clear to members of the Committee, to other hon. Members and to the public that some water authorities and water companies have no intention of putting meters in properties. It has been decided by some water companies — and, indeed, put into practice in some areas—that meters for measuring domestic water supplies in bulk should be situated on the footpath or in the curtilage of the dwelling, near the stop tap.

6 pm

An exhibition held in the House a few months ago demonstrated a meter designed to fit on a footpath which required no provision or alteration of any plumbing inside the dwelling, and hence no involvement on the part of the consumer outside whose property the meter was installed.

Surely, if such a metering system successfully meets the requirements of the water industry, and all the problems that can develop in metering trials—including weather and the type and flow of water being used—without disturbing the household, paragraph 1 is redundant. There is little useful purpose in telling contractors, and the people whose properties are to be adapted after a certain date, that they will have to make provision for the installation of a meter, or provide facilities in the property for a meter to be installed. If there is no cause for such an installation, we are surely being premature in accepting such a provision in the Bill.

I understand that two water authorities are now using the meters to which I referred, and that six private water companies, and the Welsh water authority, are also considering the possibility of their introduction. Meter trials are taking place in more ways than one. We feel that it would be in everyone's interest to wait until the trials have been carried out before considering whether provision should be made and expenses undertaken by contractors—and, indeed, by individuals who may be having their properties altered—for the installation of a meter. That might involve plumbing adaptation to enable the meter to be installed in a convenient place, which, under the Bill in its present form, would be at the discretion not of the consumer—the owner or tenant of the property — but of the water undertaking. Such arrangements could be expensive for consumers.

We would prefer a system of voluntary metering to continue. However, if metering is to be compulsory, we consider it unfair and unjust for people to have to go to the expense of providing for a meter when there is no evidence of the need for one.

A press release put out by the Water Companies Association on 29 September 1987 states:

"'It is important', said the Associations"—

that is, the Water Authorities and Water Companies Associations—

"'that extensive trials of metering and assessment of their impact in demand take place before decisions are taken on the general use of water meters.'"

The Minister should consider those views carefully when he is asking his colleagues to reject new clause 2. Unless he can give an assurance that consumers will incur no additional expense as a result of the addition to schedule 1, I believe that to press for the rejection of the new clause would be against the best interests of consumers.

Page 2 of the press release states:

"The trials are likely to have a major influence on how we charge for water in the future. Metering could be the answer. Ministers will consider consumer interests before approving any trial scheme."

Before there is any suggestion of major metering provisions, says the Water Companies Association, we should wait until the trials have taken place and we have evidence of the impact on those living in the trial areas. If we accept that view, paragraph 1 should not apply.

I have a considerable interest in the Yorkshire water authority, as the trial area is in my constituency. I know how people are thinking and what provisions they are requesting in the event of a meter trial taking place. A report of a meeting held on 20 October last year between officers of the Yorkshire water authority and members of Wakefield metropolitan district council states:

"It is important that Yorkshire Water learns how to deal effectively with the many problems which metering on this scale will raise, such as . . . The practical problems in installing meters—where do we put them—? What should we do about defect on the customers plumbing system?"

Before any universal metering is considered, the authority would like to study the results of the trials being held in the Normanton area. If we accept paragraph 1, the position described by the Yorkshire water authority will be superseded by the new clause. The authority's points are not being heard or heeded by the Minister.

The practical operators of the water system wish to obtain information, in line with the Government directive, based on the results obtained where meters were installed in a large geographical area involving different sections of a community. The water authorities want to know the practical problems involved with installing meters and where to put them. The water authority in Yorkshire needs that information to decide whether meters should be

[Mr. O'Brien]

installed in properties. I believe that it is in the interest of future metering that we should wait until the trials have been considered so that there is evidence to substantiate whether meters should be situated in premises and what installation would mean.

The Water Companies Association believes that, before decisions are taken on the general use of water meters, careful consideration should be given to the impact on demand and to where the meters should be situated. If we accept the view of the Water Companies Association, we should accept new clause 2.

On 27 October there was a second meeting between officials of the Yorkshire water authority and members of the Wakefield district council. It was reported that:

"the Yorkshire Water Board accepted that metering at best would be marginally economic and in submitting the various suggested areas had drawn the Secretary of State's attention to the problems they envisaged. In the end, however, it would have to prove to be an economic proposition for the Board to pursue universal metering throughout its area."

In other words, the Yorkshire water authority has doubts about the economic viability of the scheme that it wishes to apply in the Normanton area. It believes that it could be "marginally economic". It has submitted suggestions to the Secretary of State regarding the areas involved and it requires proof that the proposition is economic. It believes that that assurance should be forthcoming from the evidence that is obtained from the trial meter area. Such information is required before the Yorkshire water authority can proceed with universal metering throughout its area. The message from the Yorkshire water authority to the Government is, "Please do not extend the area of compulsory metering until we have had the opportunity to see what the tests will reveal".

In Committee we were informed that the trial areas would be studied for three years. We were also informed that if a scheme, as suggested to the Secretary of State by the water undertakers, was not working as had been thought, it could be amended and then submitted to the Secretary of State for further consideration. Therefore, a scheme could continue for between three years and five years depending on what information was received from the trial area.

Before the Government insist that additional expense should be incurred by contractors and people involved with the alteration of premises where meters may be installed or provision made to provide a meter, the evidence obtained from the trial areas should be submitted for consideration. Obviously this matter is giving rise to concern not just to Labour Members, but to people outside the House who are following these matters most carefully, including the Water Companies Association. The Water Companies Association is anxious to have all the information before considering the general use of water meters.

On 17 December the Minister said in Committee:

"There is nothing to stop consumers in a trial area from putting forward a request to the water undertaker to try some new technology. Consumers may say to their water authority, 'We believe that it will assist you in formulating more precise answers to a number of the imponderables if we volunteer ourselves for further trial work.' That would be a matter for the undertaker, but he may decide that it would be helpful." —[*Official Report, Standing Committee B*, 17 December 1987; c. 598.]

6.15 pm

Therefore, within the trial area, a suggestion may be made that there should be an amendment to the scheme that has been installed by the water undertakers. If new technology means that a meter could be changed in a few years, there is little purpose in saying to contractors and people who are having a dwelling built or altered that they must make provision for that meter or adapt the plumbing to take it. Such expense could be wasted after two or three years as a result of new technology. We believe that the Bill will lead to such a situation. For that reason, the Minister must pay careful consideration to the new clause.

On 19 January I asked the Minister in Committee:

"Who will carry out the inspection to decide that the pipes are inadequate and who will pay for that inspection? The pipes are not visible for inspection so some excavation will be required. Therefore, there are likely to be problems. Who will be responsible for making that decision and who will bear the cost of any inspections?"

Such inspections will apply to all properties that are being adapted or improved after the date that has been suggested in the Bill. There remain questions as to who will be responsible for certain charges and costs. In Committee the Minister replied:

"The latter question is significant, but I should like to answer it a little later as I am in some doubt and wish to clarify the matter with my officials. I am not sure whether the matter would be dealt with by charging a connection fee or whether a separate cost would be levied directly by the water inspectors who would inspect the work.

The Committee will have noted that there is a shift in emphasis in this legislation, as compared with previous legislation, in regard to who pays. Whereas, in general, there was an onus on the owner of a property to pay under the 1945 and 1951 Acts, in regard to metering, the shift is now towards the undertaker paying". — [*Official Report, Standing Committee B*, 19 January 1988; c. 672.]

If we are to accept that argument—I have no reason not to accept it—it poses great questions as to the benefit and the reason for schedule 1, paragraph 1, as introduced at a later stage in Committee. Perhaps the Minister could develop his reply of 19 January as it applies to schedule 1.

If there are excavations and reasons for extra costs when a property is adapted to meet the requirements laid down in schedule 1, paragraph 1, there will be further problems, as we outlined in Committee, unless we are given the necessary information and assurances. Obviously there are a number of issues that must be considered before we can accept schedule 1, paragraph 1 as presented. "The water briefing", which is a bulletin produced by the Water Authorities Association, refers to charges. The question of charges is very important. People want to know what this measure will cost and are asking, "How much extra will I have to pay? What benefit will I receive? Will it end the question of spiralling charges?" The same questions have been posed to the Water Authorities Association, and I shall quote from the July 1987 issue of "The water briefing". Paragraph 4.1 says:

"Pricing policies and controls are a key component of the whole regulatory package. Water authorities have made clear that the uniform pricing formula suggested in Professor Littlechild's report, with no compensating factor to allow for the differing circumstances and obligations of different authorities, is unlikely to provide the solution. They will wish to discuss pricing mechanisms and their effects in greater detail with the Government."

It is important that all the concerns in this regard, including the proposals to make provision to install a meter in new properties, and all the proposals are

discussed in depth. Consideration will have to be given to all the issues that arise before any legal administration is set up.

The Minister must pay heed to what the water companies are saying. The Minister should give careful attention to new clause 2 because it must be decided whether the people involved will have to meet the necessary expenditure or whether it will be met by the Government.

I should like to remind the Minister of the notes on clauses and schedules that were given to members of the Committee. They say that clause 4 establishes

"a special charging regime designed to protect consumer interests . . ."

Page 12 of the explanatory notes says:

". . . The Secretary of State will himself ensure that the interests of customers whose premises are included in the trials are protected."

We are saying that it is not only the customers in trial areas whose interests should be protected by everyone who could be a victim of these meter trials.

Before the meter trials have finished and before evidence about them is submitted to the Secretary of State and before we know whether the consumer interests will at all times be safeguarded, the Government are saying that provision shall be made whereby the water undertakings can insist that a meter or service pipe can be installed in new properties for supplying water. Alternatively, it is said that provision will have to be made so that a meter can be installed later.

That is not in the best interests of the consumer. It contradicts what the Secretary of State outlined in the Bill and in the explanatory notes — that at all times the interest of the customer is paramount.

The explanatory note on page 15 says:

"The Government intends to monitor each trial very carefully, and in particular will be looking at the nature of complaints from customers and how they are dealt with."

It is difficult to apply the principle and practicalities of the explanatory note to people who will be told that they must make provision for a meter in their dwelling before the trial periods are finished and a report submitted to the Secretary of State. An unfair burden will be placed on people who will have to meet that demand. The Minister must give an assurance from the Dispatch Box on this issue.

New clause 2 is important and has a meaning. If there is to be sincerity in this legislation, which will apply in my constituency and in 10 other areas, we must be assured that hardship will not be experienced by people who will have to install meters when building or adapting new dwellings.

I remind the Minister that the water companies have said that the metering trials and the assessment of their impact on demand should take place before decisions are taken on the general use of water meters. If the Minister accepts that view of the water companies, he must accept new clause 2. If he does not, how will the Government ensure that people adapting or building new dwellings after the suggested date—when they will have to install provisions for meters or install meters in their properties —will be fairly dealt with? I ask the Minister to answer those questions.

Ms. Walley: I shall speak briefly in support of new clause 2, which goes to the heart of the Government's legislation.

The Minister said in the previous debate that he was prepared to take on board considerations that acknowledged the important role played by consumer bodies, trading standard officers and so on. If he is prepared to be sincere and take account of the well-formulated views of those organisations, he should extend that sincerity and apply it to the Government's arguments for compulsory water meter trials, which are the basis of the Bill. We sat through hour after hour in Committee and were given every assurance by the Minister that, when selecting areas for compulsory water metering, every regard would be given to socio-economic, climatic, geographic and geological factors. It seems odd that these trials will take place in areas that, bar one, are Conservative-controlled.

We are about to embark on water metering trials to establish the correct way forward to replace the present water rate charges. Why did the Minister, by way of a planted question on 2 December, give an undertaking that he would move an amendment that would provide for the compulsory installation of water meters at the earliest opportunity—certainly as soon as the Bill becomes law?

The Minister has a chance to prove that the Government are sincere by supporting new clause 2. There must be some reason why the Government are so anxious to rush through this proposal. Why cannot the Government wait until the results in the survey areas are known?

I find the Minister's reply of 2 December quite contradictory. In reply to the question, he said:

"We are concerned about metering the consumption and we believe that it would be a far more accurate guide to measure and update consumption figures to assess whether metering is the best way to move forward."

However, almost in the same breath, in reply to the question,

"Does my hon. Friend agree that it would be possible to start by introducing compulsory metering of new houses?",

the Minister said:

"The simple answer is 'Yes'. For that reason we have introduced an amendment to be considered during the latter stages of the Public Utility Transfers and Water Charges Bill currently in Committee." — [*Official Report*, 2 December 1987; Vol. 1430 c. 919.]

The Minister's reply to that planted question—it had to be planted—demonstrated the Government's insincerity. Compulsory water meters either represent an experimental way of deciding the best way forward or they are connected to some preconceived plan that will hasten the privatisation of the water industry. I support the new clause.

6.30 pm

Ms. Quin: I add my voice to those of my hon. Friends the Members for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) and for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley). The announcement made during Environment questions took many of us by surprise, because it was made in answer to the third supplementary question. It seemed to have been slipped in at the end, although it was obviously a matter of fundamental importance to this Bill and to our debates in Committee. It is right that that point should be made.

Furthermore, the fact that the Government have decided to provide for the installation of meters in all new properties seems to suggest that their mind is firmly made up and that, as my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North said, the trials are nothing but a sham. What is the purpose of having trials if the Government have

[Ms. Quin]

made up their mind already? Perhaps the Minister will reassure us on this point by listing for us the alternative forms of charging for water, other than water metering.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: I shall not delay the Labour Front Bench spokesman for very long. However, new clause 2 is important because it is a test of the Government's genuine commitment to the metering trials. There are no two ways about it. The Government say that they are serious about a metering trials scheme. They say they wish to try metering to see whether it works and to decide whether to opt for compulsory metering. They say that they are serious about examining the difficulties that will undoubtedly arise for some of the poorest in our society, which need to be taken into account and which may be a bar to such compulsory metering. If they believe that, they should not be proposing measures that clearly pre-empt such a scheme.

Schedule 1(1) is aimed at preparing the ground for a compulsory metering scheme right across the country before the metering trials have even taken place. Representatives of my local water board raised the issue with me before the Minister had tabled the amendment and before he had publicly announced it. I was asked, "Will you be supporting the Government amendment? We think that it is important so that we can get metering installed as soon as possible after the trial scheme." In effect, they were saying, "This measure is important because it will allow us to put in compulsory metering at the earliest possible opportunity" — in an area where there has been no trial scheme. In other words, the measure is a way of bringing forward privatisation and compulsory metering across the board.

If Ministers were genuine about wanting a trial scheme the results of which they could examine and from which they were prepared to learn lessons—they might have to decide that compulsory metering as proposed does not allow for adequate consumer protection or for the protection of those who most need it—they would not be putting forward this proposal, which they did not even come up with when they were drafting the Bill. This proposal has been advanced as a result of pressure from the water authorities, which want privatisation pushed through as early as possible—not with any thought for the consumer or the results of a metering trial scheme. I hope that the new clause will be passed because it is important.

Mr. Boyes: We have had a good debate on this important matter. The Minister must be most embarrassed about the proposal, because, as my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley) said, he tried to sneak in this change of policy at Question Time. As my hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin) said, that took us by surprise. It is most unfortunate that the Minister had to have recourse to a planted question to announce a policy change that has serious implications. As my hon. Friends and the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) said, it nails the lie about the water metering trials being trials. I suspect that the trials may be intended to establish whether the hardware works. They will have nothing to do with people or consumers. The Government have made up their mind that the trials will be successful whatever happens.

During the debate on new clause 1, I reiterated the question that I asked the Minister a dozen times or more in Committee. How will the Government determine whether the trials have been successful? How are they going to analyse the results? We never got an answer to that question in Committee, and this evening I again challenged the Minister to reply to that specific question, which is of great interest to all Opposition Members. We need to know in advance what criteria will be used to judge failure or success so that we can measure the results against them. If the Minister gives us no criteria, it is obvious that he will say that the scheme was successful.

The other reason why we think that the trials are a sham piece of kidology is that there are two Bills running in parallel — the Public Utilities Transfers and Water Charges Bill and the Local Government Finance Bill. The Minister said in Standing Committee:

"we have announced, in the Local Government Finance Bill, our intention to abolish domestic rates from April 1990. New domestic properties and dwellings created by conversions will not be rated from that date. They will come under the new system. Therefore, it is necessary that water undertakers have an alternative means of charging for their services to such properties." — [*Official Report, Standing Committee B*, 14 January 1988; c. 666.]

In other words, irrespective of how long we take on this Bill or of what happens in connection with it, the Minister, the Secretary of State and others in the Department of the Environment have already determined that water metering for new houses is absolutely essential because of the abolition of domestic rates and their replacement by a poll tax.

If the poll tax comes in and the Minister has no method of charging for water other than by metering, whatever happens in the trials he will not dare do anything other than announce in one and a half or two years that the trials have been successful. He will have no alternative. Of course this is a sham, of course it is idiocy and of course the Minister, who time after time has proved himself to be extremely intelligent and knowledgeable on these matters, must find it extremely embarrassing to have to push this proposal.

I am told that the source of the information was the Minister himself.

Mr. Moynihan *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Boyes: I hope that the Minister is not suggesting that civil servants are accountable. If so, we shall say that civil servants should have better things to do. I do not believe that the information came from a civil servant. I believe that it came from a member of the press who was doodling. According to the *Daily Mirror*, the Minister made 640 interventions in Committee. He is proud of that, but I take it as a compliment to Opposition Members for having pressed the Government so hard in Committee.

In Committee, my hon. Friends the Members for Gateshead, East, for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson), for Stoke-on-Trent, North, for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) and for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) asked the Minister the most difficult, penetrating and pointed questions. As a consequence, the Minister has been forced to intervene on all those occasions. Although he might claim a record—if it is a record, he can take credit for it—I hope that he will explain to his civil servants and to the Secretary of State why he had to make all those interventions.

I wish to ask the Minister to comment further on a matter which greatly concerns Opposition Members—the activities of the East Worcestershire Waterworks company. I do not question the integrity of the people who run that company, or of the dedicated staff who work there, but the company has not acted correctly; indeed, it may have acted illegally. I raised this matter in Committee when it was brought to my attention that the company was issuing a letter to customers about water metering.

Like many other companies, that company offered customers the opportunity of voluntary metering, provided that the cost of installation of the meter was borne by the consumer. In September 1985, the company decided that properties with new supplies should be connected automatically to water meters.

The letter to customers started, "Dear Customer", so it was not a personal letter to individual consumers. It was a general circular letter, so presumably everyone concerned received the same letter. The letter went on:

"It has been normal practice for the Water Industry in the United Kingdom to charge for water supplies to domestic properties on the basis of rateable value of the property supplied which is used as a proxy to reflect the quantity of water likely to be used at the property.

The relationship has come under increasing attack in recent years on the grounds of unfairness."

That may be a value judgment by the East Worcestershire Waterworks company and many Opposition Members would claim that it is fairer to use rateable values than meters. That is what we have argued in the Bill. However, we do not agree with that judgment.

The letter continued:

"In order to overcome this criticism and to make charges which properly reflect the quantity of water used by our customers, the Company adopted a policy of metering all new domestic properties with effect from the 1st September, 1985."

When the East Worcestershire Waterworks company issued that letter, the proposal to introduce compulsory metering of all new properties was not even a twinkle in the Minister's eye.

6.45 pm

As I am not a barrister or a legal expert, I would not know whether the company has acted irregularly or improperly, but I could seek legal advice on that. The letter was signed by Mr. G. A. Booker, chief executive. The letter did not state that metering was optional. As the Minister knows, when people receive an official letter, they believe that the contents reflect the law, and that therefore it must be correct.

When I raised the matter with the Minister, he agreed to take it up with the East Worcestershire Waterworks company on behalf of Opposition Members. I thank the Minister for that. He has sent me two letters, dated 29 January, which deal with this matter. He sent me a copy of the metered water supply agreement form issued by the East Worcestershire Waterworks company and other documents which deal with completion of a meter card. He also sent me a copy of the terms and conditions for the supply of water by meter.

I have studied those documents, particularly the agreement that the consumer must sign. When I sign agreements, I am accustomed to there being little red boxes which state the individual's rights under consumer law, so that, if he does not like the goods, he can send them back after so many days, not pay any further instalments and withdraw from the signed contract. The agreement makes no mention of the consumer's rights, nor does it state the conditions under which he can withdraw from the agreement.

I highlight this company because it was brought to my attention and because the Minister undertook to check with the water authorities and the water companies whether this was a common practice. Again, I thank him for doing so. All the water companies and water authorities may have done this for some time. The letter dated 29 January that I received from the Minister on 1 February, stated:

"I am now able to let you have the information which I promised in Committee on 21 January (Official Report, Col. 702) about the general practice of water undertakers on the installation of meters in domestic properties under their present powers. I have written to you separately, as on reflection I think was right, about the position of the East Worcestershire Waterworks Company.

In the time available, it was not possible to consult all the undertakers individually. But I am advised by their Association that the water authorities do not routinely install meters in new domestic properties. They charge for water on the usual RV basis, unless the customer asks for a meter. The Water Companies' Association report that their members have various policies. East Worcestershire is the only one which arranges for the developers to install a meter and then charges by measure as a matter of policy unless the customer asks for RV charging."

In none of the documentation supplied to me previously, or on 1 February by the Minister, does it say that the East Worcestershire Waterworks company—which is unique—informed people, either by correspondence or by telephone, that they could opt out. That concerns me greatly.

This squalid little Bill is all about imposing on people something that they may not want. From now onwards, all new houses will have water meters installed in preparation for metering. Rateable values will have to exist for a long time after the introduction of the poll tax because water meters cannot be incorporated into all houses overnight. However, we are concerned that one water company has acted prematurely.

The Minister has been true to the spirit of the Bill, but the Government have failed to give us sufficient notice of their amendment concerning meters in new buildings. I hope that the Minister will comment on the East Worcestershire Waterworks company. My hon. Friend the Member for Normanton made a lengthy analytical speech and we have given the Minister much to think about. I hope that the strength of our arguments will enable the Minister to concede new clause 2.

Mr. Moynihan: If this is my 631st intervention—we have the arithmetic talents of a first-rate young lady, Jackie Allen, to thank for that information—the only reason has been my determination to answer the many important interventions put to me. Miss Allen is an assiduous student of the Public Utility Transfers and Water Charges Bill with a remarkable capacity to count. She is to be commended if she has embarrassed me with her comments.

One important point that she would have drawn to my attention — the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) was right to refer to it again—is how we shall assess the success or otherwise of the trials. We do not see them as scientific experiments—to use the hon. Gentleman's words — to be judged against defined scientific criteria on which one can say that they have succeeded or failed. We regard all the additional

[Mr. Moynihan]

knowledge in a whole range of issues connected with the trial schemes to be important, and each incremental learning curve along which the water authorities move are successes in their own right because they will bring additional knowledge to the water undertakers. That is essential in determining the outcome of their considerations about the best possible form of charging for water after 1990.

The hon. Member for Houghton and Washington made an important point about the East Worcestershire Waterworks company. I gave him an undertaking that I would try to make a further statement on that point to the House at the appropriate time. I understand that the East Worcestershire Waterworks company generally has meters installed in new properties by developers and asks the new occupier to sign a measured water supply agreement if he wishes his water charges to be based on the measured flow. The vast majority of customers in new properties choose to sign the agreement and pay for water according to measure.

I now understand that the company has responded to the concern expressed by hon. Members in Committee and decided to amend its literature to make the option of being charged by rateable value or by measure more apparent to occupiers of new properties. As I said when the issue was raised in Committee—I know that all hon. Members understand this point—I cannot give an opinion on the legality or otherwise of the company's position. That is a matter for the company, its customers and its legal advisers. However, I hope that that additional information, which has been taken up in the national press only today, shows that responsible action has been taken by the East Worcestershire Waterworks company. That action is due as much to the representations made by the Government as to the persistent pressure that the Opposition have applied to the issue and brought regularly to the Committee's attention.

The new clause raises the important issue of whether, within the constraints of legislation, water undertakers should be left to make their own decisions about future charging policy, or whether Parliament should take their decisions for them. In the Government's view, the industry and its eventual shareholders, not Parliament, are best placed to decide whether a move to metering is worth while.

In particular, the industry needs to make a decision soon on how to charge for water services to new domestic properties and conversions completed after 1 April 1990 which, as a result of our eagerly awaited reform of the rating system, will not be rated after that date. Schedule 1, paragraph 1, would allow each undertaker to decide whether to meter new domestic connections. It does not require them — I emphasise that — to meter such connections. The decision, quite rightly, is left to each undertaker's commercial judgment.

However, I expect that each undertaker will take full advantage of that new power since it will give them access to the metering option at minimum inconvenience and expense to themselves, their customers and the construction industry. The Government will expect the building industry and consumer groups to be fully consulted by the water industry in drawing up specifications for use under this provision. We expect that that consultation process will take about one year. In consequence, we do not see the provision coming into force until at least one year after the Bill receives Royal Assent, but, for the reasons that I have already mentioned, before 1 April 1990. That, as hon. Members will be aware, would be by commencement order under clause 8(2).

To postpone the use of those powers until 1993, when the trials are likely to be complete, or later, to allow for the compilation of a report and for approval by Parliament, would, apart from creating enormous problems for the industry in charging for new properties, add to the cost of any later decision to move to more widespread metering. I emphasise that we are talking about new properties, not about requiring water undertakers to meter such connections. We are talking about an opportunity for water undertakers to decide whether to meter such new domestic connections.

To sum up, the effect of the new clause would be to delay the adoption of widespread metering, if that is what the industry eventually decides to do. I re-emphasise that it is not the Government's intention to pre-empt the outcome of the trials, or to argue at this stage, or indeed at any stage, that their view about charging is sacrosanct and will not take into account the full outcome of the metering trials as the detail of those trials comes to light. Indeed, flat-rate charges are an option which a number of water undertakers are looking at carefully alongside another range of charging systems.

Some have argued—we looked at this in Committee—that the high level of infrastructural costs that would go towards the traditional standing charges is such that the water supply element would be a small proportion of the total bill. Those who urge that would argue against metering and more in favour of a flat-rate charge. That sort of issue needs to be examined in detail during the metering trials. It is not for the Government to pre-empt the outcome of those; it is for the industry, in the final analysis, to decide on the method of charging that would be most appropriate to its specific circumstances.

Mr. O'Brien: Has the Minister—or the Secretary of State—agreed with the water industry that charging by rateable value will continue into the next century?

7 pm

Mr. Moynihan: No, I have not. From 1990, for 10 years, the industry will be able to continue on rateable value, seeking new charging systems to be introduced during that period and not into the next century. That 10-year period — the hon. Gentleman knows that I always try to answer his questions accurately, and it would be misleading to say that the system was going into the next century—will expire and that option will no longer be in place on new year's day in the year 2000. But it will still be there for the undertakers on new year's eve.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: What would happen to a water-connected property that was greatly improved during that time? Would it pay on the basis of a rateable value assessment made before those improvements or would it be possible to have some form of assessment done on that property in the intervening period? If the latter is the case — it is the only thing that would make sense — why could not the same be done for new properties or properties that had just been connected to water?

Mr. Moynihan: The undertaker will be entitled to use that rateable value and to go over the charging system that

it wanted, in the full knowledge that the rateable value would not be available in the year 2000, at any stage during the 10-year period. This is an enabling power, as the hon. Gentleman knew when we introduced the complex provisions, to allow undertakers to insist that new properties should be fitted with appropriate technology so that metering could be put in place at an appropriate time. Our reasons for doing so were as much to avoid duplication of cost——

Mr. Matthew Taylor: I understand that, but, unless I am much mistaken, the Minister has not quite got my point. If there is an option for properties to continue to be charged on the basis of rateable value, is it possible to update that rateable value if the property changes? Is there a possibility of a new rating assessment up until the year 2000?

Mr. Moynihan: I understand that the answer is no. I must correct a point about which I was trying to be specific earlier. I made a minor error: it will not be on new year's eve in the year 1999. Rateable values will continue to be an option until 31 March in the year 2000. Those extra 100 or so days are relevant in the interests of accuracy. I am grateful to those who have reminded me of that important information, which is now on the record.

I believe that the main points about the new clause have already been covered in my response. I want now to take up one important point about charging that was raised by the hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien). Except for certain specific circumstances set out in schedule 1, paragraph 5, the cost of complying with the requirement under the schedule is to be met by the developer. That is critically important, reflecting the shift of emphasis from the consumer to the developer since the earlier legislation of 1945 and 1951. Limited exceptions to the rule in sub-paragraph (1) are provided for in paragraph 2. They are outlined clearly and concisely. When a meter is installed by or at the request of the undertaker, he must bear the costs of installation and connection, and any expenses of maintaining, repairing or removing a meter in accordance with any requirements of the undertaker; and the expense of any works associated with the installation or connection, or with the maintenance, repair or removal of the meter in accordance with any requirements of the undertaker. Additional limited exceptions are provided in sub-paragraph (2), but I hope that what I have said clarifies the point about charging.

I ask the House to reject the new clause.

Question put and negatived.

New Clause 4

REPORT TO PARLIAMENT OF COSTS OF ELECTRICITY PRIVATISATION

The Secretary of State shall report to Parliament all items of expenditure including consultancy fees, incurred by electricity boards or the Electricity Council in facilitating the transfer of their property or functions to another body corporate, arising from the privatisation of the electricity supply industry.—*[Mr. Prescott.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

New clause 4 is a somewhat narrower clause dealing with clause 1, which concerns the electricity industry. I have read the Committee and Second Reading debates on the privatisation of the electricity supply industry. It was a surprise to many of us that the clause should have been included in the Bill. All that I can tell from the debates that have been held is that the Government think that it would be right for the electricity board and the Electricity Council to be able to spend their money for consultation and fees on the possible plans that are being prepared for the privatisation of the industry. However, they appeared to fear the fact that NALGO had threatened to take action in the case of a water board, and so the Government have taken this chance to reinforce and state in legislation their view that it would be entirely proper and legal for the electricity board and the Electricity Council to use consultancy fees and to take into account recommendations and considerations on the transfer of their property or functions to another body corporate. The intention of the new clause is to make it clear that the Secretary of State shall report to Parliament all items of expenditure incurred in that way.

The Opposition's concern is to take this opportunity to debate what sort of reports the Government, or the Electricity Council, have in mind, and why it is necessary to take powers in this way. As the legislation is not yet before the House, one presumes that this is a sort of paving clause. I accept the Minister's statement in Committee that there are no powers in clause 1 — perhaps he will reaffirm that today — to advance any part of the privatisation of the electricity industry. It is merely to prepare the reports and advice that the Government and the CEGB need to prepare and influence the legislation that is to come.

What are the reports about—the financial problems that will arise from privatisation? Are they about the consumer, the nuclear part of the industry or other ports of call? Those are all essential matters that will be directly affected by the Government's proposals for and commitment to privatisation of the electricity supply industry.

This debate gives the Government an opportunity to give us an idea of what they had in mind. What has influenced the Government to want to spend their money in this way? If action were taken by NALGO in connection with the moneys used for consultation—presumably the legislation is not retrospective — and the reports had already been prepared by the Electricity Council and the CEGB, had the action been found to be illegal, it would still be illegal and not affected by the Bill. If so, why is this being done? One assumes that the provision will not apply, so why is it in the Bill? There was some discussion about that in Committee, but it is still not clear.

Our new clause is designed to deal with the Bill as it stands. We want to take into account the sort of things that the Government have in mind. I note that the Minister, replying to queries raised by hon. Members in Committee, said:

"the authorities would not have to fight lengthy and costly legal battles to defend their position. That would result in extra costs to people who are paying for their services." — [*Official Report, Standing Committee B*, 10 November 1987; c. 46.]

It seems that the Minister felt that the costs were not justified and that if there were any fear of them arising he wanted to take the chance to prevent such extra costs being imposed on the consumer. At the end of the day the consumer must pay all the costs. There was a debate in

[Mr. John Prescott]

Committee as to whether there would be any limit on the costs. The Minister replied that, because he set the effective rate and the fiduciary duties of nationalised industries, that would control how much was spent on the reports. That is not an effective way of controlling expenditure. He did not answer when several hon. Members asked in Committee what limits would be on the expenditure.

Even on a most generous assessment of the costs, they pale into insignificance when compared with what taxpayers will have to pay in commission to the City for handling the privatisation of the various industries. I think that about £500 million has been paid to bankers, accountants and solicitors for the 13 or 14 privatisations that we have had. It is peculiar that the Government are concerned about the chickenfeed of costs to be imposed on the consumer when the major cost of the sale of industries —hundreds of millions of pounds—has caused them no concern before. One can only assume that the amount involved in the privatisation of electricity, which will be greater than almost all the others put together, will be of considerable benefit to the City, where people have already been hired.

I do not know who the people are who are involved in the consultancies. I have tried to find out from the various bodies, but they are extremely secretive about what has been done and how much money has been spent. I know from the limited amount of information that has been published that the Government, the CEGB and the Electricity Council have different bankers and different accountants who will presumably do very well from acting for the different parts of the industry. That is all that I can find out about the people who have already been hired.

It would appear that the consultancy fees are limited very much to narrow financial obligations. I believe that the only concern of the Government in privatisation is how much money they can get from selling the silver. They are not concerned about the benefit to the consumer or whether the reorganisation that they wish to force on the electricity supply industry will be more efficient and safer for the consumer. Many people in the industry challenge the objects that the Government say they have in mind.

We want to know from the Minister whether the consultancy fees and other moneys to be paid out are really for the financial sector of the industry — the accountants and bankers — or whether the money is being used to get an assessment of the consequences of breaking up the electricity supply industry. We know from the public debate that the proposal to separate the grid from the CEGB is controversial. The various parties have made strong statements about the consequences for the consumer and for the security of the industry.

In the Second Reading debate the Secretary of State said:

"Much preliminary work needs to be done both within the Government and the industry itself. This Bill will ensure that the industry can participate fully in that process." — [*Official Report*, 21 October 1987; Vol. 120, c. 773.]

Presumably the process is the privatisation of the industry. In the debate that has gone on since October there have been differing views about the consequences of certain actions that are proposed. It is unfortunate that the Secretary of State has not taken the opportunity to tell the House tonight his thinking on the reports that he has got. We have to watch him on television or read what he has said at a luxury hotel. I do not remember the name—I do not know the luxury hotels — but yesterday in a luxury hotel he lectured the mining industry on the consequences if it began to play politics with the industry. There is no one more politically motivated than the Secretary of State in his actions on the mining industry.

We have to wait for the press, the television or a side remark to find out about fundamental policy. Why could the Secretary of State not take the opportunity to come to the House and give us some information about the reports that we are asking for so that we may assess for ourselves the consequences of privatisation? The Secretary of State referred on Second Reading to a public debate in which the industry could participate fully; presumably he did not have it in mind that Parliament would take part in that full debate, because he referred only to the industry.

7.15 pm

The only reference to Parliament being considered is in complaints about the privatisation of utilities. When the gas industry was privatised many criticisms of the Select Committee about the procedures adopted for privatisation, about the protection of the consumer and about concern that a public monopoly was being turned into a private monopoly have been borne out by events.

The reason for the Bill is that the Government wish to move from a public monopoly to a private monopoly. Hence our fears about the attempt to break up the generation side and the distribution side, all in the name of competition. We wait to see the consequences.

In their response to the Select Committee the Government promised that they would issue a White Paper before the privatisation of any other public utility. Yet in this Bill we have a clause which refers to the privatisation of the electricity industry. In Committee the Minister said:

"The Government have a clear view of the merits of privatising the electricity industry". — [*Official Report, Standing Committee B*, 10 November 1987; c. 44.]

What he meant was that he was not sure how they could do it. They did not know what the full effects would be. Presumably that was why they have to have reports. But they are not really interested in the consequences so long as they can get the money for the Treasury. That is all it is about. It is not about the rights of consumers. We have been told by the Minister and the Secretary of State about the exciting period for the consumers. They have exciting ideas about giving rebates if consumers do not get a proper service. We have yet to hear more about that.

Parliament is not allowed to debate the issues. We have to glean the information from public statements. There is an opportunity in this debate for all the believers in the privatisation of electricity to put forward their views. Much of the money will be made by Government supporters, the people involved in the process. Where are they now? They are not here. They are not interested in whether it is good for the consumer. They have no report to tell them the nuclear industry is to be tacked on. They are not interested in that. All they are interested in is the value of the privatisation.

The Secretary of State is very good at lecturing miners and everyone else but he cannot come here to tell Parliament how he stands. He cannot do the House the courtesy of coming to listen to the concerns of hon. Members, particularly after the announcement in Scotland today that because of his policies a British Coal contract will be cancelled, which will put thousands of miners out

of work and result in the closure of more mines in Scotland. That is just the forerunner of what will happen in the rest of the United Kingdom.

I ask the Minister specifically what reports he has in mind. What moneys are to be used by the bodies concerned to prepare for privatisation? I would like to assume that the Minister is not solely concerned with the financial effects but may be concerned about the industry. Indeed, there is an obligation on the Department and on the industry to do something about that. But the Government are fast changing the terms of reference of the board, the chairman and the Electricity Council so as to kill off any critical opposition from those in the industry to their plans.

Have the Government done an assessment to justify the reports that we hear about the split of the CEGB from the national grid? We hear from the people who run the industry that there will be blackouts. I do not know whether that is right or wrong, but security of supply by the publicly owned electricity industry is important. We have been proud of the security of supply and it has been praised on both sides of the House. Indeed, recently during the gales electricity has still been supplied. In the home of privatisation, America, we see the fears of the people about a privatised service. It does not give them the security that we have with our publicly owned system. That is an issue on which there could be a debate, but when the Government decided to break up the CEGB and the grid—if that is their decision—how did they arrive at that view?

Have the reports been done? If the reports have been done, why have they not been made available to the House so that we can debate them? Is the CEGB to be broken up into two sectors? The industry says that that would cost far more than it would save. We have heard what the Secretary of State says on television, but the industry is saying the opposite. Parliament should be entitled to express a view about those matters.

I take the view from what we have heard in Committee —I had hoped we might hear differently today—that ideology is behind this. The Government say that they believe in the merits, but they just want to privatise for the sake of privatisation. They have not looked into this; it is a leap into the dark. They will risk this major industry, with a £12 billion turnover and £45 billion of assets; an important industry to the economy and to the industries that depend upon it. Plant manufacturers, the coal industry and the nuclear industry are all dependent on the policies to be pursued in those areas. It is crucial that the Government should make an assessment of what is going on.

Reports and studies should be carried out, but I am worried as to whether the reports will be independent. If they are independent, will they be taken into account if they arrive at a different conclusion from the Government? The Government do not want to listen to impartial advice. They simply change the chairmen. They have changed the chairman of health bodies, and they would change the chairman of the CEGB when his time is up if he does not carry out what the Government want. The Government should tell us of the consequences for industry of privatisation in the very important areas to which the studies should address themselves.

I hope that the Minister will tell us whether Parliament will be involved. He should tell us, instead of constantly teasing us, whether there will be a White Paper before the industry is privatised which will assess the consequences and whether the study will be taken into account. I hope that the Minister will make a definitive statement on the suggestions in the press as to whether there is tobe a White Paper. He should answer the question put by the Select Committee on whether there will be a White Paper.

I hope that the studies will take into account the problems associated with privatisation. We have read in the press of the decisions coming out bit by bit. Taking the nuclear industry as an example, will the Minister request a report on the consequences for the nuclear industry? We have heard from the Secretary of State that, while he believes in market forces, he is scared that if we privatise the electricity industry the nuclear industry may not order any more generating stations, so apparently a decision will be imposed on the privatised electricity industry that 20 per cent. of electricity must be produced by nuclear generation. That is what might be called an energy policy, although the Government constantly tell us that they do not believe in an energy policy; they believe in market forces. If they believe in market forces, why have they come to a judgment—perhaps the report led them along that path—that 20 per cent. of electricity must be produced by nuclear generation? We know the decommissioning cost of Magnox. Will that line be extended and will that bear the cost of privatisation? A legitimate inquiry should be made on how that will affect the price of electricity.

Have the reports been done? We should be debating the major consequences of privatisation. The Secretary of State has made a statement, and presumably he has made up his mind. If he has made up his mind, why does he need money for reports? Apparently he has made up his mind on the importation of coal. We have heard tonight that the Scottish electricity generating board has taken the view, as the Government have given it higher profit targets and have told them to reduce costs, that the only effective way to reduce costs is to replace British coal with imported coal, so we see the planning agreements for greater imports of coal. Many studies have been done on how many mining jobs will be lost—we are told that it will be 1,700 in Scotland—and what will be the effect on the community and on the balance of payments if we replace domestically produced coal with imported coal. The loss of production of 30 million tonnes could add £1 billion to the balance of payments, which would have an effect on the real economy.

Are the studies being done by the Government? If they are, why do they want the Bill to provide the money? Is it because the Secretary of State has already come to a judgment? The CEGB and the Scottish electricity board are already applying what the Secretary of State has told them to do, with major and disastrous consequences for the miners and pits, yet the Secretary of State has the audacity to tell us that the miners are playing politics, when he has fixed them in a political ring. They cannot win; there is no future for them. It does not matter how much he refers to pit closures and redundancies, because the Government have made up their mind to import coal and close down pits, to the worst fears of the miners, yet the Minister will come to the Dispatch Box and tell us about confidence in the industry.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (Mr. Michael Spicer): This is the most appalling distortion, well below the normal standard of the hon. Member for

[Mr. Michael Spicer]

Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott). We have been absolutely clear about the coal industry — that a privatised electricity industry will be free to buy coal in the best markets. We have said that because we are confident that British coal can be competitive if it reforms. We have vast reserves of highly commercial coal and we intend to put money behind that coal so that it will be competitive with foreign coal. It is a total distortion to make any other case.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I remind the House that we are dealing with reports to Parliament. Most Front Benchers are going far too wide.

Mr. Prescott: I take the point that we are debating reports, and those reports will be presented to Parliament. I am trying to ascertain whether the reports have already been prepared, because the Bill says that the Government want to be assured that they have the authority and legal powers to commission such reports. I find it peculiar that the Government should have to wait for the Bill, as money has already been spent on various reports. It appears that the threat of legal action is there, irrespective of the Bill. I want to know what reports have already been done, because the Bill will give us power to ask the Secretary of State to report to Parliament. What should we do with the reports that have already been prepared?

The Minister talked about market price. He should apply that to the nuclear industry. Why is he imposing a condition? Why is it strategically right to impose a condition on nuclear generated power if he is not prepared to put the argument for coal? It is vindictiveness against the coal industry. I do not want to open up that debate, but I presume that some reports were done by his Department. Can we have the reports so that we can make an honest judgment as to whether what the Secretary of State has been telling us is correct?

The point we are making is critical: Parliament must be informed. The Government have nothing but contempt for Parliament, when they constantly use their votes to force things through. The Government have no desire to inform Parliament. A combined Committee unanimously called on the Government to produce a White Paper, and we would have felt that we had made some advances if the Minister had said that that report would be produced. We are worried that we do not have access to reports and we are worried about the continued nobbling by the Government of the chairmen of nationalised industries, either by replacing them or by not making available their reports.

We do not have the means to judge the independence of reports. If the Secretary of State and Minister want evidence of that, they should look at the reply given to Parliament about the reappointment of Sir Philip Jones. The Government changed the terms of reference of a chairman who had been critical of the Government's proposals and told him to get into line if he wants the job and to carry out the Government's policy. They instructed him, for all to see — I will not quote it, but it was reported in *Hansard* last Friday. They have nobbled a chairman who disagreed with the Government.

We have moved the new clause because Parliament must be given the chance to make a judgment about reports. I hope that the Minister will give us more substantial replies than he did in the Committee, when no reports and no answers to questions were given. We must have a satisfactory reply to this. It is crucial to the rights of Parliament to check on the Executive in the privatisation of one of our fundamentally important industries.

7.30 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): Like my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott), I am very keen that the reports that have been referred to should be presented to the House so that hon. Members can have an opportunity to decide where they want to go. The House will be aware that there have been expressions of concern that there may be a traumatic spin-off for the mining industry arising out of the privatisation of the electricity industry.

We know that at present there is an understanding that the electricity industry will take 80 per cent. of the output of British Coal. We are all aware that if privatisation takes place, that understanding will no longer exist; we shall be open to the commercial market. There is speculation that preparations are under way for greater imports of coal into this country. The Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill and the North Killingholme Cargo Terminal Bill, on the Order Paper today, certainly point that way. If this is not the case, what are they all about?

I too am interested in the costs of and charges for consultancies, particularly looking at some of the consultants—the Electricity Council, Price Waterhouse, N.M. Rothschild and, when it comes to the CEGB, Lazards. We all know who is involved in that company. It is a man called Sir Ian MacGregor, whom the coal industry will never forget.

I believe that it is absolutely essential that the House have these reports before there is any further privatisation. It is absolutely right that White Papers should be presented and that there should be discussions before the Government continue on their path of channelling profits to the private sector. I also believe that, if there is to be a massive rundown of the coal industry arising out of the privatisation of electricity, the Government should give serious consideration to the effects of that and not leave us in a similar situation to that in which we have been left previously, with whole communities wiped out and no new employment opportunities provided.

The House has a right to know what the Government intend to do and how many men are going to be affected by the privatisation of electricity. Will it be another 40,000, as I can pretty well imagine? Indeed, as recently as last year, an eminent economist, Mr. J. McCluskey, while giving evidence to the Select Committee on Energy, forecast that the work force in the mining industry would be down to 64,000 by 1990. If the Government have any reports indicating this, the House has a right to know about them. If the young men in the mining industry, where the average age at present is 34, are going to find themselves thrown out of work because of the privatisation of the electricity industry, the House has a right to know.

The House also has a right to know whether the Government have any reports, or intend making any reports, on the 20 per cent. nuclear power proportion, and if that will need subsidising. I put that question to the Minister because the indications are and my advice is that it could well be that the 20 per cent. will need subsidising. If that is the case, if we have suffered throughout the

mining industry because of the withdrawal of subsidy only for it to be transferred to the nuclear sector, the House has a right to know. These reports are absolutely essential.

I hope that tonight the Minister will be able to say whether the Government are going to publicise these reports, if there are reports, and inform the House of the cost in terms of wiping out jobs in the mining industry. I believe that the Minister has an obligation, on behalf of the Government, to make these facts available before any major decisions on the subject are taken.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I rise to support the very modest new clause proposed by my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott), which I expect the Government to accept. All it does is require the Secretary of State to

"report to Parliament all items of expenditure including consultancy fees, incurred by electricity boards or the Electricity Council in facilitating the transfer of their property or functions to another body corporate, arising from the privatisation of the electricity supply industry."

The legislation that we are dealing with gives, under clause 1, massively wide powers. For example, under clause 1(3), the Minister will have the power to

"do that thing with a view to promoting the interests of—

(a) any body corporate to which it is proposed to transfer the property or functions."

The Minister is provided with the power to promote the interests of any body corporate to which it is proposed to transfer the property or functions — not actually a transfer of property or functions, but simply a proposal to do so. This is a massive, sweeping power. It is not unreasonable, therefore, that we should ask that the Minister provide reports to Parliament about the application of the clause.

After all, we would not want the Minister to be giving kickbacks to the friends of the Conservative party who are contributing to its campaign funds. Under clause 1, the Government could provide a consultancy for or ask for a report from all that legion of organisations which have been giving money to the Conservative party. That would be a corrupt use of taxpayers' money, but it would have the gloss of legality because the Minister has been given such wide powers.

I expect that the Minister will deny any such activity, and the best way to embark on that denial is to accept the new clause in order to show that the Department of Energy is dealing at arm's length with all those organisations. He could also say that to demonstrate that arm's-length relationship the Government will promote various reports, consultations and so forth. One of the benefits of such reports would be to demonstrate that Government Members who are struggling along like the rest of us on their £24,000 a year are not benefiting from this privatisation measure through the various consultancies on which they are moonlighting and which are included in that very thick tome, the Register of Members' Interests.

This covers a wide range. Price Waterhouse has been mentioned, for instance. The hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) is a consultant to Price Waterhouse. This is a rich vein which one could mine for some time. I should have thought that, as the various bodies receive contracts from the Department, the Minister will be only too happy to provide the House with reports. There is in any event a question of general accountability.

The Minister cannot say that privatising electricity will lead to safeguards in management or standards. A few recent examples show that private ownership, with its pursuit of profit, sometimes disregards standards of safety. One has only to mention Townsend Thoresen for a shiver to run down people's spines. The private enterprise supervision of that organisation has not exactly become a byword for safety standards.

In the Bill, however, we are dealing with the electricity industry, which has one of the most dangerous and potentially harmful methods of electricity generation known to mankind. We ought to have some regular reports to know what is going on and to stop the Minister uttering the slick platitude that he uttered a few moments ago — that the electricity generating industry would be allowed to buy coal from the best market. What precisely does that mean? If the Minister wants to say now that that is not what he means, and that he means that coal will be bought in future from British coal mines, let him say so. Let him not talk in platitudes about buying coal from the best market. That generally involves the concept of competition. We have to make a judgment about the best supply of coal in a competitive market place.

It will be interesting to hear a statement from the Minister that, in carrying out the terms of clause 1, the Government will ensure that no coal is bought from South Africa, where black people are exploited. If he said that, it would at least reassure us. But if any of the bodies corporate to which it is proposed to transfer the property or functions of the electricity generating industry will develop a partnership in South Africa, should not Parliament know about it? It would be in the interests of the community at large for Parliament to receive reports of such a development.

I am sure that the Minister will join in with a conventional consensus about apartheid, as some Conservatives do who say that they are against apartheid. Let the Minister demonstrate that to the House by accepting the new clause so that he can report to Parliament. Should any of the nefarious organisations with which the Minister might become involved promote a body corporate to take over electricity generation, the Minister can report to the House. He knows that he will get our backing.

7.45 pm

As my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) has said about fair competition, what of subsidies that other Common Market countries provide for their mining industries? Will that be dealt with fairly, or will the bodies corporate examine that sort of issue at the request of the Minister, if he is prepared to examine matters on that basis? Will he be prepared, for example, to say that we will not purchase coal from the mines of Colombia, where children are sent to work? We will be pleased to know about that, and he can include the information in the regular reports that the modest new clause asks him to make. The mining community will know then that this is not a vicious vendetta against them, to usurp their position by importing coal from any country where people are exploited to a greater degree.

In our experience, private industry often cuts corners to make greater profit. We must know what is happening in an industry with such a dangerous form of electricity generation. Indeed, at the moment there is insufficient

[Mr. Bob Cryer]

information with regard to public facilities. The Central Electricity Generating Board frequently diffuses information that is economical with the truth.

To remind the Minister, not long ago a Government employee called Sir Robert Armstrong, who was paid a fantastic salary because he was a man of such importance, was knighted for lying to a court in Australia. What an extraordinary set of values! If he had been a sweeper-up, lathe operator, turner or weaver in an ordinary firm and caught out for lying, he would have been sacked. But the Government, with their warped values, reward people who are economical with the truth. Therefore, to avoid misunderstanding or the possibility of a charge of duplicity, regular reports to the House could be scrutinised, and judged.

Although we say that the standards of public utilities are not always of the best, the Minister should think of what happens in private utilities. They cut corners in safety standards to make bigger profits.

Mr. Michael Jack (Fylde) *rose——*

Mr. Cryer: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman in a moment.

An overworked and under-staffed nuclear installations inspectorate cannot complete all the work that is required of it. There is a great danger in those circumstances that something could go wrong. In the United States of America, the incident at Three Mile Island occurred in a nuclear installation that was run by a private utility. That was the most dangerous accident before Chernobyl. Therefore, it behoves us to ask for regular reports to Parliament.

Mr. Jack: I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving way. Will he agree with me that reports are made available regularly and openly by the nuclear installations inspectorate, as well as the Health and Safety Executive and British Nuclear Fuels Ltd., with information on safety standards within the nuclear industry?

Mr. Cryer: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for mentioning those reports. Clearly he is in favour of requiring reports to be produced to Parliament. I am in favour of that too, and there is no difference between us on the issue. Under the new clause, we will be able to supplement such reports with information from the Secretary of State, because he is facilitating the transfer of a major public utility to private resources.

We want details and technical information, but we also need to have general information about the powers in clause 1 relating to the promotion of bodies corporate. We want to be able to match one sort of information with another. For example, if there was a particularly bad contractor, we should like to know whether the new body corporate will deal with that contractor. We should be able to marry information from the two reports and make a better judgment.

The Government, with their majority, can get a report through Parliament at the drop of a hat. The number of revolting Tories is very slender; even on a big issue, they get only a dozen revolters. That is all they can manage. The Government know that they can get a report through Parliament, but in a democracy the information should be made available.

Mr. Frank Cook: In relation to the possibility that existing reports, such as those suggested by the hon. Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack), could be combined with the reports that we seek in the new clause, perhaps my hon. Friend will ponder the gross inadequacy of some reports published now. I will remind him of the type of instance that I mean. A question mark was put over the weld quality assurance records at Hinkley Point B, which were admitted by an individual almost a year ago. The CEGB and the nuclear installations inspectorate were supposed to investigate that and said that they would be open to public scrutiny. I am still waiting to get access to the plant; as are the engineers that I nominated. We are still waiting. The CEGB keeps us outside the gate and denies us the right that it said would be granted nearly 12 months ago.

Mr. Cryer: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who has pursued these matters with persistence and devotion to detail. It is one of the strengths of Parliament that it contains people such as my hon. Friend who are not prepared to take bland platitudes from bodies such as the CEGB.

The standards of public ownership tend to be better than those of private ownership. Publicly owned bodies tend to be more accountable, but, having said that, I accept my hon. Friend's criticisms. The Minister is being given enormous powers to promote bodies that are private and that will not have any element of accountability unless the new clause is agreed. If the Minister has any pretensions to democracy, he should accept the clause.

A lot of money—about £500 million—has flowed from the taxpayers' revenues to the Government's Tory friends in the City. If the Minister and the Government wish to divest themselves of the taint of lining the pockets of their friends—the wetter Conservative Members may indeed wish to divest themselves of that taint—they should accept the new clause. Of course, the Government may not regard that as a taint; they may regard it as a success story. Indeed, as some of that money has been recycled into the funds of the Conservative party, it is an even greater success story—although many of us would call that corrupt. However, as the Conservative party raises greed to a principle, they could argue that that principle is being carried into effect by their friends in the City who are being greedy and lining their pockets to a huge extent.

The Government are always talking about how it is not the Government who make the money; it is the taxpayer who provides the money and the Government who spend it. Therefore, if the Government want fairness and some accountability for the taxpayers' revenue, they should, in all equity, accept this modest new clause so that the most important assembly in the United Kingdom, this Parliament—that sounds a bit grand, but by and large it is true—should be able to examine the reports and question the Minister in a way that would not be possible without the new clause.

I shall be shocked if the Minister does not accept the new clause, because he will then stand adjudged of all my criticisms.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): I wish briefly to support the call that the reports, which presumably are being worked on now and which will be published under clause 1, should be available in the House so that we can consider them. If nothing else, we should do so to ensure

that the reports are in the national interest and not in other interests. That applies especially to the question of what will happen to the supply of electricity once this pagan Bill is followed by other legislation and ends by breaking up the electricity supply industry as we have known it for a long time. There is also the question of the protection of consumers under a regime that will be different from the public regime that is the electricity supply industry now.

However, as has been mentioned, the problems go wider than that. If the press reports are correct, it has been announced today that the South of Scotland Electricity Board is now to seek a market in which to buy its coal which will be much wider than the Scottish coalfield. That could be described as the beginning of the end for deep coal mining in Scotland. It should be remembered that that industry has served Britain for many centuries—certainly for decades—and has helped us to fight wars against the enemies without. However, if todays's press reports are true, the SSEB is to turn its back on the Scottish coal miners and effectively to close the industry. I am certain that in the national interest, any reports would take into account the cost to the nation of any rundown of the industry and the cost to its communities. It would be remiss of the House to pass the new clause without that being said.

On the question of judging the independence of that national industry, it is important for us to ensure that all the reports are in the national interest and that they do not have any other interest. The question of party political interest in selling off public utilities has been raised. The electricity supply industry will be the biggest single privatisation in terms of the money that the Government will receive. That is important especially in the light of recent legislation which has stated that local authorities are not able to use public funds for party political propaganda. Therefore, it is important to make sure when selling off this great asset of our nation that none of the reports will be used for party political propaganda.

I hope that any reports drawn up through the use of clause 1—if the new clause is not accepted—will be available in the Library so that we can truly judge whether the national interest is being served.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) asked various questions, to some of which I can give him a clear and positive response. That applies especially to his first question in which he asked whether I would confirm that there were no powers in the Bill relevant or concerned specifically with the restructuring of the industry. I am happy to confirm that to him. This is not a Bill of substance so far as the electricity industry is concerned. Certainly, the Bill does not say anything about the nature of the restructuring of the industry.

The hon. Gentleman went on to ask me why we need the Bill in connection with electricity. He made the point fairly that there have been previous privatisations and that the process of discussion about privatisation has already begun. In that context, the hon. Gentleman asked why the Bill was necessary and what it means in terms of the expenditure that has already been incurred. That is a perfectly fair point and the answer is that the Government have never believed that the Bill is necessary. What we have always said—I said this earlier in Committee—was that, in the context of the litigation which, when the Bill was introduced was live litigation, clearly, in some people's minds, there was doubt about the vires of the expenditure. Rather than all parties being engaged in lengthy litigation which, in our view, would be fairly pointless and wasteful of resources, we should make it clear in legislation that a limited form of expenditure—it is only limited—relating to the advice given by the bodies that are to be privatised, used in assisting the Secretary of State to facilitate or to modify his proposals, should be protected by statute.

I am not talking just about public sector parties and the effect of their expenditure on the consumer, although the hon. Gentleman is right to say that, ultimately, that expenditure would fall on the consumer. That seems a perfectly reasonable position for the Government to have taken, although we have never had any doubt that the expenditure was perfectly acceptable and legal. Indeed, if the Government had had to fight the matter in the courts, that is the basis upon which we should have fought. However, we felt that it would be a waste of time and a waste of everybody's resources if we pursued the matter in the courts and that it would be better to clear it up through legislation.

Mr. Prescott: I am grateful to the Minister for that reply. As I presume that some consultancy fees have already been incurred, and as I presume also that the legislation will not be retrospective in such cases, is the Minister saying that the Bill gives the authority—although the Government believe that they already have that—to the next legislation for privatisation for the expenditure on the reports, consultations and consultancy fees that will be incurred while that privatisation Bill is going through the House during the next parliamentary Session?

8 pm

Mr. Spicer: I am not sure that I fully understand whether the hon. Gentleman is talking about the past or the future. In the context of the Bill, I am speaking about the present electricity privatisation process. The Bill will give double assurance. We consider that there will be no problem regarding past or future expenditure, but for the sake of efficiency of use of resources we wish to be doubly clear about this matter, because there has been litigation. Rather than people spending their resources and time on wasteful litigation, we wish to make the issue doubly clear in the Bill.

Mr. Prescot: I am sorry to press the Minister, but presumably sone expenses have already been incurred which could no have been covered by present legislation. I was asking whether the real intention of the clause relates to expenditure o be undertaken in the next parliamentary Session, when we shall consider the privatisation Bill. Presumably that is all that it can cover.

Mr. Spicer: It will apply both to the expenditure incurred when he Bill receives Royal Assent and to future expenditure. I have no idea what that expenditure will be. In the case of electricity, I assume that very little expenditure wil have been incurred during the time to which the hon Gentleman referred.

The hon. Gntleman asked, very fairly, what advice would be givenunder the terms of the Bill. Of course, the specific advice will depend on the proposals that the Government wll make for privatisation. One thing is clear. We wen asked whether we had a mandate to privatise. Then is no question about our intention to

[Mr. Spicer]

privatise the electricity industry and our confirmation of that intention is in our general election manifesto. I could list the areas on which advice will be given, such as technical, economic and organisational matters, but the important point is that the precise nature of the advice will depend on the structure that the Government propose.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East asked how that would relate to Parliament. That was the theme behind many of the speeches tonight. The hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) made the same point. The role of Parliament clearly must be paramount. The structure of the industry that we are proposing under privatisation will be announced in the House. Whether that announcement is accompanied by a White Paper is still being considered by the Government.

I believe that the most important issue is the nature, contents, specifics and detail of the statement that the Secretary of State for Energy will make to the House. The questioning process and, dependent upon what the House wishes to do, the debates that take place are also important. The probing of the Government's position during that debate or those debates will be critical in regard to how the Government produce their plans for the country. I assure the House that that will be done through Parliament.

Mr. Prescott: Is the Minister now telling the House that, despite all the press reports, there is a possibility that the Government will ignore the advice of the Select Committee and produce the White Paper before the privatisation of electricity? In response to a request from the Select Committee, the Government said that they would give consideration to its recommendations. Is that all that it is? Would consideration include the possibility that the Government may not produce one, anyway?

Mr. Spicer: I am saying that the Government have not yet decided but they are certainly considering whether to produce a White Paper.

The important question that was raised by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East was that our detailed plans for the privatisation of the electricity supply industry should be presented to Parliament, that Ministers should be probed and questioned and that the policy that we announce should be debated. Surely that is more critical than whether we produce a White Paper. Hon. Members on both sides of the House are discussing whether the statement should be accompanied by a White Paper. They have produced strong arguments, but the critical issue is how we present the facts and the proposals before the House. It may be for the convenience of the House that a detailed statement, questioning and debate should be accompanied by a White Paper. I am not in a position finally to tell the House that the Government have decided on that.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East asked what studies the Government were making of this extremely complex matter. After six months or so of examining the subject, I am bound to concede that it is a complex issue on which there are passionate feelings and technically supported opinions from all sides. Therefore, it would be foolish, to say the least, of the Government not to have engaged in deep technical, economic and organisational analyses of the various options that they were considering. If that was the hon. Gentleman's question, I can happily assure him that very substantive analysis has been made of all the implications of the various proposals that we now have in mind.

I shall now address the specifics of new clause 4. New clause 4 places certain requirements on the Government regarding the fees and the reports and advice that the bodies would undertake on behalf of the Secretary of State. The central issue is whether all that information should continuously be put before Parliament. My answer is that Parliament is already deeply embroiled in that process.

Under the terms of the Bill, Parliament restricts considerably the nature of the expenditure which can be undertaken. The hon. Member for Bradford, South said that the Bill was wide-ranging and sweeping. That was a fair rhetorical point, but it is not how the Bill is drafted. Clause 1(1)(a) and (b) are highly restrictive in regard to expenditure. Clause 1(1)(a) states that only advice which is

"facilitating the implementation of the proposal for the transfer"

can be accommodated within the terms of the Bill.

In regard to whether those moneys are likely to be properly spent, the Secretary of State has the responsibility to appoint auditors to ensure that the money is properly spent. He also appoints the members of the boards, who have their own financial responsibilities for the way in which money is spent.

Fundamentally, Parliament has devolved management responsibility on those nationalised industries. Parliament has said that within certain broad parameters and responsibilities which lie on the shoulders of the Secretary of State, those nationalised industries, within the financial targets set by the Secretary of State and debated in Parliament and within various constraints, must get on with the business of managing themselves and their operations in a way that complies with their broad objectives. It must be said that that kind of highly detailed expenditure, which, as I have already argued, is very limited, must be the responsibility of the bodies concerned. Parliament would want to engage itself with that expenditure on a daily basis, as is implicit under the terms of the new clause.

That is the substance of my case for voting against the new clause.

Mr. Prescott: So the Government are going to inform us?

Mr. Spicer: I suspect that the hon. Gentleman would not agree with me, let alone be informed by me, however long I spoke. Therefore, it might be for the convenience of the House, having made those specific points against the new clause, if I advised that the new clause be withdrawn or that hon. Members vote against it.

Mr. John Garrett: I had hoped that this brief debate about expenditure to facilitate privatisation would give us the opportunity to establish the Department's thinking about the Government's largest proposed privatisation. I had hoped that we would learn what studies might be undertaken before privatisation so as better to inform the House.

I found the Minister's reply somewhat less than satisfactory given the major issues raised by my hon. Friends on matters of great consequence about the ultimate effect of privatisation. The Minister said that the

Department would seek advice from the bodies referred to in the new clause. He said that he was unwilling to list the necessary advice which might be technical or economic and, I assume, social or even political.

We had expected a White Paper to precede the publication of the Bill. The Minister referred to a statement. What does a statement mean? It amounts to 10 minutes after Question Time for Back Benchers to address questions to a Minister. How is that public accountability? Surely that bears out the authoritarian style that we are so accustomed to in the way in which the Government conduct their affairs.

I believe that the privatisation of the electricity supply industry should be preceded by several studies which should be reported to the House. I want to add one or two to those mentioned by my hon. Friends.

On 6 November the Secretary of State admitted that Britain's electricity costs were among the lowest in Europe and lower than those of the United States, Japan and Germany where privatised or semi-privatised electricity supply is dominant. The efficiency of our electricity supply industry derives from the planning control possible under an integrated system, including the security and ability to use the cheapest source of power on any given day. An early study by the Department of Energy might concern the potential benefit of privatisation to the consumer and the cost penalties of the separation of generation and transmission—or have we already seen one effect of the impending privatisation in the 15 per cent. increase in electricity tariffs over the next 18 months? Is that what the Secretary of State meant by talking about making it possible for competitors to enter the business?

We can learn one major social and economic consequence from gas privatisation. According to the Gas Consumers Council, there has been a 35 per cent. increase in disconnections over the past year. How did that contribute to efficiency? What protection for the poor will there be in electricity privatisation? What will happen to the 2·5 million householders who now receive help with their heating costs, particularly when the social security regulations to be introduced in April will make such help unlikely in future?

A major study is required, with a report to the House, on the effect of the proposals on fuel poverty. Is the Minister aware of the effects, or will he commission a study to find out? The Secretary of State often refers to the consumer interest. How will that be safeguarded? What will happen to consultative councils? What forms of representation will be available against the activities and performance of private boards and generators? The experience of British Telecom and British Gas is that consumer consultation has been substantially weakened. What is proposed for the Electricity Consumers Council? What machinery will exist for public and consumer accountability? We must assume that security of supply and safety will transcend private profit in these matters.

The greatest mystery of all surrounds nuclear power. I should have thought that a substantial report would be due to Parliament on what the Department has in mind about nuclear power. How does the Secretary of State propose to reconcile the least cost argument with the desire to preserve a nuclear power capacity? How will the cost of decommissioning nuclear power enter the equation?

8.15 pm

The second report of the Select Committee on Energy in 1986-87 includes a memorandum from the Central Electricity Generating Board which states that the total cost of decommissioning a major Magnox station would be £180 million to £330 million with stage 2 taking 15 years. The lower figure assumes that the final stage would be deferred for 100 years. It stated that improved technology over the 100 years would lead to cost reductions in decommissioning. Surely it is more likely that more stringent safety codes will be introduced over that period which would increase decommissioning costs. Safety is not getting cheaper and that might be the subject of a major report to the House.

Are the Government proposing to exempt nuclear power from privatisation or to discount the cost of decommissioning when striking a price for nuclear generation? Will private generators have to take on nuclear generation or commit themselves to building new nuclear power capacity?

On 29 January David Fairhall explained in *The Guardian:*

> "The British nuclear establishment . . . contrasted its own integrated approach with a US system under which the electricity utilities are largely left to run their own nuclear programmes so long as they obey the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's rules.
>
> The danger of the US arrangement, as the Americans themselves have conceded, is that the safe operation of a nuclear power station is far too complicated to be susceptible to a set of written rules . . .
>
> Britain's nuclear power industry was created for strategic reasons, not short-term commercial ones. It depends on a vast infrastructure of research . . . and technological expertise . . .
>
> No commercial outfit is going to touch it, in other words, without all-risks cover from government and taxpayer."

Perhaps we can have a report to the House on that novel form of insurance.

When formulating the guidelines for a new regulatory body, how would fuel costs be treated if they could be passed on to the consumer? How would that encourage efficiency? In assessing allowable costs other than fuel, how would the prudence of investment costs — for example, in safety—be established?

If a private generator has to be offered a rate of return over the life of a power station of 30 years or so, how will it be possible to run a national merit order to use the cheapest first? If the rate of return to a private generator is guaranteed, surely that must increase prices.

There is a national interest in R and D, shared by the House, in this area. It is important that a study is carried out into R and D. Profit maximisation will mean that investment and innovation decisions are made on a short time scale. That will lead to a greater buying in of research and development, including from overseas, with a corresponding rundown in United Kingdom expertise. That is likely to mean that either Britain will lose its position at the leading edge of the relevant technologies or that it will become increasingly and dangerously reliant on overseas expertise—or both.

There is major R and D in the electricity industry, including combined cycle pressurised fluid bed combustion, new technologies for emission control and super conductivity in transmission systems. It is most unlikely that private enterprise will invest in those matters to the detriment of our science and of providing cheap and safe electricity.

[Mr. John Garrett]

I had hoped that the Minister would offer to instigate studies on those matters and report the results to the House. I suspect that Ministers are not interested in the results. Our major misgivings are not satisfied by the Minister's explanation. We are extremely unhappy about the Government's failure to give a guarantee of a White Paper. A statement is not good enough. The new clause is about public accountability and about telling the truth.

Mr. Cryer: It is also very modest.

Mr. Garrett: As my hon. Friend says, it is very modest. I should have thought that the Minister could concede it easily. This is a matter of public and parliamentary accountability. We are dissatisfied with the Minister's reply and we shall divide the House on the clause.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 217, Noes 252.

Division No. 162] **[8.20 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Ms Hilary
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coleman, Donald
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, J.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alastair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, James
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Galbraith, Samuel
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Ms Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Douglas
Hinchliffe, David
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, James
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kilfedder, James
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Miss Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Tom
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon J *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Ms Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerald
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Ms Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Anthony
Wray, James
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Frank Cook.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bigg-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John

Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Timothy
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knowles, Michael
Lang, Ian
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Mans, Keith
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon C.
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Alan Howarth and
Mr. David Maclean.

Question accordingly negatived.

Clause 4

METERING TRIALS SCHEMES

8.30 pm

Ms. Quin: I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 5, line 17, at end insert—

'*(c)* to whether the charging structure adopted for the purpose of the trial takes into account the imposition of value added tax on water according to EEC practice.'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take amendment No. 2, in page 5, line 17, at end insert—

'*(c)* to whether the charging structure adopted for the purpose of the trial meets the following criteria—

(i) the charging structure must be easily understood by the consumer,

(ii) the charging structure must be practical and able to be carried out with the available technology,

(iii) the charging structure must be capable of wider application and use.'.

Ms. Quin: The amendments relate to the structure and type of charges to which the consumer will be subject during the trial periods. We believe that the issue of the charging structure to be used is important because we have consistently argued that consumers should know what they are paying for when they receive their water bill. That knowledge is particularly important during the trial periods because consumers in those areas, once they have asked the question, "Why us? Why were we chosen for the trial?", will go on to ask, "What will it cost us?". They have a right to know that and they have a right to have a detailed breakdown of the costs.

Paragraph *(c)*(i) of amendment No. 2 refers to the fact that we feel that:

"the charging structure must be easily understood by the consumer"

We believe that the consumer should know what part of the bill represents fixed costs, what part represents the new measures taken to improve the quality of water and what part represents the charges relating to the volume of

[Ms. Quin]

water consumed. Earlier on in the debate my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley) made the important point that a large part of gas and electricity bills relates to the volume of supply consumed —she mentioned the figure of 80 per cent. However, for the water industry an entirely different situation obtains. The figures that I have seen suggest that only 20 per cent. of the bill relates to the volume of water consumed. It is right that the customer in the trial areas should have the necessary information relating to the bill. It has been widely reported that metering will lead to an increase in costs. Therefore, the consumers in the trial areas have a right to know how much of the extra cost on their bill specifically relates to metering.

Amendment No. 1 relates to the question of VAT on water charges. It is not clear whether VAT will be charged on the domestic consumer of water in the future. We certainly hope not and we would be delighted if the Government gave us a clear commitment on that tonight. We hope that the Government will resist any pressure to impose VAT. I understand that the court case that is still to be completed at the European Court of Justice relates to VAT being charged on industrial consumers only. However, I understand that the European Commission's proposals concerning harmonisation of VAT rates in the long term include water charges in their plans for the lower band of VAT. We are concerned about that and we believe that the consumer in the trial areas has a right to be told what is happening about VAT. Perhaps the Government will give us the assurance that we require and tell us that there will be no VAT charged on domestic users of water during the period of the trials and, we hope, thereafter. We wait to hear from the Minister in that regard.

Subparagraphs (ii) and (iii) of amendment No. 2 are common sense amendments. Subparagraph (ii) states that the charging structure should be practical and should be carried out "with the available technology". Subparagraph (iii) states that the:

"charging structure must be capable of wider application and use".

The purpose of subparagraph (ii) and (iii) is to prevent a person in the trial areas being any more of a guinea pig than he or she already is under the system. Certainly we do not want those people to be given an unworkable system or a system that will not be used again.

We believe that the amendments are practical and common sense. By tabling them we believe that we are providing the Government with some practical advice that will help them conduct the trials in an easier and, perhaps, more acceptable way than would otherwise have been the case. That hope is despite our belief that the trials should not go ahead. However, the amendments are constructive and we have proposed changes that we believe will give extra protection to the households and consumers involved.

One of my hon. Friends has referred to the fact that all of our amendments amount to a consumer protection charter during the metering trials. Therefore, we hope that the Minister will accept the amendments in the spirit intended because we believe that they represent a constructive way forward.

Mr. O'Brien: It is not our intention to delay the House on the amendments. Suffice it to say that the real issue is the charges to the consumers. Indeed, amendment No. 2 makes it clear that the charging structure that is adopted for the trial should follow certain criteria.

In the Yorkshire area we are advised that the rising block tariff will be the charging structure applied. Reference has already been made to the old lady living alone who pays the same water charges as the family next door and that is unjust. Unless the base of the charging structure takes that into account I believe that there will be disadvantages and the widow or the single person will suffer an unfairness. If the rising block tariff is not based on the single person or the old lady, but is based on a family of three or four, that old lady will lose out. The amount of water that she will pay for, at the base of the tariff, will be the same as a family of four. There will be great difficulties for single people living in large properties.

There is also the problem of standing charges. People in my area pay two standing charges to the water authority — one for water and one for sewerage. Unless information is given in the explanatory notes to consumers as to what charges will be, I can foresee immense problems for low-income families in my area.

These amendments are important. The charging structure must be practical so that the authorities can implement it. There must be no preference whatsoever in the agreed structure. Some sections of the community will benefit from the introduction of meters, but others will be disadvantaged. I hope that no undue preference will be shown in the pricing structure to certain groups of people.

I ask the Minister to give assurances that people on low incomes will not lose out during metering trials. If there is to be universal metering during those trials, greater problems will arise that will have to be analysed.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin) raised some important issues in moving these amendments and I hope that the Minister will answer the questions that have been posed.

Mr. Moynihan: Although these amendments are unnecessary, for reasons that I shall mention in a moment, they cover some important issues. I am glad that Labour Members have raised them.

The reasons why the Government regard the amendments as unnecessary and, indeed, restrictive are as follows. Clause 4 sets out a special regime for metering trials schemes. Each water authority or company wishing to carry out a trial must submit proposals to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for his consideration and approval. In so doing, my right hon. Friend will be required, by clause 4(3), to have regard to the interests of those customers who are likely to be affected and to various other matters, including the methods and principles by which charges will be calculated and imposed. That is covered by clause 4(4). That will allow my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State ample scope to consider the structure of the charges proposed for each trial, including the rationale between the choice of a particular tariff structure and, most important, the implications for customers.

In addition, as a result of clause 4(5), in considering a scheme for approval he may also take into account whether the proposed charges are intended, within the constraints of the experimental nature of the trial, to be cost related and whether a charging system would result in undue discrimination against or undue preference for any class of customers. That point is critical, and it was

raised by the hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien). With regard to the trial in his area, I take this opportunity to underline the fact that any charging system must not result in undue discrimination or undue preference. It will be critical to the Secretary of State's consideration of any proposed trial scheme that that criterion is adhered to.

Those latter requirements are, as hon. Members will have recognised, the cornerstone of the existing customer protection provisions in section 30 of the Water Act 1973, which are re-enacted in clause 3 of the Bill. Thus, the Bill as it stands would enable my right hon. Friend to consider all the matters in these amendments and many more aspects of proposed charging procedures.

With regard to the various detailed issues raised by these amendments, I should like to assure the House that it is quite true that the industry has tentatively drawn up a list of different types of tariff to be tested in this proposed joint programme — one large scale and 10 small scale trials. However, I emphasise that the final decision on the type and level of each tariff will be a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. In considering each proposal, my right hon. Friend will take into account the need for a balanced programme of trials on a nationwide basis.

I should emphasise the importance that the Water Authorities Association has placed on ensuring that we consider a range of tariff structures. In putting forward a range of proposals to my right hon. Friend, it will have taken into consideration the nature of metering trials and the opportunity to try out a variety of charging structures and tariff bases. It will be incumbent on all water undertakers to make available full details of the proposed tariff structure to everyone in each of the metering trial areas before my right hon Friend the Secretary of State has before him the proposed trial areas for approval. It will be opportune at that stage for individual consumers or groups in a proposed trial area to make representations to the Secretary of State for him to take into account.

8.45 pm

Those points are critical, because they are part and parcel of the importance that we attach to consumer interests. It is one of our priorities to ensure that we carry with us those who live within the proposed trial areas. They are important criteria and are of particular concern to customers, and I can assure the House that they will be taken into account when my right hon. Friend considers each scheme.

The hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin) raised the important issue of VAT. Although the European Commission has been taking proceedings against the United Kingdom for having a zero VAT rating for the supply of various goods and services, including water and sewerage services to industry, the case does not concern domestic supplies. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer will look at the ruling of the European Court when it is delivered. In the meantime, it is premature to speculate about what the outcome might be. However, I should re-emphasise that the Commission's action does not apply to domestic water supplies.

I repeat that these amendments are unnecessary and I urge hon. Members, following my explanation to the House, not to press them.

Ms. Quin: I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. Pendry: I beg to move amendment No. 5, in page 5, line 40, at end insert—

'In considering the matters in paragraph (a) above, the Secretary of State shall have particular regard to implications for charitable institutions and voluntary sporting organisations.'.

I wish to say immediately that this is a probing amendment. We wish to show our flexibility, and we hope that the Minister will show some as well. I am sure that it has not escaped the notice of Conservative Members that we are prepared to amend clause 4. Therefore, we hope that the Minister will be flexible.

I hope that the Minister will not try to improve on his record of interventions. I do not know who Miss Allen is, but when she totted up his interventions, I am sure that she did not take their quality into account. The Minister often had to get up three or four times to make a simple point.

We are conscious that the Minister wears a number of hats. I got into trouble in Committee when I said that he was in charge of aqua affairs and that I did not know how many other affairs he was in charge of. I did not make the point as clearly as I shall now — the Minister is responsible not only for sport but for the water industry, for environmental protection, for the Countryside Commission and a number of other areas of Government any one of which totals 9·10 per cent. of his responsibilities. We are lucky that we are receiving 18·20 per cent. of his responsibilities. I am sure that we shall have a much weightier contribution from him tonight that we have had to date.

The Minister prides himself on getting on well with the sporting fraternity. Alas, that is wearing a bit thin with water sporting groups. Unless he is more forthcoming, he can say goodbye to the good will that he has built up to date with the many charitable and voluntary sporting groups in this country, who so far have been impressed with his energy. I know from representations that I have received that many of them feel that with this legislation that good will is disappearing fast. Many of the existing agreements that recreational and sporting groups have with the water authorities are clearly under threat and those groups look to the Minister to protect them. If the amendment is not carried, they will increase their opposition.

There are many obvious examples. As the Minister perhaps knows—it was referred to in Committee—the National Anglers Council has voiced its worries about the Bill. As the Minister also knows, there are 3·4 million anglers in this country, 1·2 million of whom have fishing licences. The specific price agreements of individual angling clubs are at risk. The Minister should accept the amendment and give clear guarantees to put the anglers and others out of their misery. In my constituency, there is a disabled persons' angling club in the Longendale valley which will be badly hit if prices are forced up. That club is not alone. Many groups in the areas chosen for the meter trials will suffer in the same way.

I said in Committee and reiterate now that, unless the Minister is clear and unequivocal on the issues worrying the clubs, many groups in the trial areas will suffer loss of amenity by having their running costs forced up, particularly when the main legislation is passed later. Characteristically, the Minister has underestimated the number of regular users of the water environment each year. He puts the figure at about 2 million, when the real figure is closer to 5 million.

[Mr. Pendry]

It is not only those groups that worry us; the amendment addresses itself to a wider range of interested groups. The Minister has become relatively famous as a water sportsman. I discount his boxing prowess, because I have sparred with him and his reflexes are far too slow for him to have been any good at that sport. Is it not ironic that the water sportsmen are turning against him because when that substance is metered it will bring many of them close to extinction?

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Pendry: I am trying to hurry along. The hon. Gentleman has not taken much interest in this Bill; although he is not alone, so I do not wish to single him out from the rest of the breed.

As we said in Committee, water sports enthusiasts are not alone in feeling apprehensive about the consequences of the Bill. In trial areas, many other sports clubs will find that their premises and services will be hit by the Bill. That applies to football, cricket, tennis and golf clubs—to say nothing of bowling clubs where many of our elderly citizens pass their recreational time. There are many more. Is the Minister really prepared to throw away all the good will that he has generated with the sporting fraternity and impose metering charges on those groups?

I have received letters from groundsmen of football clubs who are worried about the implications of the Bill. They are worried about the price of sprinkling and of watering their pitches. My hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley) is a great Port Vale supporter. Unfortunately, I heard someone say that, without a wet pitch, that club would not have beaten Spurs on Saturday.

Ms. Walley: I must put it on record that the abilities of Port Vale football club are second to none. With or without the conditions on the pitch, I have no doubt that they would have been the giant-killers and beaten Tottenham Hotspur on Saturday.

Mr. Pendry: I would have said exactly the same to the person who made that accusation.

On an equally light note, because cricket clubs have been affected I am tempted to think that the Minister is perhaps standing up for the dying breed of the English spin bowler. If cricket clubs are to economise with water, more and more dry and dusty pitches will play havoc with the batsman's technique. At the risk of destroying good wickets, it is no good the Minister saying on the one hand that he is prepared to put out the begging bowl to save the Oval while on the other putting the squeeze on a number of small cricket clubs which may go out of business altogether. Exorbitant water metering charges will add to the already crippling costs faced by sports clubs.

Mr. Barry Field: The hon. Gentleman makes much of the effects of water metering on sporting clubs. As he knows, my constituency is the largest of the test areas to be metered. How does he explain the fact that I have not had one representation from any sporting user of water? I have received many from households but not one from a sporting user.

Mr. Pendry: I am glad that I gave way to the hon. Gentleman. He should have been making lots of loud noises in support of the Government. If his constituents find it as difficult to find him as we have, I am not surprised that he has received nothing.

The Minister knows that I have a high regard for him. He has done much work for sport, but he has so many hats to wear that he cannot possibly come to grips with his portfolio as he might like to. He must stand up to his boss, the Secretary of State—who was here for five minutes to support him but has just left again—and to his bigger boss, the Prime Minister. Both are known to be sporting philistines. If he does not stand up to them, he will find himself alienated and distanced from his erstwhile supporters. The other day, I asked him to stand tall for sport. I am asking him to stand tall again. In the friendliest possible way, I would say to him that he must place on record tonight his determination to protect the best interests of charitable and sporting organisations from this squalid Bill, and he must say so loud and clear.

Mr. Moynihan: I know that life in their Lordships' House has been unexpectedly diverse and, on occasions, colourful this evening, but the contribution of the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) stretched even my imagination to incredulity. The only way that the Bill can affect anglers is if they use a lot of water in their club houses. I do not think that anyone has the intention of even considering the possibility of metering water as it goes past them in the river.

Mr. Pendry: The Minister was not listening. I was talking about a club in my constituency and other angling clubs. We are talking about clubs.

Mr. Moynihan: I do not quite see how an angling club in the hon. Gentleman's constituency will be affected by the Bill, as there is no proposed metering trial scheme there. It defies the imagination to raise the issue of sporting clubs. As the hon. Gentleman, as a keen follower of sport, well knows, a large number of sporting clubs, particularly those with large acreages, are already metered. Like industry, they see the benefits and are already metered. One reason why my hon. Friend the Member for the Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) has not received any letters on the subject is that many of the clubs are already metered and see the benefits of it.

Some of the points raised by the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde would be better directed at the substantive legislation. I am aware that fishing, sporting and recreational interests must be well protected and enhanced, as they will be when the National Rivers Authority is established, but that has nothing to do with this Bill.

Clause 4(3) requires my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, when considering proposals, to have regard to the interests of those customers charged by trial schemes and to various other matters. This amendment requires my right hon. Friend, when considering a scheme, to have particular regard to implications for charitable institutions and voluntary sporting organisations. These are, of course, very important groups, and no one takes a keener interest in their activities than I. That is why I hope that hon. Members will accept my advice that the requirement is unnecessary. I explained when we discussed amendments Nos. 1 and 2 that, as part of the special charges scheme regime for the trials, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is required to have regard to the interest of customers made subject to charges by each scheme, and

that, in doing so, he may take into account whether the trial would result in undue discrimination or undue preference to any classes of customer. These requirements should ensure that all classes of consumers, including voluntary sporting organisations and charitable institutions, are treated fairly.

I therefore urge that the amendment should be withdrawn. Nobody could be more committed to protecting and promoting the interests of sport and recreation than myself. I give a clear undertaking that they will not be affected by the provisions in the Bill.

9 pm

Mr. Boyes: The Minister's reply was disappointing and well below his usual standard of excellence. On this occasion, it is a 3 out of 10 job.

The Minister said that he would ensure that charitable bodies were treated fairly, but what does that mean? Many people are dependent on charitable bodies, especially when Government cuts occur. Many people live in poverty and are abused in different ways. The proliferation of physical and sexual abuse of children is of great concern to us all. Regrettably, more and more people are having to rely on charities for assistance and guidance. When the Minister said that he hoped to treat charities fairly, did he mean that he would do something special for charities? Surely, when their bills increase substantially as a result of water metering, they will be treated extremely unfairly. I had hoped that the Minister would recognise that point.

The Minister did not mention that fishing is an important aspect of leisure, whether one watches, plays or referees, especially in constituencies such as mine where there is massive unemployment. I had hoped that the Minister would make some helpful comments so that recreational clubs would not be disadvantaged by water metering.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) argued the case well, but the Minister has not given us a glimmer of hope. Charitable bodies will be treated like everybody else: if, as a consequence of metering, they find themselves in reduced financial circumstances, or have to go out of existence, so be it. That is a callous approach from a Minister whom we know to be caring, but who has not shown his concern on this occasion.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 5

PROVISIONS RELATING TO METERS ETC.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: I beg to move amendment No. 6, in page 7, line 7, at end insert—

'*(dd)* require water undertakers to inspect, examine and test meters, free of charge, every twelve months if the customer so desires.'.

The amendment derives from a number of votes in Committee and, I am sad to say, from the fact that no changes have resulted from several promises that the Minister made to consider the matter.

Let us consider the essential points for and against the free testing of meters for those involved in the trial schemes, although I should like all those who are metered to have the same opportunities.

One argument against the free testing of meters is that those at present with meters can call for a test to be performed which must be paid for if it shows that there is nothing wrong with the meter. That may be reasonable where people who presently have meters have opted for them, because they see a financial gain in doing so. Therefore, it is argued, if they have a complaint about the meters they can bear the cost of having them checked. However, even that is a fairly mean attitude for a public service.

If one looks at compulsory metering, particularly in the trial schemes where different meters are being tested and where there are doubts about the effect of the system on different people, about the accuracy of the meters being used and about how well they will work in practice, it is astonishing that the Government should try to limit people's ability to ask for meter tests by forcing a charge where no fault is found.

That will clearly penalise the poorest in society. Those who are most likely to be affected by a false meter, possibly leading to higher charges than they should be paying, will be most directly hurt, because, when they consider whether to have the meter inspected, they will have to bear in mind that if the meter is accurate they will be penalised for having asked for it to be checked.

It is a basic element of fairness that people should have the opportunity to have their meters checked. I had hoped that the Minister would follow through his earlier agreement that that is a strong point, and come up with the goods in practice.

We are discussing a state industry, and there is greater protection under a public corporation than a private industry. I hope that that will be particularly borne in mind as the industry is privatised. The right of the consumer to opt for an independent meter test should be protected. It should be possible to have meters checked, in the safe knowledge that there will be no financial penalty.

The Minister made it clear that he does not want somebody phoning up every day asking for yet another test, and I accept that. He correctly said that that could result in a few maverick individuals causing high costs for the great majority of consumers. The amendment takes that into account by limiting the right to free testing to once every 12 months. It has been suggested that that should be limited to one, full stop, but that would be lunatic because things can change over time. The fact that a meter has been tested and proved to be accurate one year does not mean that it will not go wrong the following year. However, I have taken on board the point that the Minister made in Committee, that there needs to be some limit, and that is contained in the amendment.

If the Minister feels that the amendment is still too open, I refer him to the suggestion made in Committee that testing could be through reference by Members of Parliament, as, for example, when matters are referred to the ombudsman. If he is prepared to make that commitment, I shall be happy to withdraw the amendment and await a subsequent Government amendment.

It is clear that the Minister saw the strength of this point. In written answers, he made a commitment to contact water authorities to see whether something could be done about it. In the Committee's proceedings on 15 December, the Minister said:

"We shall discuss regulations, but I place on record that I will consider making provision in regulations by discussing with water undertakers the possibility of establishing a system that will go part way to satisfying the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor).

[Mr. Matthew Taylor]

My greatest worry about going the whole way is that, as the hon. Member for Truro said, some people who did not want meters installed in particular properties will go too far and abuse the system by telephoning each day to demand that meters should be tested." — [*Official Report*, Standing Committee B, 15 December 1987; c. 532.]

Later, in reply to another Opposition hon. Member, the Minister said:

"Following an intervention by the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) in Committee on 15 December, I have already given an undertaking to consider the possibility of customers taking part in the trials being offered, free of charge, at least one test of the accuracy of their meters . . . I hope that Opposition Members will accept that we are not closed in our thinking about a free test, particularly for elderly folk who find new equipment being brought into their houses and are uncertain about reading a water-metering device. In such cases, we must be careful not to charge—certainly on the first occasion—anyone who shows that anxiety.

We are to hold discussions with the water undertakers to satisfy the points made by Opposition Members."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee B*, 14 January 1988; c. 652.]

We are now on Report, and nothing material has been forthcoming. I regret having had to table the amendment. I have made sure that it is couched in terms similar to those that the Minister said he would bring forward. He has not done so, and I ask him now to accept the amendment on the ground that it is in line with what he wanted. It does not go as far as many Opposition Members might want, but it is a step in the right direction, and I look forward to hearing the Minister's support for it.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): Hon. Members will be pleased to hear that my contribution will be brief. As an engineer, I should have thought that the measurement of the flow of a liquid —water, oil or whatever—is probably the simplest and most accurate of techniques.

Why is the legislation being brought forward? It is here because of public opinion. We have heard about fair play from Opposition Members; we heard the story about the old lady living on her own and about people up the road living three or four to a house and using much more water than her—and how unfair that was. That is, perhaps, a sensible argument, but it is strange to hear it coming from the Opposition who have opposed that sort of argument in the context of the community charge when we have spoken of the old lady living on her own who wants a fair system. However, I must not digress.

Pilot schemes will include everything. If a domestic user's bill after the pilot scheme happened to be abnormal, I am certain that officials would visit his home and go through the sort of quantities of water that he was using for the bath, watering and sprinkling the garden, the toilet systems and so on, and decide whether there had been some malfunction of the meter. That would happen in the unlikely event of a failure, and it is what a pilot scheme is all about. The Government are responding to public opinion by bringing forward this sensible measure, and it would be a shame to complicate it with this sort of amendment when the pilot scheme takes care of the point raised by the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) about a malfunction of the meter. Any malfunctioning will show up from house to house during a pilot scheme; however, it is unlikely.

As I said at the beginning, measuring fluid through pipes is one of the easiest and most straightforward of techniques. It is far less sophisticated than the measurement of gas, electricity or anything else. The flow of liquid is straightforward and I see no great cause for concern. The pilot scheme will sort the problem out. We are starting off gently with pilot schemes to see how the system goes and to meet public opinion and demand. We are targeting the poor in this, as in all the other things we are doing, such as the review of the welfare state and the community charge, where we are helping the old lady who is living on her own. In exactly the same way, with water metering we are helping the old lady living on her own. If a person wants to economise, he need not have a big bath and he can top up the water in the kettle. People can save themselves money if they have a metered system, whereas with rateable values they have no choice but to meet on demand the bill that is sent. I hope the hon. Gentleman is big enough to withdraw the amendment, which is unnecessary.

9.15 pm

Mr. Boyes: We will not support the amendment. I do not intend to develop the arguments but wish to make just one point. These are trials and during the trials we expect special conditions to apply. People will be concerned and worried, particularly if they suspect that their bills are higher under metering than when assessed on rateable values. As all hon. Members know, when new techniques are used, the elderly are often worried. I do not see why they should be limited to one inspection per year, particularly if the first inspection shows that the meter is faulty. I accept the view of the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) that measuring water is simple, but simple things in the hands of this Government can become complicated.

We want trial meters to be tested on request. If that means that someone wants a meter tested less than 12 months after the first test, it should be done. We do not want to limit people to one test in 12 months. The water undertaker might argue that because there had been a test within the last 12 months, even though the bill might be higher than the equivalent bill under rateable valuation, the meter could not be tested again.

To suggest that people will ring in each day is insulting to the vast majority of those taking part in the trials. While many people will not like meters and will have to be cajoled or even forced to have them, they will act responsibly. If they think that the meter needs to be tested, they will request a test. During the trials I hope that if someone feels great anxiety that the meter is not working correctly, proper tests will be done.

Mr. Moynihan: I am surprised at the contribution by the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor). I gave him a clear undertaking that I would consider the possibility of customers taking part in the trial being offered free of charge at least one test of the accuracy of their meters. I noted his assent. He was pleased that I gave that undertaking because he recognised, as hon. Members on both sides of the House do, that we must ensure, if possible, that someone who is elderly, say, who is not used to having a meter and who is anxious about its accuracy should have the opportunity to have that anxiety removed.

One way of removing the anxiety is to have the meter tested or to have proper authorisation of the meter which, as my hon. Friend the Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) said, is highly unlikely to be inaccurate. Because we wanted to remove anxiety we moved from our original position of saying that there

would be no free test for meters to the commitment that I gave to the hon. Member in Committee. I also gave that commitment in writing to the hon. Member in a letter dated 21 December. I said that I would look at the matter with all the water undertakers and try to reconcile the concerns and worries expressed by him and by other Opposition Members.

I am currently taking up that concern. I am sorry that in the three working weeks since Christmas it has not been possible to come to a firm conclusion and to discuss a specific provision with the Water Authorities Association, but I gave a clear undertaking that the anxieties expressed would not be swept under the carpet and would be taken account of, and that I would ensure that they were given further consideration in detailed discussions. I would regret it if the hon. Member pressed the point to a vote, because that commitment was made with integrity, and was so recognised by Labour Members.

I hope that our discussions will soon reach a final outcome and I will be in a position to give a commitment. The position will become clearer by the time the Bill goes to the House of Lords. If we have not come to a satisfactory solution by then, the hon. Member will have the opportunity to table an amendment in another place. We shall be pushed to try to get a complete answer by then, but I give the commitment that I will do everything I can. If I have not succeeded, the hon. Member and his hon. Friends may wish to pursue the matter in the House of Lords, if they are unsatisfied with the speed of progress.

I will not go into the detail of the substantive provisions, not least because the Department of Trade and Industry has put forward proposals for accurate regulations to ensure and certify that all meters on the market meet approved European standards as well as national standards. Hon. Members in Committee may have read the detailed brief on that point, so I will not keep the House by repeating that. The commitment I gave in the debate is important. I hope that it will persuade the hon. Member for Truro to allow at least a breather between now and the time that the Bill goes to the House of Lords so that he is in a position to reconsider the thrust of the arguments he has put before the House this evening.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: I thank the Minister for his reply and his commitment, if possible, to come forward with a firm proposal before the Bill goes to the House of Lords. In view of that commitment, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 8

SHORT TITLE, COMMENCEMENT AND EXTENT

Mr. Henderson: I beg to move amendment No. 7, in page 8, line 38, leave out

'Sections 2 to 6 above and the Schedules to'.

We have had 20 sittings of the Bill in Committee in order to guarantee and protect our democracy and our parliamentary process. It is clear, from the way that clause 8(2) omits clause 1 from the clauses which are regulated, that this undermines our parliamentary process and therefore our democracy.

In moving amendment No. 7 we are trying to redress the damage that would be caused if our amendments are not accepted by the Government, because clause 1 relates to privatisation and is a eunuch clause. Superficially, clause 1 governs the transfer of powers from existing authorities to future authorities which will be privatised, but the Bill is not an enabling Bill; it circumvents. Water authorities, acting alone or with the Government, can circumvent Parliament in many ways.

Although clauses 2 to 6 regulate the conditions and circumstances in which water meters will be introduced, the Bill leaves completely unregulated the fundamental question of ownership, control and management of a water authority, and thereby circumvents Parliament in a number of ways. It does so by the extent to which water authorities can spend public money in publicising a sale to the private sector, a sale which I submit has no guaranteed improvement, interest or gain for the consumer. We know of pending litigation in this regard in relation to the Severn-Trent water authority.

In effect, water authorities can use public money to give away public assets with no or little safeguard for the public interest or for consumers. Water authorities can fatten themselves up for a sale which ultimately can only line the pockets of the private sector.

It also leaves unregulated the transfer of assets from a water authority to a newly privatised company. A water authority could sell the lucrative side of the business. It could sell reservoirs in which large investments had been made at public expense in recent years. It could sell main piping systems which had been installed, again at public expense in recent years. At the same time, it could retain the liabilities which are unsellable—the liabilities of old water mains systems or smaller piping systems, the kind of systems which in Committee we have referred to in relation to water in much of the Thames area. So the public sector could be left with the old Victorian liabilities while the private sector creamed off the public investment which has been put in to improve our water system.

As the Bill is currently constructed, clause 8 leaves unrestricted any potential changes in employment. Without reference to Parliament a water authority could completely restructure the labour force. People who had gained skills and experience, much of it at public expense in public training centres, could be cast aside. Contractors could be introduced, with all the cowboy practices and cut-price wage levels. All of this, which I believe would seriously undermine the industry, could happen without reference to Parliament. A water authority could even make most of its staff redundant, at enormous cost to the public purse in redundancy payments, and at the same time introduce private contractors. All this would be designed to fatten up the industry for a future sale.

The Minister stated in Committee that

"it is not the Government's intention that the Bill should give enabling powers to water authorities to prepare for proposals other than those set down by the Government for the privatisation of the water and electricity industries." [*Official Report*, Standing Committee B, 12 November 1987; c. 79.]

That may on the surface seem fair enough, but our point is that that definition is far too wide. If it is taken literally it allows the Government to go ahead without reference to Parliament and virtually to do anything in relation to the sale of the water industry or the electricity industry.

I believe that, regardless of what we might hear about mandates at general elections and prior notification of Government intentions, the public do not want to see their water industry sold off without further reference to their

[Mr. Henderson]

opinion. People still have some faith in the Parliament of this country because they believe that at least there is a chance to air their views. Our point in presenting this amendment is that if the Government do not accept it they are abrogating their commitment to democracy. I believe that Parliament should decide the future of the water industry. If after a debate in Parliament the arguments of the Opposition are lost, at least we have had a chance to refer to important issues and to reflect public opinion that agrees with our views. Likewise, the Government have the opportunity to build up their case.

We must remember that Parliament has built up protection for the water industry over many years. Victorian sewers did not suddenly appear; sewage in the streets did not suddenly disappear; or dirty water from our taps. We have a sensible system of disposing of dirty water and providing clean water only because in Victorian days and afterwards Parliament decided that that should happen. The legislation came from several political parties rather than one. They all thought that something should be done.

9.30 pm

People in this country are proud of our water system. If they travel abroad they say, "I am not having their water. It is not nearly so good as ours. I do not trust it and I will stick to bottled water." We all have experience of that attitude. Often, British people will not drink water even in Sweden where the water system is as good as ours. They do not believe that the water comes from a good system that has stood the test of time in the same way as the British system. That pride should be retained. It is offensive to that pride for the Government to decide to introduce a major change to the structure of the water industry without referring to Parliament.

Parliament should decide whether this country wants to retain an integrated water industry, with control of the disposal of dirty water and provision of clean water under one authority. The majority of water authorities have argued that that is an important factor in achieving high standards of efficiency in the industry. It was certainly the case until very recently that the chairmen of all the water authorities argued that case. I believe that factor underlies the reluctance of the chairmen of the water authorities to agree to divest any power to the National Rivers Authority. We must remember that all of those chairmen were appointed by the Government. They were not appointees of a previous Government, who were making a political point to the industry. The chairmen were appointed by the Government, who wished to introduce their ideology into the industry. Yet the chairmen say that it makes sense to have an integrated industry, not a divided one.

The industry could be broken up by an act of Government and not by an Act of Parliament under this so-called enabling Bill. After our argument and debate, it might be decided that it makes some sense to divide the responsibility for our water industry. I do not think that it will make sense. If the case is tested, people surely will accept that there should be one integrated structure for the industry. But it is proper for a division of responsibility to be decided by Parliament, and not by the Government at any particular time.

I have never been convinced that there was a strong case for the enabling Bill. If the Government wanted to pursue their case to sell the industry, they should have put forward their detailed proposals and made specific points about the National Rivers Authority rather than what we have seen in the White Paper. It says that the arrangements for the water industry might be this way or that way and there might be some advantage in this or that. It was incumbent on the Government to say that this was the kind of structure that they envisaged because it would be efficient and acceptable for the industry. We would like a public debate. After that public debate, they could have come forward with specific proposals on how to change the structure of the industry.

However, what has actually happened is that, because we have had this Bill, the Government can now prepare the way for effectively doing what they want with our water industry, without any further reference to Parliament, for up to two years from now. Much irreversible change and potential damage could be done to the industry during that period of time and that would be wrong.

Mr. Sydney Bidwell (Ealing, Southall): Unlike the observation made earlier from the Conservative Benches, my hon. Friend's suggestion reflects the great deal of public fear, which could only become entrenched, especially about the reductions in the standards of water purification in the system that we have come to revere.

Mr. Henderson: I thank my hon. Friend for making that key point. That is another area in which hon. Members of all parties would recognise that there is a problem, even with our pride in our water supply. If our water supply now—good as it has been in the past—does not match the required European standards—and there is much evidence that it probably does not at this stage—money needs to be spent on the industry to ensure that we comply with those standards. I am glad that my hon. Friend raised that point because people who believe that that is the case do not know, if they agree to selling off the industry, whether a new privatised company would be prepared to accept that liability. After making a killing in the sell-off, the privatised company may end up being subsidised by Government to achieve the necessary reforms to which anyone with a sensible knowledge of public health standards would want to ensure that we adhere.

If the Bill is passed without our amendment, in effect, the public and Parliament would not have any control and would be excluded from the process of selling off and changing the structure of the industry. I was tempted to say "breaking up the industry" but I can live with the phraseology of "changing the structure of the industry".

The important point is that that would be an abnegation of our democracy. The Minister has shown that he is, at least in part, prepared to listen to some of the arguments that were put to him in Committee, so I hope that he will recognise that the amendment is fundamental and that he will understand its importance and say to the Secretary of State, "I think that we should accept this amendment to make sure that public control is returned to the people."

Mr. Dickens: I am pleased that Opposition Members are not pressing their amendment, so I do not want to antagonise them at this stage. However, there is an

important point that they may not have thought about. Millions of people throughout the United Kingdom have what are described as "unadopted sewers", not because those sewers are actually unadopted but because of sloppy work by earlier councils, bad minute taking, and because they were not delineated on maps, which means that those people cannot prove to the satisfaction of the local authority that the sewers have been adopted.

If there is a breakage in any of those sewers, a bill of apportionment goes to each household out of the blue. These people are sitting on timebombs. I am talking about millions of people who will look to the privatisation of water Bill as perhaps providing them with some relief. It may be possible—I do not put it more strongly than that—for the Department, when it is negotiating, to encourage the water authorities to take on those sewers as part of the deal. That would be the very best, but, at the very worst, perhaps the Department could encourage the water authorities to come to some financial arrangement with those millions of people throughout the country whereby they could reach a financial settlement to free themselves from the timebombs on which they are sitting.

I know that Opposition Members hold sincere views, but I remind them that millions of people look to the water privatisation Bill as perhaps the only way of getting out of a great dilemma about old sewers that may not have been adopted. In most cases they have been adopted, but that cannot be proved.

Mr. Moynihan: The results of the sewerage law review are being considered by my colleagues in the Department. I can give the hon. Gentleman the undertaking that his comments have been well aired, will be taken into account and that the outcome of those considerations will in part be reflected in the main Bill. I can assure the hon. Member that his points about the future shape of the water industry will be at the heart of the substantive legislation that will be prepared during the coming months and brought before Parliament in the autumn. The detailed consultation exercise, not least on the National Rivers Authority, will be critical.

The amendment is proposed to clause 8 which deals with the commencement and extent of the provisions of the Bill. When first presented to the House, subsection (2) provided that clauses 2 to 6 and the schedules to the Bill would come into force two months after Royal Assent. That provision was amended by me in Committee to make the coming into force of those provisions dependent upon an order or orders made by the Secretary of State through statutory instrument appointing a day or days for commencement. As I explained in Committee, the amendment served to give flexibility and to help the consumers and the undertakers. I offered various examples of the way in which we expected to use that flexibility. Our amendment allows the Secretary of State to delay the coming into force of that provision until undertakers have had sufficient opportunity to let their metered customers know about the new requirement. I explained in Committee that the Bill's other provisions, in particular clause 1, would come into force on Royal Assent. The Opposition amendment would mean instead that those other provisions would require an order, or orders, made by the Secretary of State to come into force.

We do not consider that this additional procedural requirement is either necessary or appropriate for the other provisions. We wish to see neither delay nor the prospect of delay between the enactment of the Bill and the availability to water authorities and the electricity supply industry of the express power provided to them by clause 1.

Once the will of Parliament has been expressed and Parliament has approved the Bill, the water authorities will wish to put the clause 1 power into use and make progress towards the new structure for the industry that we have proposed. The amendment seeks to introduce an unnecessary procedural hurdle into the work of preparation and it should be withdrawn. Despite having had a rather wide-ranging debate on an amendment which I followed with interest, I am not completely sure how closely it followed amendment No. 7.

Mr. Boyes: My hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) has covered the amendment extremely well and left little for me to say. I can only reiterate that the proposals for privatisation in the Bill allow the authorities to do virtually anything. We argued at length in Committee about that. We are concerned about the undermining of democracy and the circumventing of Parliament—two key themes—in that the role of Parliament is continuously reduced by the activities of Ministers. Opposition Members are adamant that we shall ensure that the main enabling Bill is vigorously opposed.

The Minister has not explained why it is necessary to have an enabling Bill. I beg the Minister's indulgence to ask a further question about the relationship between the privatisation proposals and VAT. When the Minister answered the question from my hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin) he did not appear to realise that the European Court decision to which my hon. Friend referred related specifically to industrial users of water. The Minister should get hold of an article in *The Independent* on Tuesday 8 December 1987 in which there is a discussion of the Commission's general VAT rate and harmonisation measures. It refers to a 4 per cent. to 9 per cent. charge on water users. Presumably that applies to both industrial and domestic users. Water supply is included among the list of half a dozen possibilities for VAT, which also includes foodstuffs. The Minister may not wish to respond immediately; he may want to consider that point carefully. There is a clear distinction in this case. The Minister is honest and has never misled us and I accept that he gave his earlier reply with all integrity.

9.45 pm

Ms. Quin: The Government have given a commitment that they would not apply VAT to food, children's clothes or fuel. However, they have not given an assurance that they would not impose it on books, newspapers, periodicals or water charges, despite the case in the European Court. As I understand it, the European Commission's general proposals for VAT harmonisation include water charges, which would relate to industrial and domestic users.

Mr. Boyes: As the Minister is aware, my hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East is still a Member of the European Parliament and she follows Commission matters closely. We are trying to be helpful as well as trying to elicit information. If the Minister prefers to have a little time on this matter, it would be acceptable if he gave us a written reply. However, we disagree with his argument on amendment No. 7.

Mr. Moynihan: It would be foolish of a Minister to stand at the Dispatch Box and pre-empt any possible decision that the Chancellor of the Exchequer may take about the Budget. I would not wander down that road on any of the issues raised by the hon. Gentleman and that covers every aspect of the budgetary process. Opposition Members must be aware that I would not do that. However, the Commission's proceedings against the United Kingdom are relevant. I want to make it clear—and I repeat this point—that the case does not concern domestic supplies. It is only relevant for industry and I place that on the record.

Amendment negatived.

Schedule 1

Provisions Relating to Meters etc.

Ms. Walley: I beg to move amendment No. 8, in page 13, line 30, leave out 'so much' and insert 'no part'.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take amendment No. 9, in page 13, line 31, leave out

'as is attributable to compliance with a request'

and insert

'if a reasonable request is'.

Ms. Walley: I want to be brief. If the amendment was accepted it would amount to a reasonable amendment to the Bill as any "reasonable request" by a water consumer would mean that where it was necessary to adjust or change the siting of a water meter in someone's home the water undertaker or water company would meet the cost rather than the individual consumer.

It is important to put the amendments into the context of the legislation as a whole. Consumers have every right to be concerned about the legislation's financial effects, not only on those who are facing increased charges as a result of the installation of water meters in the compulsory metering areaa, but on those throughout the country who will have to meet the extra costs incurred as a result of paying off outstanding debts to water authorities to pave the way for privatisation. On top of that, consumers are likely to face a position whereby water authorities will state that a water meter must be sited in a particular position in a home. The consumer will have to meet the cost should it be necessary to change the position of that water meter.

It would be easy to extend the references made earlier about consumer protection to some kind of charter for consumers which would include the right for any consumer to make a reasonable demand or suggestion to the water authority about where a meter should be sited. It seems to us entirely wrong and unfair that consumers should be forced to have a meter in their own homes, in a totally unsuitable place, or to meet the cost of putting such meters elsewhere. It is on the basis of extending consumer rights in the water industry that we have tabled these reasonable amendments.

Mr. Moynihan: The amendments would place on most undertakers an unacceptable burden of needless expenditure. Undertakers would not be able to recover the extra costs associated with resiting a meter in a position other than that reasonably proposed by the undertaker.

The question of reasonable location for meters would be governed by regulations on siting to be made under clause 5. The hon. Lady is aware of the three options for siting: close to the curtilage of the property, either outside or inside the boundary; as near as possible to the outer wall of the building, and as close as possible to the entry point of the supply pipe into the building; or inside the building, as close as possible to both the internal stop tap and the entry point of the supply pipe into the building or dwelling. Undertakers should respond to reasonable requests to resite meters, and it will be open to them, in some exceptional circumstances, not to make a charge for that.

If that were as far as we went, I would feel that the hon. Lady had a case. However, the most important and critical part of the argument that I am developing is that, in cases of dispute, there is scope for arbitration under schedule 1, paragraph 9. The hon. Lady mentioned the possibility of a totally unsuitable place. I would argue that the possibility of a meter being placed in a totally unsuitable place might well be covered in arbitration. However, it is unacceptable for undertakers always to be required to bear the full cost of resiting meters, especially when the original positioning of the meter complies with regulations to be made under the Bill. Undertakers could be forced into lengthy arbitration about what constitutes a reasonable request, for which all their customers would pay through future Bills.

I hope that my explanation of the importance that we attach to the need for arbitration will find agreement coming from Opposition Members as well as my hon. Friends, and I invite the House to reject the amendment.

Mr. Boyes: The Minister has talked about scope for arbitration. However, it is interesting that, in replying to the important points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley), he never once mentioned the word "consumer". His reply was all about the annoyance, inconvenience and concern of the water undertakers. It never entered his head that we had handed him on a golden platter the opportunity to disprove much of what we have been arguing this evening, and for many hours in Committee: that Opposition Members are concerned first and foremost with the consumers' needs, concerns and worries. Once again, the Minister stands up and says, "Well, it might inconvenience the water undertaker if someone wanted a meter moved." Of course it might, but that is the kind of business that we are in. Water undertakers may find themselves inconvenienced from time to time.

We are on the side of the consumer. We shall continue to fight for the consumers' rights and to lobby for the consumer. We accept that the final vote this evening will go the Government's way. However, many people will be concerned with water meter trials, and, after that, with universal metering. Right up to the end of the Bill, we shall continue, with strengthened arguments, to protect the rights of the consumer.

Amendment negatived.

Order for Third Reading read.

9.54 pm

Mr. Moynihan: I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

This is a short Bill, but one which is important both to the Government's privatisation programme, and the future arrangements for charging for water supplies. We have had an exhaustive examination of it in Committee, and I believe that we represent the Bill to the House with some significant improvements.

I confess myself deeply impressed by the knowledge of hon. Members on the various subjects, but perhaps chiefly by the expertise of the hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) whose past service in the water industry was frequently in evidence to assist the elucidation of many otherwise obscure points.

In Committee, we amended the metering and charges provisions. In particular, we introduced a new provision to enable water undertakers to require the installation of meters in new or converted houses, or to stipulate that plumbing be suitable for later installation of meters.

Provided that the House gives the Bill a Third Reading tonight, as I am confident it will, it will go from here to another place significantly strengthened and improved not least, indeed foremost, in the interests of the consumer. Those of us most concerned can now turn our attentions to the policy objectives that the Bill enables us to implement. We look forward with confidence to the successful introduction of privatisation legislation, both for water and electricity, and to the programme of metering trials and the lessons that we in Government, and the water industry, will learn from that.

I commend the Bill to the House.

9.55 pm

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Much has been made of the importance of the metering trials and much of what the Minister has said will reassure people. Many may be ignorant of the fact that we have had metering of water since the end of the 19th century.

The most important feature of the Bill is that it prepares the way for privatisation. The privatisation policies of the Government have been one of our major successes. More than a third of those previously working in the public sector are now working in the private sector. People are more responsible for their own lives, managing their own companies and keeping Whitehall further away from their concerns.

Many will be reassured by the proposals for a National Rivers Authority providing for integrated river management and pollution control. Recently, there has been worry about the quality of our rivers: our constituents will bear testimony that this is a subject of growing concern.

This may be one of the last opportunities to discuss the substantive issues involved in privatisation before the Government finalise their proposals. Before moving forward, at this stage I would like my hon. Friend to give full consideration to the model offered by the statutory water companies. Much is made of the fact that 25 per cent. of water is already supplied by the 28 statutory water companies. I have the privilege to be a director of one of those companies. My friend, Sir John Page, the former Member for Harrow, West, now chairman of the Water Companies Association, previously had a similar responsibility.

The Labour party has frequently spoken about the needs of the consumer. Statutory water companies, based on a philosophy of service, act as mutual companies together with the consumers. The dividends are limited by law and surplus funds must be applied to reducing future water rates. With the provision of water serious consideration must be given to long-term investment. Each generation provides the long-term infrastructure necessary to supply water for future generations. If we move towards plcs, primarily focusing on the returns to the shareholder, there may be serious implications for the water industry.

I ask my hon. Friend to follow the advice offered by my noble Friend Lord Nugent the other day who asked that the model of the statutory water company, a tried, tested and trusted model, should be given every consideration before the Government moved further with legislation for water privatisation. Nevertheless, I wholeheartedly support this Bill.

9.58 pm

Mr. O'Brien: We have discussed at great length tonight certain issues that will be affected by the Bill. However, there is one issue to which we have not referred, but which I consider to be the most important. When the trial schemes were suggested or introduced by water undertakings no opportunity was given to the people involved in those trial areas to decide whether they wanted to be included. We consider that to be totally undemocratic.

The people who are taking part in the trial areas have been dragooned into the trials and on that premise we shall divide the House on Third Reading. We consider the Bill to be totally unfair, unreasonable and undemocratic. Against that background we suggest that the Government should withdraw the Bill or we shall vote against it.

10 pm

Mr. Moynihan: By leave of the House, I should like to express my thanks to those hon. Members who served on the Standing Committee and those other hon. Members who have contributed to our deliberations today.

I spoke earlier of the contribution of the hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien), but I should like to place on record my appreciation of the efforts of all the Committee members in scrutinising and testing the Bill's provisions.

The Bill is concerned with two of Britain's most essential industries. The attention that it has received has been commensurate with the importance of the subject. The Bill has been thoroughly considered in Committee and our discussions today have allowed further examination of some of its most important aspects. It is now ready to go to another place, and I commend it to the House.

Question put, That the Bill be now read the Third time:—

The House divided: Ayes 267, Noes 223.

Division No. 163] **[10 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert	Biffen, Rt Hon John
Alison, Rt Hon Michael	Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Allason, Rupert	Blackburn, Dr John G.
Amess, David	Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Arbuthnot, James	Body, Sir Richard
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*	Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Ashby, David	Boscawen, Hon Robert
Aspinwall, Jack	Boswell, Tim
Atkins, Robert	Bottomley, Peter
Atkinson, David	Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*	Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Baldry, Tony	Bowis, John
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*	Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony	Brazier, Julian
Bellingham, Henry	Bright, Graham
Bendall, Vivian	Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*	Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Benyon, W.	Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Bevan, David Gilroy	Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick

Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Timothy
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knowles, Michael
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd and
Mr. David Lightbown.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Ms Hilary
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, J.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alastair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, James
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Galbraith, Samuel

Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Ms Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Douglas
Hinchliffe, David
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, James
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kilfedder, James
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Miss Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Tom
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon J *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Ms Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerald
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Ms Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Anthony
Wray, James
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Frank Cook.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Bill read the Third time, and passed.

Industrial Training Levy

10.12 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Patrick Nicholls): I beg to move,

That the draft Industrial Training Levy (Engineering Board) Order 1988, which was laid before this House on 13th January, be approved.

Our debate tonight takes place because any industrial training levy order which involves a levy exceeding 1 per cent. of an employer's payroll must receive parliamentary approval under the Industrial Training Act 1982. In the case of the Engineering Industry Training Board, one part of the levy proposals—that covering site employees in the mechanical and electrical engineering construction sector—establishes a levy rate of 1·12 per cent. and requires approval under the affirmative resolution procedure.

The board's levy proposals for 1988 show no change from those approved by the House in March of last year. The board anticipates that it will raise some £19·6 million from the levy, after allowing for exemption. The levy will apply to those firms which fall within the scope of the board between the date the order comes into force and 31 August 1988.

The levy proposals are in two parts, the first applying to mainstream engineering, and the second to the mechanical and electrical engineering construction industry. I shall briefly outline the proposals in both sectors.

For mainstream engineering establishments the board proposes a total levy of 1 per cent. of an employer's payroll. For an establishment with fewer than 1,000 employees, 0·08 per cent. of payroll will be non-exemptible; larger establishments will pay a non-exemptible levy of 0·08 per cent. in respect of the first 1,000 employees and 0·072 per cent. in respect of the remainder. The bulk of the levy is therefore non-exemptible—that is, employers who train satisfactorily will be given credit for this and will not be required to pay the maximum levy to the board. In addition, firms employing 40 workers or fewer will be excluded totally from paying levy. Some 68 per cent. of firms employing 12 per cent. of the work force will be excluded from levy because of their size.

For the mechanical and electrical engineering construction sector, again the levy proposals are the same as those approved last year. In this sector, arrangements differ for workers employed on site, and those employed off site. For on-site employees no levy is payable on the first £50,000 of payroll; above that, a non-exemptible levy of 1·12 per cent. will apply, and 31 per cent. of establishments employing 0·5 per cent. of the work force will be below the levy threshold.

For off-site employees, establishments with up to 30 employees will be excluded from levy; this will mean that some 79 per cent. of establishments employing 11 per cent. of the work force will not pay levy. Establishments with more than 30 employees will be levied at 1 per cent. of payroll. The non-exemptible element of this levy will be 0·15 per cent.

The raising of a non-exemptible levy in excess of 0·2 per cent. in the on-site sector means that the board must satisfy another requirement of the Industrial Training Act 1982 — that there should be a proven employer consensus in the industry for the proposals. Employer

[Mr. Patrick Nicholls]

organisations representing more than half the employers liable to pay levy, and also representing employers liable to pay more than half the total levy between them, have confirmed their agreement to the proposals, thus satisfying the conditions of the Act.

The proposals before the House that we are debating tonight were approved unanimously by the board and the Manpower Services Commission. They show no change from those approved by the House in March last year. Therefore, I commend them to the House.

10.16 pm

Mr. Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield): As usual, the Opposition support the order and congratulate the board on its past work and proven desire to adopt and adapt to the changing realities of training. Some of us get used to the routine of supporting orders such as this and I welcome the Minister to yet another late night session.

Since last year, a number of initiatives have come out of the Engineering Industry Training Board which has long recognised that, even with the levy exemption system and a statutory board for this sector of industry, there is still a failure adequately to train sufficient highly skilled men and women to maintain this leading, indeed the largest, sector of our manufacturing industry.

Even with the small economic upturn that we have seen in recent months, and against the backdrop of an industry which now employs only 1·9 million workers when as recently as 1979 it was employing 3 million workers, we are already experiencing dreadful skill shortages in the industry which strike dangerously at the heart of our ability to compete successfuly as an industrial nation and successfully to create wealth by meeting the challenges of technology and international markets.

Only last month a report—I wait for the Minister to listen to this because it is something that he should digest and think about — from the National Institute of Economic and Social Research revealed the appalling gap that exists, and progressively opens, between us and the major countries with which we are in direct competition in the engineering sector.

The report reveals that between 1975 and 1985—a period of 10 years — compared with Germany and France we have done appallingly badly at producing a trained work force with engineering qualifications. Between 1975 and 1985 France increased by 60 per cent. the numbers of people obtaining craft-level vocational qualifications. In the same period, Germany increased its numbers by 35 per cent. And what did Britain do? The United Kingdom achieved a decrease in the numbers of these skilled personnel of 30 per cent. That is a depressing picture to paint on a night when we are discussing the Engineering Industry Training Board and its ability to carry out its functions on its present levy and on the levy proposed tonight. Let me put the percentages in real numbers of how many people obtained craft engineering qualifications: 10,800 received them in 1985 in this country; in France, 27,000 qualified — two and a half times as many; in Germany, 55,000 qualified—five times more.

Even on a night when we agree with the order, I recommend that the Minister read the national institute's report seriously and examine its recommendations. They are not all to be swallowed at one gulp, but the report shows that France and Germany, using different methods from ours, are taking training in the engineering industry seriously and attempting to do something about it. France, like us, started from well behind the Germans, but recognised that there was a problem and used its own institutions in its own way to meet the challenge. The problem with our country is that the Government do not recognise the problem or react to the challenge.

Why, in spite of the training board and the levy, does our country fail to produce the skills that we need? I shall suggest some reasons; we have rehearsed them before, but it is worth telling the House about them tonight. First, only 50 per cent. of those working in the engineering industry work in the engineering sector as described in the Industrial Training Act 1982. Fifty per cent. work outside in the service industries, the financial sector and beyond. They are beyond the remit of the board and outside its scope. One might agree with some of the engineering employers who ask why they should train qualified engineers when they will be recruited by someone who paid nowt for their training.

Secondly, employers with fewer than 40 employees are on the register but are not included in the liability for the levy. That is a large percentage. This country has many small engineering workshops with about 20 or 30 men. So 12·5 per cent. of the industry goes out, because firms with fewer than 40 are excluded. Thirdly, some of the small and large companies that have long been regarded as reasonable trainers have never understood the crucial fact that British companies, unlike our international competitors, seem unable to grasp, which is that our companies too often regard training not as an investment but as a cost. That is a sad reflection on what is happening to the training of the work force in this country.

Over the past nine years the Government have abolished all but a handful of statutory training boards. I am sorry to say that the recent Anderson report for the Manpower Services Commission shows what has happened to the sectors of the industry for which the boards were abolished. We know how disastrous that has been for all those sectors, apart from the few examples that the reports picks out as shining lights in a dark and tragic picture.

The Government have spent most of their money on programmes centred on the unemployed. That is not surprising, as unemployment has risen under the Government's policies. So most of the wealth put the way of training has been for programmes that are not so much for training but for income support aimed at the unemployed. What has been wrong with the country and what has happened to the Engineering Industry Training Board—even with its levy—has been an inability to do as much as can and should be done to train the work force in work, which is the fastest route to increasing productivity and wealth creation.

The Government have never understood the central lesson that other competitive countries have learned, that the sum of individual companies pursuing their individual training progammes, their own company interests and their own company benefits, will never add up to a training programme for this or any other sector of industry. What is more, it will never add up to anything that produces a training policy in the national interest.

There is only one body responsible for the national interest—the Government. But this Government have a total lack of a national strategy. It has always been

replaced by a potent and corrosive ideology. The Engineering Industry Training Board has informed the Government often of the crisis in engineering training. We faced a crisis last year and the year before; we have faced it over the last nine years. *[Interruption.]* The Minister's hon. Friend seems to be running a book; it would be interesting to know what he is betting on. I should not like to run a book on the crisis in the engineering industry. If hon. Members want to bet on the British racehorse in terms of competitiveness, it is not a very good one to bet on under this Government. We are in the midst of a steel crisis and we are facing bottlenecks, steel shortages and a loss of competitiveness internationally.

The Government are still obsessed with the myth that the free market will deliver what the country needs with no real Government direction. The Labour party says that what is needed is leadership and commitment to provide a trained base of human resource without which we cannot succeed, as every industrial nation knows. We should look to the future, not towards yesterday or how well we did 20 or 100 years ago.

At the beginning of the week I had a meeting with the Engineering Employers' Federation. It was a disturbing and worrying experience. When I have talked to its counterparts in the United States, Germany and France, I have found people who want to move into innovation and who have prepared themselves and their country for future challenges and for being in the forefront of technology and engineering. What I found with the Engineering Employers' Federation here was a great desire to remain in the past, to look only to the short-term future of their own companies and not to the future of their sector or their country. I find that profoundly depressing and disturbing.

Some of the nostrums so popular in organisations like the Engineering Employers' Federation will be the epitaph of British industry in years to come unless we have a Government who say that they have a national interest to train. There must be a strategy to train. We must take it forward in a leadership role. I suspect that the Government will allow organisations like the Engineering Employers' Federation to lead. Indeed, the proposals to change the complexion of the board and the nature of the Manpower Services Commission lead me to believe that there is no longer a national strategy for training but merely a wish to follow the dictates of individual companies. I repeat that that does not open the way to a strategy for training that will benefit this country in the years to come.

So I end on a profoundly pessimistic note. Yes, we have an Engineering Industry Training Board and it is doing a relatively good job. But much more needs to be done in this sector. Mechanisms, plans and an impetus from Government are needed so that training in this sector is taken on as never before.

I refer to a report in the *Financial Times* only this week which I think gets to the heart of the problem. A study of the training programmes of major companies in this country shows that often even the large companies—and in terms of the engineering industry this means those with tremendous clout and with more than 1,000 employees—have little real direction in their training programmes. They do not know what their training is supposed to secure. They do not have a training plan that prepares the company to face the future. Indeed, many of the training programmes described by the Manpower Services Commission only this week are more a laying on of hands, to be able to say that they are training, doing the basics rather than doing what our competitors in the United States, Germany and Japan are doing. How can we put ourselves in the forefront of training for the new, innovative age of the next 10 or 20 years?

We shall not oppose this order, but we are profoundly worried about the direction of engineering training in this country.

Question put:—

The House proceeded to a Division—

MR. MARK LENNOX-BOYD *and* MR. DAVID LIGHTBOWN *were appointed Tellers for the Ayes but no Members being willing to act as Tellers for the Noes,* MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *declared that the Ayes had it.*

Resolved,

That the draft Industrial Training Levy (Engineering Board) Order 1988, which was laid before this House on 13th January, be approved.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for an Opposition spokesman to say from the Dispatch Box that the Opposition will not oppose the order, but for the Opposition Whip who is on duty to shout in a very loud voice, along with his colleagues, demanding a vote on the matter? Clearly the left hand does not know what the left hand is doing in the Labour party.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): That is not a point of order for the Chair.

PETITIONS

Rating Reform (Scotland)

10.36 pm

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): I am grateful for the fact that a Division was called, thus giving me the opportunity to leave a Standing Committee and come to the Chamber to present this petition on behalf of 235 members of the Prestonpans Labour party club. It calls on the House to repeal the legislation imposing a poll tax in Scotland.

It is well known that there is universal feeling in Scotland that the legislation is pernicious and unfair and is likely to cause terrible hardship for many people on low incomes. There is universal feeling in Scotland that the House would be well advised to repeal this damaging legislation. I have no hesitation in supporting the petition on behalf of my constituents.

To lie upon the Table.

10.37 pm

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): For the convenience of the House, I shall present two petitions together, which are both for the repeal of the iniquitous poll tax legislation that is euphemistically entitled the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act.

The two petitions are from all the members of the Cumnock and district branch of the National Association of Widows, and from the residents of Rankinston, a mining town in my constituency. The petition was carried out by S. McColgan of Scenery Hill cottage, Rankinston.

[Mr. George Foulkes]

The number of signatures on the petition is 420, which is almost all the adult population of Rankinston. They vote almost 100 per cent. Labour—and all the better for it.

Both the Cumnock and district branch of the National Association of Widows and the residents of Rankiston petition the House for the repeal of the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act, the iniquitous poll tax measure, because it is unworkable and it will be much more costly to raise the same amount of money, or in some cases less money, raised by the present rating system. Above all, it is unfair.

To lie upon the Table.

10.39 pm

Mr. Calum A. Macdonald (Western Isles): With your permission, Madam Deputy Speaker, I beg leave to present a petition on behalf of almost 1,000 residents of the Western Isles. The petition complains that the introduction of the community charge, or poll tax, will impose upon the people of the Western Isles and upon the people of Scotland in general an unfair tax that is inefficient, to boot. It will hit particularly hard those who are already poor and also rural areas. It will be expensive to administer and it will entail intolerable intrusions upon privacy to administer.

The petition concludes with a prayer to repeal the tax.

To lie upon the Table.

Confectionery (Value Added Tax)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.

10.36 pm

Mr. Doug Henderson (Newcastle upon Tyne, North): I am very grateful for this opportunity to consider the removal of value added tax from crisps, nuts and confectionery, including chocolate biscuits. I am also pleased that some Conservative Members are present, and I hope that at least one of them will take part in the debate.

I understand the convention that it is difficult—perhaps awkward—for the Minister to make a specific response to the matter that I am raising, certainly in quantitative terms. However, I hope that, after listening to the contributions, he will accept that issues of taxation principle are at stake and that he will feel able to refer to those principles and to give the Government's view on them, even if he enters a caveat on when any Government action might take place or the extent to which that Government action might alter the current position. I hope that the Minister will not hide behind convention—indeed, I urge him not to do so—and I hope that he will explain the Government's view on what I believe is an important issue, affecting nearly everyone in the country.

For more than a decade, hungry mouths in nearly every home have been eating crisps, nuts, confectionery, biscuits and so on, on which value added tax has been paid. At the same time—this is not a criticism; it is a comparison—food at the rich man's table, where there have, perhaps, been smoked salmon and caviar to eat, has been tax-free. Countless other luxury food items are also tax-free.

The schoolkid who likes, and can perhaps afford no more than, a packet of crisps or a chocolate biscuit at what I used to call piece-time, although I think that playtime is a more appropriate term, pays a VAT charge on those items. That child's mother, who might feel a bit peckish in the middle of the morning and, on the weeks when she is not on the Cambridge diet, might enjoy some nuts to help her out, pays value added tax on those nuts. Working men and women in industry who have an energy gap halfway through an afternoon or night shift, will often have recourse to a chocolate biscuit to give them an energy boost; they pay value added tax on that biscuit.

I am sure that hon. Members of all parties regularly visit pensioners' organisations and we all see chocolate digestive biscuits emerging at the pensioners' coffee mornings. Those biscuits attract value added tax also. All of us who, from time to time, take a break and often consume a well-known product, again a chocolate biscuit, pay value added tax on that biscuit.

The tax law on food is not only discriminatory; I would argue that it is in a muddle because some confectionery and some biscuits are taxed while others are not. A digestive biscuit is untaxed, but even if the same digestive biscuit is of the high-fibre type, which, according to the nutritionalists is better for us, if it is coated with chocolate, it is taxed. It cannot be argued that the relevant question is whether chocolate is involved in the product, because a number of other products, with a high chocolate content are tax-free.

I do not want to advertise particular brands, but I cannot think of a generic name for Jaffa cakes, which are untaxed, as are chocolate puddings. One of my favourites is sponge pudding, which is absolutely saturated with chocolate, and that too is untaxed if it comes out of a tin and is eaten at home.

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): I should like to declare an outside interest in the sugar industry. I am following the hon. Gentleman's points with great attention, because it seems a supreme irony that a tax is put on the confectionery which goes into the lunchboxes of many working men and women, when it is the Government's policy to have no tax on food.

It is interesting to consider whether, in the forthcoming Budget, the Government will suggest that that anomaly should be removed. I recall that, when the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) introduced the tax, he mentioned a number of reasons for doing so. One was that he had 400 million reasons for introducing the tax—all of them green ones. He meant that he needed the money.

The Government do not need the money now, and I hope that they will take the opportunity to remove that anomalous tax on part of the food supply in Britain. The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne (Mr. Henderson) has done a great service in drawing the matter to the attention of the House.

Mr. Henderson: I am grateful to the hon. Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) for making that important point, especially in relation to packed lunches. I have been a little reticent about raising that subject, in case it was thought that I was arguing a particular corner.

I would have thought that the Minister might wish to associate himself with that point. I hear that, because of the austerity of the civil service, beer and sandwiches are being consumed at Treasury meetings, and that it is common for civil servants to bring packed lunches. I am sure that Treasury officials and Ministers would not want to feel that they are being discriminated against.

I shall return to the muddle. The best illustration of the muddle relates to the cookie that contains some chocolate. I always have problems with what have been called sexist comments, but I have watched my wife—and I have done it myself—prepare the ingredients. If chocolate pieces are added to a bowl of sugar and fat and the other ingredients to make cookies that contain chocolate pieces, those cookies clearly would not be taxable. However, if the same ingredients are used to bake cookies with chocolate on the outside, it is arguable the same cookies, with the same contents, will become taxable—and under existing law, they would attract VAT. That is the real muddle.

It is not surprising that there is confusion. Her Majesty's Customs and Excise must have great difficulty in determining which confectionery products should be liable for VAT. I am sure that an unnecessary amount of public expenditure goes into that determination, which should be clarified by Parliament.

Mr. Conal Gregory (York): I congratulate the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North on his success in Mr. Speaker's ballot with this important debate.

In my constituency, confectionery is the No. 1 industry. I should like to follow one specific point that the hon. Gentleman raised about the uses of confectionery. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will explain why certain types of confectionery are zero-rated in the same way as other foods. Confectionery that is used for sacramental

[Mr. Conal Gregory]

purposes is zero-rated. That was the case in 1973; the hon. Gentleman alluded to that. Earlier today, we heard in the House of the great popularity of a certain type of confectionery to which the hon. Gentleman alluded. The Minister for Employment said that 40 Kit-Kats are consumed every second — such is the industry of his Department in doing research.

We have moved away from the times when confectionery was a special item at Christmas and on Mother's day and Valentine's day — which now approaches. I conclude that we have reached the stage of snacking on confectionery, and it is right that the Treasury consider that point and the use of a whole variety of confectionery at times other than purely special occasions.

Mr. Henderson: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for emphasising that point. It reinforces the general argument that I am trying to present.

There is a muddle, and Customs and Excise has a very difficult job to perform. Therefore it is hardly surprising that a number of cases have ended up in court. A recent court case, Commissioners of Customs and Excise *v* Quaker Oats Limited, related to a chewy bar. Tax liability was determined on the basis of whether the main manufacturing process was baking or another process. That is unacceptable and far too lax. It demonstrates the inherent weakness of the law and the need for change.

We in this country are conscious of the fact that a different attitude is adopted towards the taxation of food. Value added tax is levied on food in some EEC countries, albeit at a reduced rate. I hope that I shall not embarrass the Minister by mentioning that, at the last general election, rumours were rife that, after it was over, VAT would be levied on a wide range of foods. I remember that the Government denied those rumours. I am glad that the Government were able to make their position clear about defending the interests of consumers.

There is, however, an inconsistency, because about 20 per cent. of our food—food that falls into the category of crisps, nuts and confectionery—is subject to tax. The Government accept that those items are food. When the Government prepare their statistics for the family expenditure survey, for product surveys in *Economic Trends*, for unemployment, for the retail price index or for overseas trade, they include all those items as part of the calculation — and rightly so. However, that shows the inconsistency of the law and the need to address that contradiction.

The Government ought not to say that they cannot comment on that point. It would be difficult for the Government to clarify the position in their Budget proposals, but the position should be established before the House decides what would be practicable. Some may argue that it would be unwise to remove taxation from some of those products, because it would inevitably lead to an increase in consumption that would be damaging to health. I do not accept that view.

Nutritionists do not agree on what is an ideal diet. However, they agree that the diet should be balanced and that it should include a combination of carbohydrates, fats and protein. The Biscuit, Cake, Chocolate and Confectionery Alliance has argued convincingly that its products contribute 22 per cent. of the carbohydrates, 15 per cent. of the fats and 7 per cent. of the protein consumed in this country, and that their products amount to about 15 per cent. of the average person's diet. To classify those products for taxation purposes as non-food items—as luxuries that people consume at the weekend in small quantities—flies in the face of both logic and equity.

I hope that the Government will not argue that, although they would like to do something about this, they would encounter difficulties from the European Commission. In the current case that was referred to in an earlier debate, which relates to whether we should be able to zero-rate certain services, the Advocate General for the European Court of Justice cited the instance of zero-rating food as an acceptable application of the rules within Europe. He stated that that acceptability was based on social grounds.

If the Government accept some of the arguments that I and other hon. Members have presented tonight, they cannot maintain that there is a European obstacle. The Government have a strong defence under article 28.2 of the sixth directive, which allows a review of the items that are included as VAT-exempt or VAT-reduced. Under article 17 of the directive, the Commission allows certain products to have the reduced rate introduced on social grounds.

Some of my colleagues did not like the way in which the taxation was originally applied, and I am sure that some Conservative Members felt the same. Notwithstanding the arguments, we have an obligation to the House to start with a clean sheet and examine the whole question of what is and what is not food. We should recognise that an untenable position currently exists.

Of course, revenue implications are inevitable whenever a proposition like this is put to the test in the House. In the short time that I have been a Member of the House, I have noticed that, whenever revenue implications arise, uncomfortable twitching occurs among Treasury Ministers. I do not expect anything different this evening.

However, we are not talking about the loss of all the tax revenue on these foods. I am sure that the Treasury team, understanding the secondary impact of economics, will realise that at present £590 million is raised in taxation on those products, of which about £450 million is raised from confectionery and biscuits. I know that the Minister will be aware that, by changing the law to apply taxation in the way that I and my colleagues are suggesting, he would not lose the full £590 million, or £450 million in the case of confectionery. There is a plus side to the account.

The Minister will understand that there will be benefits from the impact that reducing VAT would have on increasing the demand for products. Three of four major conglomerates which control the industry have given a commitment to control the price should taxation be removed. They know that the Government will gain from other indirect taxes and through the saving of unemployment benefit and social security as a result of increased employment in the industry. The estimate is for an additional 14,000 jobs. I would not suggest that that is a precise figure, but it is a sign of the order of the increase in employment.

Increased taxes and national insurance would accrue to the Treasury through the employment of more people in the industry and increased taxes on profits. I estimate that the net cost to the Treasury might be about £240 million in the case of confectionery and perhaps another £50 million for nuts and crisps.

I hope that the Government will accept that the case has been made that there are inconsistencies and that the people who have suffered are in the lower and middle income groups. Packed lunches have suffered badly from the way in which taxation is levied at the moment.

I asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer about this on 26 November 1987. He replied that I should take up the matter with my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey), who first introduced that tax. I do not think that that sort of dismissive reply—which we have not heard from the Minister this evening—is sufficient. We must tackle the whole question of taxation consistency, logic, equity and fairness. The issue is not one of party policy, as is clear from the support that it has received on both sides of the House.

I ask the Minster to agree to early discussions with his colleagues, and particularly with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, on the possibility of assenting to my proposals.

11 pm

Mr. Conal Gregory (York) *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Has the hon. Gentleman agreement for a second intervention?

Mr. Gregory: I sought to raise just one point, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has already been allowed one long intervention. Has he agreement for another?

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Peter Lilley) *indicated assent.*

Mr. Gregory: I should like to delay the House for a few moments before my hon. Friend responds, mainly on financial matters, on which he is particularly competent.

First, I wish to endorse the comment by the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) about the comparison with other EEC countries. I hope that my hon. Friend will make some response on that. We are trying, under the treaty of Rome, to obtain consensus; we are out of line, particularly with Italy and West Germany, in not zero-rating confectionery, or putting it on at the same rate as other foods.

Secondly, some 14,000 new jobs would be created if my hon. Friend sought that approach. Thirdly, may I ask him to counter the comment made, I believe erroneously, in the last Parliament by the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) that, if Labour returned to power, a tax would be imposed on sugar? That would be very regressive, and most unfortunate for the industry.

11.1 pm

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Peter Lilley): I congratulate the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) on obtaining this debate, and on the eloquence and command of detail with which he has presented his case. I know that he has taken a deep interest in this subject for some time, and has great knowledge of it, as well as concern not just from the constituency angle, but for the wider principles that it raises.

I also pay tribute to my hon. Friends the Members for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) and for York (Mr. Gregory) for their contributions. They too have a long-standing interest in the subject and great knowledge of it, and I am grateful to them for making their points today. I am grateful, too, to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North for acknowledging that I am constrained by the long-standing convention that Treasury Ministers do not make substantive comments on fiscal matters during the Budget purdah period, and I hope that he will understand that.

I have listened attentively to what the hon. Gentleman and my hon. Friends have said, and I will consider it deeply and discuss it with my colleagues. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will understand that I cannot go further than that today.

I will add one point: when the hon. Gentleman spoke about what he saw as anomalies, as did my hon. Friends, I felt that the ghost of Sir Gerald Nabarro was hanging over the Chamber, and remembered that he had made a whole career on the subject. I very much hope that the hon. Gentleman does not follow suit, as I would be the principal butt. However, I am grateful to him for the points that he has raised.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at three minutes past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 3 February 1988

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON BILL *[Lords]*
As amended, considered; to be read the Third time.

Oral Answers to Questions

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

South Africa

1. **Miss Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next expects to meet the South African ambassador; and what subjects he expects to discuss with him.

5. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent communications he has had with the South African Government about the situation in that country.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Sir Geoffrey Howe): I have no present plans for an early meeting with the South African ambassador. But we maintain regular contact with the South African authorities, both here and via Her Majesty's ambassador, on a wide range of issues.

Miss Lestor: Will the Secretary of State accept that it is time that further representations were made about the Sharpeville Six? The court has now stated that the Sharpeville Six were convicted on the basis, not that they had any direct connection with the deceased, but that they were in the vicinity when the crime was committed. The implications of that are pretty appalling. Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman think that it is time to ask the Prime Minister, given the special relationship that she says she has with President Botha, to make representations on the Sharpeville Six as a matter of urgency?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The House will realise that there is a specific question on this topic on the Order Paper a little later. It is right that we have followed the case closely and with concern. Through the German presidency of the Community, on behalf of the 12 members, we appealed for clemency for the Sharpeville Six on humanitarian grounds on 4 December. On 18 December we gave our support to a statement issued on behalf of the United Nations Security Council urging the South African Government to commute the death sentences on the Six. Since then, we have directly reiterated our concern to the South African Government.

Mr. Canavan: Given the appeals for clemency submitted by the United Nations Security Council and the EEC, which have been supported by hon. Members, Church organisations and anti-apartheid groups in South Africa, will the Secretary of State please urge the Prime Minister to intervene directly with President Botha to save the lives of these six young people, who seem to have been wrongly convicted?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have seen the early-day motion relating to the subject that the hon. Gentleman raises. The representations that we have made direct to the South African Government, which the hon. Gentleman acknowledged, through the United Nations and in concert with the European Community are what we judge to be most likely to have the desired effect.

Mr. Rhodes James: When my right hon. and learned Friend next meets the South African ambassador, will he remind him that his Government are committed to the independence of Namibia, and that some of us are becoming impatient and angry at their refusal to honour that commitment?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As my hon. Friend knows, we are also committed to the independence of Namibia, by United Nations resolution 435. We consider that it is a matter that should be put in hand urgently, and we have supported the negotiations currently being undertaken by the United States on an intermediary basis to bring it about. We shall continue to press in that direction.

Mr. Forth: Has my right hon. and learned Friend received representations from the South African Government about the so-called Birmingham Six? If he has not, does he think that we should all learn the lesson that it is high time we stayed out of each other's internal judicial affairs? If we did, the world would be a better place for it.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend must understand that there is a difference between the structure of countries such as ours, which are wholly democratic and subject to a universally available rule of law, and the position that prevails not just in South Africa but in other countries, where there is not complete democracy and a large part of a community is excluded from institutions on the ground of skin colour, which gives rise to a situation that has potentially wider implications. The two structures are in no way comparable.

Mr. Cabom: Have there been any discussions with any other Governments, specifically the South African Government, on setting up a regional conference on security in southern Africa?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I do not recollect there being any such thing.

Mr. Alexander: When my right hon. and learned Friend meets the high commissioner, will he raise the question of the apparently slow progress towards the consolidation of Bophuthatswana? Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that until further progress is made it will be difficult for other countries to recognise Bophuthatswana's independence?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Bophuthatswana's fragmentary nature is only one reason why no country thought it right to recognise its independence. That country is financially dependent on South Africa. The very existence of

Bophuthatswana is a consequence of apartheid, and I think that that is the principal reason why recognition has not been forthcoming.

Mr. Anderson: The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and his colleagues frequently boast about our increased aid commitment to Mozambique, yet the right hon. and learned Gentleman knows that much of the value of our investment there — especially in infrastructure projects—is destroyed by South African-backed terrorist organisations — Renamo, or MNR as it is known in Mozambique. What representations has the right hon. and learned Gentleman made to the South African ambassador here or to the South African Government about the effect on our aid efforts in Mozambique of the South African destabilisation policies? Will he give a commitment that the Government, directly or indirectly, will not meet the MNR representative, Mr. Alfonso Dhlakama, who is due to come to this country this month, having been invited by an organisation that includes many Conservative Members, and that the Government will in no way give any form of recognition to the MNR or to Savimbi's Unita?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Our policy toward Unita remains unchanged. There is no question of our recognising such an organisation, as the hon. Gentleman knows. There is no reason to believe that Mr. Dhlakama intends to visit Britain. On the more substantial point underlying the hon. Gentleman's question, of course we condemn cross-border violations in either direction. We have in particular urged the South Africans to exercise restraint. Time and again we have warned and urged the South Africans not to indulge in destabilising activity of the kind that concerns the hon. Gentleman.

Gaza Strip

2. **Mr. Madel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will consider taking a joint diplomatic initiative with the Foreign Ministers of Egypt and Israel to try to reduce tension in Gaza; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The Arab-Israel conflict and the situation in Gaza have figured prominently in our recent discussions with Egyptian and Israeli leaders. We also remain in close touch with other Governments concerned. We are ready to play a full part in efforts to reduce tension and to achieve a lasting settlement.

Mr. Madel: As America is now preoccupied with the presidential election campaign, and as the position in Gaza should not just drift along, does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that Egypt and Israel should meet at the highest level to try to make the Camp David accords work in relation to Gaza and, if successful, move on to negotiations on the West Bank?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am certain that the search for progress in the peace process should not be set to one side on the ground of elections of one kind or another anywhere. We attach importance to the possibility of co-operation with the Government of Egypt. I had long talks with the President and Foreign Minister during my visit in the autumn. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State had useful discussions with the President and Foreign Minister at the end of last month. The best basis on which to carry the peace process forward remains on the footing of two principles — the right of Israel and other states in the area to a secure existence, and the Palestinian right to self-determination. We think that the best way of carrying that forward is by means of the international conference, which is now supported by many people, including President Mubarak.

Sir Russell Johnston: I agree with what the Secretary of State has just said about the future in general, but does he not agree that the situation in Gaza is immediate? Has he given any thought to the proposal that Gaza might in some way be administered by the United Nations in the short term? If so, has he discussed that with the Israelis or the Egyptians?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I agree that what has understandably intensified world concern about the Arab-Israel dispute is the position not only in Gaza but elsewhere in the occupied territories. There can be no doubt that Israel should withdraw, as part of a comprehensive peace settlement, from the territories occupied in 1967, and that, meanwhile, she should administer the occupation of those territories in compliance with international law and human rights standards.

Mr. Temple-Morris: Will my right hon. and learned Friend stress in any initiative the enormous damage that this is doing to the state of Israel, not least by increasing awareness in the United States of the fact that Israel is an occupying power in other people's territory? Will he seek to involve the United States in any initiative in which he is able to assist?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I very much appreciate the points made by my hon. Friend. We deplore violence from any quarter in this situation, which is so fraught with conflict. We are seriously concerned about the current unrest, which has been particularly evident in Gaza. It illustrates the dangers of leaving the conflict unresolved, the urgency of the search for a peaceful settlement—and the urgency of those objectives from Israel's point of view, too. As my hon. Friend pointed out, the longer the situation continues, and the longer one finds Israeli occupation forces failing to handle disturbances in a fashion compatible with her obligations, the sharper will be the attention that is focused on the situation. We want Israel to be established within secure boundaries as a state which is not itself threatened by violence. The people of Israel want to achieve that, too. So, in their own interests, they need to address themselves to the situation of which my hon. Friend has complained.

Mr. Ernie Ross: Does the Foreign Secretary accept that, in the meantime, there is a need for something to be done to ensure that Israel complies with the Geneva conventions that relate to an occupying power's role in such a situation? How did our representative vote when those resolutions came before the United Nations?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman is right to draw attention to the need for effective action, so far as that is possible, in relation to non-compliance with international obligations in these territories. That is why we supported United Nations resolutions Nos. 605, 607, and 608, and the most recent one, introduced this week, by voting in support of them. Indeed, we played a prominent part in drafting this week's resolution. However, that is not all that needs to be done, but it is a

mark of international concern. It is important also to do what can be done to help conditions in the territories by aid and access for trade. We have actively supported all those things.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the conditions in the camps in Gaza are no worse than those in the camps in the Lebanon and Jordan? Does he also agree that it is high time that the Arab world, which encouraged the creation of those camps 40 years ago, used some of its oil-based wealth to solve the problem that it encouraged in the first place?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand why my hon. Friend is anxious to be sure that the other side of the matter is represented and taken into account in the House. As I said in my original answer, it is important to recognise that we should take account not only of the right of the Palestinians to self-determination but of the right of Israel to a secure existence within secure borders. It is right also to accept that there have been some improvements since Israeli administration in some areas. However, the point does not stop there. There is a stark contrast between the conditions of those who live in refugee camps and, for example, the Israeli settlers, who live in illegal occupation of the land alongside them. The presence of Israel in such territories is contrary to international law, as resolution after resolution of the United Nations has recognised. It is on that basis that I repeat the objectives that have been common ground to all searches for peace. Above all, it is in Israel's interest to hasten forward the process of looking for a peaceful settlement along those lines.

Mr. Kaufman: Will the Foreign Secretary tell the House what the Prime Minister meant by her statement yesterday? She said that the Government favour

"an international conference as a framework conference within which bilateral negotiations should take place between King Hussein of Jordan and Israel."—[*Official Report*, 2 February 1988; Vol. 126, c. 852.]

Although Jordan's participation is essential and indispensable, is the right hon. and learned Gentleman aware that no conference can possibly succeed—nor will any such conference be acceptable to other parties—without the participation of Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, and, above all, the Palestinians, whose plight and rights will be the central core of any such conference? Therefore, will the Foreign Secretary repudiate what the Prime Minister said? If Britain is so unclear about her policy, overcoming the obstructiveness of Mr. Shamir and of the United States Government will be impossible.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The right hon. Gentleman should not draw such dramatic conclusions from the point that he has made. The United Kingdom, together with the Twelve and most of the international community, have come out firmly in favour of an international conference. We believe that that is the right framework within which negotiations can take place. The precise method of setting that scene, of course, remains for discussion, but it is quite plain that the Palestinians and several other people will have to be participants in the discussion. I am quite certain that the right hon. Gentleman should not conclude that that is a prescription for some narrower definition of the conference that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has vigorously and energetically supported in forum after forum around the world.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend: My right hon. and learned Friend mentioned settlements. Does he agree that the Israeli Government have plans for further settlements and that to build settlements in such densely populated areas as Gaza is a great affront to Palestinian refugees? What action will the Government take to try to prevent the creation of further settlements at present?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend is right. If the existing settlements are an infringement of international law, by the same token the extension of such settlements is a still further infringement. More than that, they cannot help to advance or consolidate the cause of peace. They seek to entrench the occupation of illegally occupied territory. They act as a challenge to violence in the opposite direction, which itself poses a threat to the state and people of Israel. It is because of my passionate belief in the right of Israel and its people to exist as a state within secure borders that I urge the people of Israel and their leaders to recognise the need to turn from the path of the entrenchment of illegality and to embark upon the process of negotiation that is so important.

Hana Siniora

3. **Mr. Galloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Israeli Government about the harassment of the Palestinian journalist Hana Siniora by the Israeli security forces; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. David Mellor): Mr. Siniora has not asked for our intervention, and thus we have no reason to take up his specific case, but we shall continue to follow it closely.

Mr. Galloway: Although I am grateful for the wise and courageous stance that Her Majesty's Government are taking on the issue and for many statements on the subject that have been made today and of late, does the Minister agree that, more than anything else, the Israelis and Palestinians now need less war, war, and more jaw, jaw? Dialogue is impossible unless there is local leadership that has the confidence of the political leadership — the Palestine Liberation Organisation — and the local population, and is acceptable in the broader international community. Dialogue will be impossible if leaders are systematically harassed, arrested, sometimes tortured and, as increasingly of late, deported.

Mr. Mellor: I was glad, and I am sure that the hon. Gentleman was glad, that Mr. Siniora and his colleague were able to go to the United States and talk direct to Mr. Shultz. When I was in the United States on Monday and Tuesday, I was also glad to note that the United States is re-engaged in the peace process and that further action may be anticipated from that quarter. Plainly, as the hon. Gentleman says, this is a time for serious talking to draw in the Palestinian people. Where that leaves the PLO is in the hands of the PLO members themselves. They have the opportunity to legitimate themselves if they are prepared to accept unequivocally resolutions 242 and 338 to renounce violence and accept Israel's right to exist. If they were to do that, they could be full participants in a process in future. However, I am afraid that the contrary is also the case.

Mr. Soames: In the case of Hana Siniora and thousands of other Palestinians, what explanation can my hon. and

learned Friend offer to the House of the unspeakable inhumanities inflicted by the Israeli Government on the Palestinians? Does he agree that the Israelis, of all people, should really understand about the suffering of minorities?

Mr. Mellor: I said my piece about conditions in the occupied territories when I was there. I believe that a re-evaluation is necessary, because it was clear to me from my recent visit to the United States that the shock waves of what is happening in the occupied territories are resounding around the civilised world. Some change in tactics in the occupied territories will have to come about. The status quo in the eyes of an increasing number of sensible, mainstream people is not an option. Maintaining security in the territories at the point of a gun is not realistic and has become an increasingly inhumane process.

South Africa

4. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of Her Majesty's Government's policy towards ending apartheid in South Africa.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mrs. Lynda Chalker): Our policies are those most likely to be effective in bringing an end to apartheid. We recognise that fundamental change is very slow, but acknowledge that it must be stimulated from within South Africa.

Mr. Grocott: The Minister will understand that that was no answer to the question. When will she also understand that the Government's self-proclaimed policy of hoping to end apartheid in South Africa is a fraud and a sham? When will she begin to understand that since the declaration of the state of emergency 30,000 people have been detained in South Africa, that the use of torture is widespread and that children receive the most appalling treatment? Should not the Government accept that the horrors of apartheid are increasing daily and that their abject failure to oppose it brings shame to our country throughout the world?

Mrs. Chalker: First, the hon. Gentleman did not listen to what I said. Secondly, our repeated objection to the state of detention and the way people and particularly children are treated in South Africa is in no doubt so far as the South African Government are concerned. They are in absolutely no doubt about that. As we take positive measures in southern Africa in general, at the same time we will take up all the representations that he and many other hon. Members wish us to take up. However, the point of the hon. Gentleman's question was how we can speedily bring an end to apartheid. The only way in which we can do that is to encourage dialogue within South Africa among all the groups in South Africa and by voicing our total objection to detention without trial and the other inhumane methods that the South African Government are using against their black people.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Will my right hon. Friend note that many hon. Members welcome the Government's resistance to the introduction of economic sanctions against South Africa? Will she note in particular that those sanctions are unproductive? For example, Barclays National bank did more than any other company in South Africa to bring on black management, which is the way to the future for a multiracial South Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: I agree with my hon. Friend. The point is that, as my hon. Friend said, sanctions are beginning to deny black people in work in South Africa the opportunities that were afforded prior to disinvestment. There is growing recognition within South Africa, and within the black community there, that they are being deprived of opportunities by the detachment of some companies — and indeed, some politicians across the world—from that active and concerned interest in the future of black people in South Africa. Anything that we can do to provide positive help to the black population in South Africa should be encouraged, and I hope that it will be.

Mr. Bernie Grant: In view of the communiqué from the Commonwealth Committee of Foreign Ministers on Southern Africa—I have a copy and I am sure that the Minister will also have a copy—will the Minister assure the House that the British Government will do nothing to sabotage the efforts of that committee?

Mrs. Chalker: There is no way in which the British Government will attempt to undermine positive work to bring an end to apartheid. I repeat that I do not believe that a study of the impact of existing sanctions and proposals for tightening those sanctions will help one iota. The restrictive measures that we implement scrupulously are a political signal, but there is widespread recognition within the Commonwealth of the value of a positive contribution. There is growing awareness and concern at the negativism of the sanctions policy that some advocate.

Sir Jim Spicer: In making any assessment on behalf of the Government, will my right hon. Friend make quite certain that she has private discussions with black trade union leaders in South Africa, who will tell her that they are in favour of sanctions only if their own trade unions are excluded from the effect of such sanctions?

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend and I seek to have as many discussions as we can with black South Africans, when they are here or when we meet them in other places, to bring about the dialogue that is so urgently needed. I understand exactly what my hon. Friend said, but whoever we meet we have to balance the pressures that those people may face within South Africa and ask why they make those comments. It is understandable that in calling for sanctions some people wish to be excluded. Such a policy simply would not work, any more than punitive and negative sanctions will help to bring about the end of apartheid that we seek.

Mr. Kaufman: Why did the Government boycott the meeting in Lusaka of the Commonwealth committee on southern Africa? This is the first time that Britain has declined to participate in an important Commonwealth committee. Could they not have sent the Minister of State, the hon. and learned Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor), so that he could have spoken out against the way in which South Africa is oppressing its black population, in the way that he spoke out in Gaza last month? Will the Government at any rate agree to participate in the intensified arms embargo decided upon in Lusaka, or does the Government's opposition to South African apartheid amount to hypocritical words rather than positive action?

Mrs. Chalker: There is no question of a boycott of the meeting of eight Commonwealth Foreign Ministers. At the Vancouver summit the British Government agreed with the vast majority of policies. However, we did say that we saw no point in joining that particular committee, which is a further sub-group, but we shall continue to work with all Commonwealth countries in the constructive ways that we identified in Vancouver—in particular with aid to black South Africans and to the neighbouring countries. There is no precise information about what has been proposed by those eight Ministers who met in Lusaka. We shall, of course, consider carefully any ideas that are put forward. We continue to follow carefully the proceedings of the committee in Lusaka. We have enforced the arms embargo, and we shall continue rigorously to do so. As to sending my hon. and learned Friend there, it is easier for those who have to concentrate on one area of the world so to do. The hon. Gentleman need have no doubt that I shall be just as forthright and equally as tough on the South African Government as I was in December when I made quite clear to the Deputy Foreign Minister in Pretoria exactly what we thought of South African Government policies.

Middle East

6. **Mr. Walters:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, in view of recent events on the West Bank and in Gaza, he will indicate what steps Her Majesty's Government propose in order to speed up the middle east peace process.

Mr. Mellor: We shall continue to work for an international conference under United Nations auspices as the framework for negotiations between the parties directly concerned.

Mr. Walters: My right hon. and learned Friend and my hon. and learned Friend have both rightly condemned Israeli repression on the West Bank and in Gaza. They have also condemned Mr. Rabin's repellent speech advocating beatings, power and might as the guidelines of Israeli policy in the area. What next? Surely this must be the time to put greater steam behind a peace initiative and to make it clear that the Palestinians must be entitled to choose their own representatives at any talks that follow.

Mr. Mellor: I agree with my hon. Friend that it is crucial that the concern be translated into effective action. We believe that action should proceed in two ways. First, immediate palliative action should consist, as the Secretary-General's report to the United Nations following Mr. Goulding's visit made clear, of enhancing the work of the United Nations relief organisation and continuing the pressure on the Israeli Government to mitigate the aspects of occupation that cause the gravest hardship. Those palliatives will not be enough. The second strand has to be to work for a resumption of the peace process. That should come from all who acknowledge that the status quo cannot stand. That is why I welcome very much, as my right hon. and learned Friend does, the resumption of interest in the United States in a peace process. My hon. Friend will have seen that the Assistant Secretary of State, Mr. Murphy, is to visit the region following the visit earlier of the special United States emissary to Jordan. We obviously hope that that initiative will bear fruit, because clearly the United States has the prime influence on the Israelis.

Mr. Janner: Has the Minister seen the admission made this morning by Racal-Tacticom, and reported in the *Daily Telegraph*, that it has been supplying goods to the PLO? Does he agree with the Downing street statement this week that sections of the PLO have engaged in "appalling acts of terrorism"? In those circumstances, how can it be right that no licence is required, apparently, for sending to the PLO telecommunications equipment which presumably will not be used to convey affectionate greetings?

Mr. Mellor: I cannot add to the answer that the hon. and learned Gentleman received to a similar question that he addressed to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, who answered the private notice question yesterday. The hon. and learned Gentleman knows our position on the PLO. He knows that part of our call for a sensible settlement in the middle east is that the PLO should legitimate itself in the ways that I have already set out in answer to an earlier question.

Sir Ian Gilmour: Will my hon. and learned Friend and the Foreign Secretary bear in mind that if Europe does nothing, the American Administration invariably end up doing what the Israeli Government and the Zionist pressure group tell them to do? Will he therefore assure the House that the so-called peace process will not be left to the American Government, but that Europe will play its proper part to bring it about?

Mr. Mellor: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for that question. Plainly there is a role for others. That role is taken seriously within Europe. Indeed, my right hon. and learned Friend will on Monday attend a meeting of European Foreign Ministers who will be meeting King Hussein. I dare say that European interests and the European initiative will be made clear then.

Mr. Winnick: As one who strenuously defended the Israelis' position in 1967—I believe that I was right to do so, unlike the right hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham (Sir I. Gilmour) — I am appalled and horrified at the response of Israeli authorities in the occupied territories, for which there can be absolutely no justification. Would it not be right for Israelis to recognise that the Palestinians also have a right to their homeland? In 40 years they have not forgotten Palestine, any more than the Jewish people, during 2,000 years of exile and persecution, forgot for one moment their historic homeland.

Mr. Mellor: That is a very brave statement, and I commend the hon. Gentleman for it. Many of us who took one view in 1967 have perhaps come to look at matters in a slightly different light today. It is plainly dangerous that the present situation should continue. The scenes that we see nightly on our television screens are damaging to the reputation of Israel. Whatever might be the problems of the past—there have been great faults on the Arab side in relation to sustained aggression against Israel—if the people of these territories are to have any future, and if there is to be a sustained peace in the region, it can come about only because neighbours learn to co-exist rather than rely on the point of a gun to achieve lasting security. That is why we must continue to assert that middle east peace can be based only on all states in the region agreeing that each state has a right to exist behind secure boundaries and that the Palestinians have a right to self-determination. That is the only basis on which a lasting peace will be achieved.

Chinese Foreign Minister

8. **Mr. Grylls:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next plans to meet the Chinese Foreign Minister.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As I said in the House on 20 January, I look forward to welcoming Mr. Wu Xuegian on an official visit to Britain in the spring.

Mr. Grylls: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that many people will warmly welcome the scholarship programme, which will bring some 2,000 Chinese students to Britain, because they will presumably play their part in the modernisation of China when they return and possibly improve contacts and ties between British business and China, which would be extremely beneficial to both countries?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Yes. I agree with my hon. Friend. It is encouraging that there are 2,000 Chinese students in Britain today compared with 1,600 last year. Some 800 of the 2,000 receive funding from the Government. That itself is almost a doubling of what applied last year. It will help us to sustain the growth in exports to China, which have increased from £180 million in 1983 to £536 million in 1986. It will be part of an expanding trade relationship which will be fruitful in other ways as well.

Mr. Tony Banks: Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman aware of the vile trade in endangered species between China and Hong Kong? The centres in China appear to be the Dongmen market in Canton and Shenzhen, which forms a border between China and Hong Kong. The animals are used for food—they are eaten in restaurants in Hong Kong. Will the Foreign Secretary make the strongest representations to the Chinese Foreign Minister when they meet so that such trade can be stamped out once and for all?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am well aware of the hon. Member's interest in this important subject. It is a matter on which Hong Kong and China have strict laws presently in force. We have drawn to the attention of the Chinese authorities concerns such as those expressed by the hon. Gentleman. We have asked Hong Kong to review its efforts to see whether enforcement can be made more effective. It is already considering proposals to strengthen its arrangements.

Mr. Adley: I welcome the close relationship that has been established between the two Governments and between my right hon. and learned Friend and Mr. Wu. Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the best interests of the people of Hong Kong are undoubtedly sustained by the closest possible relationship being maintained between the two Governments? Regarding the clamour from some quarters in Hong Kong for early direct elections, will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that it is his understanding of the Chinese Government's view that it makes sense to put the Basic Law in place before embarking on constitutional adventures?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his reminder of the importance of good relations between the United Kingdom and China for the future of Hong Kong. That goes without saying. It is also right to acknowledge that the People's Republic of China has taken a more cautious view of the prospect of direct elections than has been taken in other places. Elections will be part of the constitution of the special administrative region in due course. It is on that basis that the topic was discussed in the House a week or two ago. On most issues, there was a large measure of agreement on the importance of moving to direct elections. The timing of the introduction of direct elections was the topic on which opinions still seemed to be divided.

Mr. Foulkes: When the Foreign Secretary meets his Chinese counterpart, will he raise the question of the continuation of the then existing legislative bodies in Hong Kong through the period of the handover? In particular, will he seek clarification of a statement made last week by Li Hou, the deputy director of the Hong Kong Office and secretary general of the Basic Law drafting committee, to the effect that the Chinese Government would not just be making a symbolic gesture in exercising its sovereignty after the handover? Many people in Hong Kong fear that this means that a new Legislative Council will be appointed on 1 July 1997. Does the Foreign Secretary agree that this would not be in accordance with the smooth transition called for in the joint declaration? Does he intend to make a statement to the House after the publication of the White Paper on democracy in Hong Kong next week?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: On the last point, I must point out that the House has only recently had an opportunity to debate this subject quite fully. The White Paper will be published shortly, and we shall have to see whether there is a case for a separate statement. I would have thought that it would be more likely for the House to want to have an opportunity to study the White Paper closely first. As to the statement attributed to Mr. Li Hou, I do not think that I should be required to answer for each interpretation that the hon. Gentleman chooses to put on every observation made by Chinese spokesmen. The commitment of both states in the joint declaration is to the establishment of democratic arrangements in the terms set out. The commitment is also to the highest degree of continuity through this period of changeover in 1997. That is the centrally important feature.

Mr. Ian Taylor: Will my right hon. and learned Friend take the opportunity of his meeting with the Chinese Foreign Minister to explore China's relations with other countries in the sensitive area around it, and in particular the question whether Chinese relations with South Korea can be put on a more positive footing, given the evidence which appears to show that North Korea has been practising institutionalised terrorism?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I take the importance of the point referred to in the last part of my hon. Friend's question. We have condemned the part played by the North Korean Government in the recent destruction of a South Korean aircraft. I have no doubt that, in the course of my discussion of international relations with the Chinese Foreign Minister, relations within the peninsular of Korea will be one of the topics on which we shall touch.

UN Under-Secretary General

9. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he has taken in the United Nations to protest at the treatment of the United Nations Under-Secretary General by the Israeli Government during his visit to the occupied territories in January; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: None, Sir. This is a matter for the United Nations Secretary General. We called on all parties to facilitate Mr. Goulding's visit, which was mandated by United Nations Security Council resolution 605.

Mr. Cohen: Was not the Under Secretary General of the United Nations treated very badly by the Israeli authorities during his visit to Israel, and did not the army go into the camps and disrupt them during his visit? Does the Minister agree with Mr. Goulding, who said that the Palestinians have every right to be angry about the conditions in which they are forced to live and that a political solution is needed? Will the Government work towards that solution under the auspices of the United Nations and start that by opening up a dialogue with the PLO?

Mr. Mellor: I certainly agree with that comment of Mr. Goulding's, and I was able to tell him that personally when I saw him in New York on Friday. The key point about Mr. Goulding's visit is to try to make progress on the report that the Secretary General has issued following on it. The report makes two points clear. First, there is a need for immediate alleviation of the problems in Gaza by way of the palliative measures set out in the report — enhancing the relief organisation's work and mitigating the more oppressive aspects of the occupation. Secondly, as I have already said, there is a need to get the peace process moving again.

Mr. Lawrence: Would it not help our credibility with Israel in these matters, and help to solve the humanitarian problems in Gaza, if the Government stopped signing annually the United Nations resolution that calls specifically upon the state of Israel not to rehouse the refugees in Gaza in decent accommodation?

Mr. Mellor: My hon. and learned Friend, for whom I have great respect, knows that it is not as simple as that. He knows that we vote as we do because of the manner in which it is sought to enforce rehousing—an element of compulsion is involved — and because afterwards adequate dwellings that are better than other dwellings in which people who cannot afford to move out of the camps live are then bulldozed down by the occupying forces. Therefore, I am afraid I cannot help but regard the argument sometimes used by the Israeli authorities to justify their position as rather flimsy.

Mr. Faulds: In view of the Israeli Government's arrogant disregard of international conventions and of the appalling conduct of Israeli troops, will the hon. and learned Gentleman suggest to his right hon. and learned Friend—and my right hon. and learned Friend—the Foreign Secretary, that he should raise with his EEC colleagues the need to consider the suspension, or indeed, abrogation, of EEC trade and financial agreements with Israel?

Mr. Mellor: As the hon. Gentleman knows, the issue is to be considered again by the European Foreign Ministers at their meeting with King Hussein next week and we must await the outcome of that.

On the European Community arrangements, it is obviously desirable, so far as possible, to keep political considerations out of purely trading issues. The hon. Gentleman will know that my right hon. and learned Friend took the lead in proposing that there should be direct access to the European Community for goods from the occupied territories, because that is a practical way of expressing our desire to see conditions in the occupied territories improve. It will also be known that the Commission, while negotiating the mandate for Israeli access to the Common Market, required from the Israeli authorities some undertakings on the manner in which they would carry out those access arrangements. Therefore, although we have not gone anything like all the way with the hon. Gentleman, I hope he is satisfied that there is an element of what he asks in what we are doing.

Japan

10. **Mr. Hayward:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about his recent visit to Japan.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I believe that my visit helped to strengthen the increasingly active and productive relationship between Britain and Japan. Foreign Minister Uno and I discussed a wide range of international issues, many of which we shall need to tackle together. I urged him and other Japanese Ministers to reinforce their efforts to reduce Japan's surplus. I also pressed our case on outstanding bilateral issues.

Mr. Hayward: I welcome my right hon. and learned Friend's comments and the speech in which he pressed the Japanese to open their country to inward investment. Can he now tell us the position on the application made by Cable and Wireless for membership of a consortium to compete with KDD?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: On the Cable and Wireless question, I understand that the arrangements now in prospect meet the requirements that we have been pressing with that company and on its behalf for some time. When I was in Japan I emphasised that the United Kingdom will continue to press vigorously for the redress of any grievances in trading conditions. It is right to say that the Japanese gave me much assurance of their determination to respond effectively to such representations.

Mr. Fraser: Was the Foreign Secretary able to raise with the Japanese the wholesale killing of whales in the Antarctic in breach of international agreements? Were the assurances that they gave him any more convincing than those given about the balance of trade?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Our interest in the effectiveness of the international whaling convention is a matter about which representations have been made to the Japanese Government.

Mr. Bill Walker: My right hon. and learned Friend will be happy to know that the Scotch Whisky Bill completed its Committee stage this morning. Can he tell the House what has happened about the GATT council's decision that Japan should have a common tariff for spirits—for both imports and local manufacture—and how that will help Scotch? Have we made any progress?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I congratulate my hon. Friend on the success of the Bill to which he referred. I know of his intense interest in this subject over many years. It is right to say that I do not share his general interest in the topic to quite the same extent.

I have been concerned about Japan in that context. Access for Scotch whisky was at the top of my agenda when I first went there as Minister for Trade and

Consumer Affairs in 1973. It has taken a long time. With the support of the European Community we had to take the matter to the GATT panel, which reported in favour of our case. In December the Japanese accepted those findings and announced that they intended to reform their liquor tax in the right direction to give effect to those findings. I impressed upon them that we expect the recommendation to be implemented in full and emphasised that we shall look carefully at the detailed proposals and at the changes that should come into effect without further delay.

Gibraltar

11. **Mr. Stern:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on progress in the implementation of the agreement with Spain over Gibraltar.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The agreement was an important step forward and it is now for the people of Gibraltar to decide when the agreement on Gibraltar airport can enter into force. Meanwhile, we are considering with the Spanish Government the practical implementation of the parallel arrangements at the land frontier and the Gibraltar-Algeciras ferry service.

Mr. Stern: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the agreement represents a good deal for the people of Gibraltar, not only as a boost to their economy, but for tourism and financial services? So far as the airport is concerned, will my right hon. and learned Friend use his good offices to ensure that the people of Gibraltar see the advantage of the agreement and see it implemented as soon as possible?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for what he said about the agreement. It offers the prospect of air links with the rest of Europe, the prospect of attracting more visitors and of an expansion in the tourist and financial services there, and can be a major boost to the economy. It will also bring advantages to the United Kingdom and to other European countries. I emphasise that the next steps depend on the willingness of the people of Gibraltar to make their democratic choice on the airport agreement. We have made it clear that we do not intend to impose it on them against their wishes. However, I very much hope that they will see the advantages to which my hon. Friend has drawn attention.

Sir Peter Blaker: I reinforce the words of my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern). Is it not evident that it is in the interest of the development of Gibraltar's economy that the agreement, so far as it relates to the airport, should be brought into effect as soon as possible?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: That is absolutely clear. It is a matter on which I have no doubt that the democratic processes of Gibraltar will reflect carefully in the light of the observations made by my hon. Friends.

Bermuda

12. **Mr. John M. Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the United Kingdom's relations with Bermuda.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tim Eggar): Her Majesty's Government exercise constitutional responsibility for the dependent territory of Bermuda, and relations between the United Kingdom and Bermuda continue to be excellent.

Mr. Taylor: I am sure that my hon. Friend will know that Bermuda is a community with good race relations, no litter, no unemployment, no illiteracy and no income tax. Does he think that we could learn something from Bermuda?

Mr. Eggar: I am glad that my hon. Friend enjoyed his brief visit to Bermuda so much and that he came back with such a favourable impression of that territory. Indeed, Bermuda has a lot to be proud of, but my hon. Friend will no doubt have noted, as he has told the House, that Bermuda's prosperity is not based only on its ample sunshine but on a thriving private sector and low taxation.

Mr. Corbyn: Is the Minister aware that Bermuda plays a major part in Caribbean regional matters — [HON. MEMBERS: "It is not in the Caribbean."] I know where Bermuda is. I have visited there, and not on a free trip.

As Bermuda plays an important part in regional activities and has, along with many other countries, consistently expressed concern about the United States' policy in the region and towards Central America, will the Minister take this opportunity of likewise expressing his concern at the murderous policies of the Reagan Administration towards Central America and the Caribbean?

Mr. Eggar: I recognise the hon. Gentleman's frustration at not getting in his normal propaganda on behalf of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua. However, I am afraid that I cannot follow him along the lines that he has described.

Haiti

13. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has about the current political unrest in Haiti; and what risks it poses to British citizens in that country.

Mr. Eggar: After a prolonged period of civil unrest M. Leslie Manigat was elected President of Haiti on 17 January. The country is now calm. There is no threat at present to the United Kingdom community. We continue to keep the situation under review.

Mr. Bowis: Although my hon. Friend may say that the country is calm, there has been something of a breakdown of law and order there. Is he aware that people in this country are extremely concerned that our citizens in Haiti should be protected, because the present circumstances in that country are not of their own making?

Mr. Eggar: I agree with my hon. Friend. Our overriding priority in all consular matters is that we provide an efficient service for British citizens who are in genuine distress or danger through no fault of their own. I assure my hon. Friend that we are aware of the potential risks to the some 50 British citizens in Haiti.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, on a new question of parliamentary procedure.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will deal with the matter afterwards. It is not a new procedure.

Unification Church

3.30 pm

The following question stood upon the Order Paper:

Mr. Tom Sackville (Bolton, West): To ask the Attorney-General what progress there has been in relation to the charity proceedings now pending in his name in connection with the Unification Church; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General (Sir Patrick Mayhew): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I will now answer question No. 89.

Proceedings were instituted in the High Court by my predecessor in December 1984 in connection with two trusts associated with the Unification Church. Those trusts were respectively known as the Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity and the Sun Myung Moon Foundation. Prominent among the objects of each is the promotion of the principles and teachings of Sun Myung Moon, described as the founder and world leader of the Unification Church.

In 1984 each of those trusts was, and each still remains, entered in the statutory register of charities maintained by the Charity Commissioners. That register properly comprises only those trusts whose objects are truly and exclusively charitable in English law.

The proceedings in the High Court were brought by my predecessor in the exercise on behalf of the Crown of its function as the protector of charity. He appealed against the refusal of the Charity Commissioners to accede to his request that they remove the association and the foundation from the register of charities. His grounds for that request had been that the trusts failed in particular respects to meet the requirements of English law relating to charity.

Whatever view may be taken of its tenets, the Unification Church must, as a matter of law, be regarded as a religion. In English law there is a strong presumption that any trust for the advancement of any religion, without distinction, is charitable unless the contrary is proved by evidence admissible in court proceedings. Teachings that are in their very essence contrary to morality would be an example. It is for any challenger to bring forward such evidence: the burden is on him.

The evidence available to my predecessor in 1984 properly led him, with the advice of leading counsel, to conclude that there were sufficient prospects of an appeal succeeding. That evidence included testimony of witnesses called for the successful defendants in a libel action against Associated Newspapers Group Ltd. tried in 1981. In addition, there were statements by former members of the Unification Church that had been offered when it came generally known that charity proceedings in the High Court were under consideration.

Since the proceedings were begun, the Treasury Solicitor has gone to immense lengths in seeking out additional evidence from those who have been associated with the Unification Church. Some further potential witnesses have approached him on their own initiative. Further statements have been taken from other persons, who had been closely involved in comparatively recent activities of the Unification Church in this country, and who had wanted to assist in the challenge to charitable status of the trusts.

The most careful analysis has now been made of the totality of the evidence available to me, set against the legal presumption to which I have referred. Some of it, when tested in the light of all the material now available, has proved to be insufficiently reliable. The remainder, when seen in the overall context, is shown to be of insufficient weight to rebut the legal presumption. I have now been advised by leading counsel that it is most unlikely that, if the appeal proceeded to trial, I should be able to dislodge that strong legal presumption of charitable status. After the most careful consideration, I agree with that advice.

The trial is due to start on 12 April. It would last an estimated three to six months and occasion great expense. In these circumstances, I have decided to seek the court's leave to discontinue these proceedings, and the Treasury Solicitor has this morning so informed the defendants.

Mr. Sackville: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that his answer will come as a grave disappointment to many people, particularly to those families who have been the victims of the so-called Moonies, Scientologists, and other cults and who have experienced the ruthless methods and unacceptable behaviour of those cults? Does he agree that his answer should highlight the fact that it is time we stopped giving charitable status to such vile organisations, and that the fact that we do is an affront to natural justice and an insult to those whose lives have been ruined and whose families have been torn apart by them?

The Attorney-General: I am naturally aware that my answer will come as a disappointment to many people. However, I hope that I have accurately and fully set out the basis on which I have felt obliged to accept the advice that I have been given. My answer is given exclusively in the exercise on behalf of the Crown of its role as the protector of charity. It is one whose content is dictated as a matter of law. It has no bearing upon the attitude of the Government towards any cult, and the question of any reform of the law on charity is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): Does the Attorney-General agree with the views expressed by his hon. and learned Friend the Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor), who said:

"the sinister activities of some of the groups must be exposed by every means possible and most vigorously discouraged." — [*Official Report*, 24 October 1984; Vol. 65, c. 708.]

Does the Attorney-General agree that it is regrettable that, nearly four years later, our charity law is wholly inadequate to deal with the Moonies? Will he now set about reforming the charity law quickly before more people are reduced to misery and destruction by the activities of the Moonies and others like them?

The Attorney-General: As I have already said, the reform of charity law is not for me but is in the first instance for my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. The evidence available to my predecessor in 1984 justified his decision at that time to initiate the appeal and to make the allegations that he put forward against the Unification Church. Material has come to light since 1984 as a result of the continuing inquiries of the Treasury Solicitor, the nature of which I have already described to the House. It is in the light of the totality of the evidence now available, seen against the strong legal presumption which I have mentioned, that dictates my decision.

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that his statement is outrageous for large numbers of us? Will he please tell the House whether his decision owes anything to the murder in Devon in December of Sonia Martin, who was to be a key witness in the case, and to the intimidation of other people prepared to help?

The Attorney-General: I have seen no evidence that witnesses or potential witnesses have been intimidated. I am aware that a witness who had sworn an affidavit in support of my appeal, Sonia Martin, was found dead in Devon last December. I understand that the inquest into the cause of her death presently stands adjourned and will be resumed on a date to be fixed.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): What was the parliamentary precedent for the Attorney-General coming to the House and answering orally a written question? If we are to have this, would it not have been better for him to turn his attention to written question 119 and to tell us whether the head of the security services, the Prime Minister, knew about what Mr. Stalker was writing and the shoot-to-kill policy?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I share the hon. Gentleman's concern, but there are precedents for this.

The Attorney-General: It seemed to me that it was a convenient and, I understand, a precedented means, well within the rules of order of the House, to tell the House orally and permit oral questions about a matter that could properly have been dealt with by written question.

Mr. Churchill (Davyhulme): Although I accept my right hon. and learned Friend's decision in this matter, will the Government urgently consider amendments to charity law to ensure that such undersirable organisations as the Unification Church do not have charitable status? Is my right hon. and learned Friend further aware that, over the years, several hon. Members have been approached with offers of huge value in terms of free travel to foreign places?

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Name them.

Mr. Churchill: The hon. Gentleman says, "Name them." I was one of those invited, but I declined the invitation.

Will my right hon. and learned Friend put other hon. Members on their guard against accepting hospitality from such organisations?

The Attorney-General: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's opening remarks. I undertake to draw to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary the great and genuine concern felt about this organisation and about the reform of charity law.

As to the latter part of my hon. Friend's question, the House will have heard what he had to say.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Does this mean that the Government have been forced to give in to the Moonies as a result of a shortage of money in the litigation fund because it has all been spent pursuing "Spycatcher"? If so, would it not be worth while for the Attorney-General to examine the huge fees demanded by lawyers, which cause the expenses of these court cases, or does he feel sufficiently objective to be able to conduct such an investigation?

The Attorney-General: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman expects an affirmative answer to the first part of his question. Anybody holding my present office has a duty to assess the likelihood of success for any proceedings in train. In the case of the "Spycatcher" litigation, the advice that I have received and accepted warrants the continuation of proceedings both here and overseas.

In the case of my predecessor's appeal against the decision of the Charity Commissioners, I have explained to the House as clearly as possible the reasons that have led leading counsel to advise me, and I accept the advice that there are not sufficient prospects of that appeal succeeding. That is why I have taken this step.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, whatever the legal position—I do not challenge his interpretation—there is absolutely nothing in the activities of this obnoxious and appalling group of people that qualifies them for the title "charitable" in the accepted sense of that word?

The Attorney-General: I well understand the anxiety that is genuinely and widely felt about the Unification Church. Equally, I have to apply the law of this country in respect of charitable status. Whether that law deserves review or reform is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and not for me.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Can we be assured that the Moonies have not got at the Treasury Solicitor or the Attorney-General himself, in view of this disappointing statement? Will the Attorney-General tell the House why he thought it necessary to answer in this way, by making a statement from the Dispatch Box? Could not some other device have been used?

The Attorney-General: I hoped that the wide concern expressed in this House over a number of years about the Unification Church would be its own justification for my coming to the Dispatch Box. I took the view that the matter did not merit a full-blown statement, of which many people believe there are too many. On the other hand, I felt that it was only fair to the House to give people, including the hon. Gentleman, the opportunity to ask a question about it.

As to my having been got at, I have been subjected to many more ferocious and effective assaults than anything that the Unification Church might feel disposed to launch against me. As for the Treasury Solicitor, I think that he is quite immune to any such assault.

Mr. Tim Yeo (Suffolk, South): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that our inability to proceed against the Moonies will cause widespread dismay, not least among legitimate charities, whose work is of such great benefit? Is he further aware that the circumstances that he described underline the urgent need for the review which the Home Office is carrying out following the publication last year of the Woodfield report, to include consideration of strengthening the Charity Commissioners' powers to prevent organisations whose objectives and tactics are clearly not regarded as charitable by the majority of British people from continuing to enjoy charitable status? If the law is preventing us from taking action against the Moonies, does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that it should be reviewed?

The Attorney-General: I understand, as I have made clear and readily repeat, that there will be much disappointment about the statement that I have made today. Equally, it will be understood that it would not be right for me to continue with proceedings that would lead to a three to six-month trial at enormous expense in the face of the strong advice that I have received from highly experienced leading counsel.

As to the reform of charity law, I understand what my hon. Friend has said. I shall draw it to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary.

Mr. John Hunt (Ravensbourne): Will my right hon. and learned Friend make it clear that the decision that he has announced should in no way be seen as providing carte blanche to the Unification Church to continue its exploitation of the young and vulnerable in this country? Will he make it quite clear that its activities are still being closely watched by many hon. Members in the House?

The Attorney-General: The action that I thought it right to take constitutes no more than the withdrawal of the appeal initiated by my predecessor against the refusal of the Charity Commissioners to remove these two trusts from the register of charities. Neither I nor anyone else can give carte blanche to any organisation. Certainly no carte blanche has been given to the Unification Church. I am certain that the remainder of my hon. Friend's question will be noted.

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): On any reasonable view, is not the announcement that the Attorney-General has had to make extraordinary, particularly as it comes at a time when the Government are campaigning for tax-free gifts to charities from people's payrolls?

Is the Attorney-General aware that many deserving causes find it difficult to get through the rather slow and cumbrous procedures of the Charity Commission. It is difficult to understand their predicament, given the Moonie immunity that has been announced.

Is it not the essence of the law that a religious charity should direct itself to the benefit of the public and not engage in positive harm or Right-wing political activity, which has taken in a few Conservative Members?

Given the extraordinary width of the definition of a religious charity implied in the Attorney-General's answer, will the Government announce that they will set up an immediate and urgent review charity law to put an end to the rampant abuse that has been practised by the Unification Church and the farcical nature of the decision that the Attorney-General has been forced to announce? Nothing less than an immediate review will satisfy the House.

The Attorney-General: The hon. Gentleman says that I have been obliged or forced to make a statement. Of course I have not. I chose to do so for the reasons that I have explained. However, I well note the hon. Gentleman's concern about the principles of law that govern charitable status in this country.

The proceedings which my predecessor began made certain specific allegations against the Unification Church, which the evidence then available to him entirely justified. If those allegations could be substantiated, they would, in my view and that of my predecessor, have warranted his appeal being allowed. As I have endeavoured to explain, the totality of evidence now available to me is insufficient to enable me to substantiate any of those particular allegations to the extent needed to rebut the strong legal presumption of charitable status that English law gives to any religion.

It is not for me to express either regret or any other response. It is my duty to the House to announce the conclusion that I have felt obliged to reach. I note, as all will do, what the hon. Gentleman said at the conclusion of his question and will draw it to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary.

Crown Suppliers

3.50 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Christopher Chope): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the future of the Crown Suppliers.

The Crown Suppliers are a self-financing business within the Department of the Environment. They sell furniture, and other equipment and services to the public sector. They have operated as a Government trading fund since 1976, and under the title of the Crown Suppliers since 1984.

As direct suppliers to Government Departments, the Crown Suppliers have achieved considerable success in the design and procurement of their own-brand furniture, the procurement and supply of a wide range of equipment, and the provision of fuel and transport. I have, however, considered the role and status of the Crown Suppliers in the light of untying Departments from the compulsory use of purchasing agencies.

I have had the benefit of two recent reports by consultants and have discussed a summary of those reports with staff representatives. It is clear that the Crown Suppliers must reduce their overheads substantially to reflect new working practices and purchasing policies in Government Departments.

Many of the activities of the Crown Suppliers are, however, of a commercial nature, and there is little doubt that they could be carried out more efficiently in the private sector. The question therefore is whether the Crown Suppliers should be given full freedom to compete in both public and private sectors, which would entail transfer to the private sector.

I am convinced that privatisation provides the brightest future for the Crown Suppliers, as well as a continued source of competitive supplies for the public sector. It will also allow the Crown Suppliers to have access to a wider market. It is the Government's view that the private sector should be invited to bid for those of the Crown Suppliers' businesses which can be undertaken on a normal commercial basis. Some activities will have to remain in the public sector, for security or other reasons.

The Government intend therefore to seek further advice from a financial institution on the best method of effecting the sale of the Crown Suppliers. The businesses available for sale will include the provision of furniture, furnishings and other equipment on an untied basis for the public sector, and the transport hire business. In evaluating offers received, I shall pay particular attention to proposals for the involvement of the staff in the success of the enterprise.

I also intend to bring forward legislation to effect the transfer at an early opportunity.

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): The Minister's statement on the privatisation of the Crown Suppliers is scandalous. It reflects the Government's narrow political dogma at its worst. It not only is an enormous threat to the jobs of those 1,486 people employed by the Crown Suppliers but will inevitably lead to bankruptcies and redundancies in many small, specialised firms throughout the United Kingdom, many in areas of high unemployment.

Has the Minister given the trade unions any assurance that the staff will be given the choice to remain in the Civil Service if they wish, even if this means a certain amount of regrading and retraining? Will the Minister confirm that in the past three years the Government have commissioned four reviews into the operation of the Crown Suppliers, at great cost to the taxpayer? Two of them—the Turton report of 1985 and the central unit of purchasing review 1986—acknowledged that privatisation of the Crown Suppliers was feasible but would not be in the public interest. The two most recent reviews, undertaken by Coopers and Lybrand/Samuel Montagu and Dewi Jones, were not even required to consider the public interest in their brief—it is obviously no longer a consideration for the Government.

Does the Minister agree that the Crown Suppliers exist for two reasons? First, they exist to supply the Government and the public sector with the most economic furnishing, fuel and transport. All relevant Government statistical indices demonstrate that the Crown Suppliers fulfil that task to consistent standards of excellence. Secondly, they exist to increase the competitiveness and profitability of British industry. Ninety-six per cent. of their £240 million turnover comes from British firms, one third of which have 100 workers or fewer, many of them in sheltered workshops supporting an important social service.

The Crown Suppliers have pioneered numerous designs in furnishing, including flame-retardant mattresses and materials that are sold all over the world. The CBI has applauded the Crown Suppliers' priority sourcing scheme, which guarantees business and encourages investment in plant and machinery in designated development areas.

In the private sector, British Telecom, British Gas, British Rail and most recently British Aerospace all choose to use the Crown Suppliers because they judge them to offer best value in terms of cost, quality and reliability of service.

Finally, will the Minister explain precisely what parts of the Crown Suppliers he intends to privatise? Is it not ironic that, as a result of this privatisation, it is the taxpayer, whom the Government pray in aid for many of their policies, who will lose most? Clearly, the proper place for the Crown Suppliers is in the public sector.

Mr. Chope: That was a typically negative response from the Opposition. I am surprised that the Opposition do not favour the plan to extend the opportunities of the Crown Suppliers so that they can compete in a wider market. The Crown Suppliers' present share of the contract furniture and furnishings market is 8 to 9 per cent. I look forward to the time when they will be able to go out and expand their involvement in the private market.

As far as the transfer of staff is concerned, staff will be affected by the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) (Amendment) Regulations 1987, and terms and conditions broadly comparable with those prevailing in their present employment will be available for them in the private sector.

It is the Government's policy to free Departments to make their own purchasing decisions using their own resources and to use public sector purchasing power in the widest interests of British industry. It is not a mandatory "Buy British Only" policy, which is illegal under the treaty of Rome and the GATT. It is right that the Crown Suppliers should use firms registered in the United Kingdom, because evaluation of competitive offers shows that to be the best value for money. The same principles

would apply whether the Crown Suppliers were in the public or the private sector. The same principles would also apply for the use of small firms and firms in development agencies.

No change is proposed in relation to the Government priority suppliers' purchasing arrangements. The hon. Gentleman seemed to suggest that the status quo is one on which the Crown Suppliers can rest. The more enlightened members of staff of the Crown Suppliers realise that they must change with the times.

Sir George Young (Ealing, Acton): Is my hon. Friend aware that his decision will be warmly welcomed by Conservative Members and by many employees in the Crown Suppliers, who will welcome the freedom that it will give them to compete where they cannot now compete — in the private sector? Far from resulting in less employment in the Crown Suppliers or less work for the small firms that supply them, this decision could result in more employment and more work for those firms.

Mr. Chope: I appreciate my hon. Friend's typically positive response. I know that, when he had responsibility in government for the Crown Suppliers, he took a keen interest in their work, and it is a tremendous endorsement of today's announcement that my hon. Friend thinks that it is in the best interest of the Crown Suppliers.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): When the hon. Gentleman considers the tenders for this business, will he seek an undertaking that there will be no further job losses on Merseyside?

Mr. Chope: I cannot give guarantees about job losses on Merseyside. As the hon. Gentleman may know, one of the reports that we commissioned referred to the possibility of reducing the overheads of the Crown Suppliers within the Government sector. One of the proposals put forward was that one of the two procurement offices — there are two: one in Liverpool and the other in London — should be closed. I can understand that staff in Liverpool would be extremely concerned if there were no such proposal as I have put to the House today. If either the London or the Liverpool office had to be closed, they certainly might fear that there would be job losses in Liverpool. I look forward to better employment opportunities in the Crown Suppliers, and that includes employment in Liverpool.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): Does my hon. Friend accept that, generally, the decision must be a good step for the Government? What percentage of the Crown Suppliers' business is with overseas Governments and other Commonwealth nations, who have looked to such business because it was backed by the United Kingdom Government? Will he make it quite clear that whoever takes over the Crown Suppliers will operate with the same integrity as that which can be expected from Her Majesty's Government? Will he further confirm that opportunities will still be open on the security aspects, which the Government will contain, from which Commonwealth countries will be able to benefit if they so require?

Mr. Chope: My hon. Friend referred to overseas and Commonwealth countries. At present, the Crown Suppliers have little overseas business. I hope that they will get more overseas business as a result of privatisation.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Are there not some inconsistencies in the Government's policy? On the one hand, they say that the Crown Suppliers have done a good job, that 85 per cent. of their costs are better than in any other sector, and that 60 per cent. of their work is already contracted by the private sector, but, on the other hand, they say that it should be privatised. The Treasury says that it is not in the public interest for them to be privatised, yet the Department of the Environment says that it is.

What report has the Minister received that states that the proposal will have a cost benefit for the taxpayer? Is not the reality that no report comes to that conclusion? The Minister's political view, rather than any objective criterion, is prevailing. There will not only be job losses in places such as mine in south London, but increases in other Government Departments. Is not the whole matter a triumph of dogma over logic? Should not the Minister take it away and re-examine the proposal?

Mr. Chope: The hon. Gentleman is under a misapprehension. The decision has the full support of the Government and the enthusiastic support of the Treasury. One matter that has concerned the Treasury is the level of the Crown Suppliers' overheads. If the Crown Suppliers stay within the public sector, action will have to be taken to deal with their overheads. The alternative of opening wider outside markets is preferable.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Will my hon. Friend accept that his decision will be warmly welcomed, not least by the furniture industry? Having listened to the eulogy given by the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes), the Crown Suppliers would seem to have little going for them. They should not be afraid of private industry, and the furniture industry in particular, which will welcome the decision and the additional competition that it will provide — all to the benefit of the Government and the people.

Mr. Chope: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He is absolutely right.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): What activities will remain in the public sector?

Mr. Chope: Certainly the activities that have security implications—and there may be one or two beyond that —will remain in the public sector.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): Is my hon. Friend aware that his announcement will be welcomed? Has he considered the possibility of offering the Crown Suppliers on a management buy-out basis to people who have an esprit de corps, some of whom are my constituents and have written to me? Will he regard it as a forerunner of doing exactly the same to the Property Services Agency?

Mr. Chope: There has been an expression of interest by some members of the management in purchasing part of the Crown Suppliers. Their applications will certainly be considered along with the others. On the wider issue of the Property Services Agency, as my hon. Friend knows, we are moving to commercial accounts, with a view to a trading fund in the future.

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): Will the Minister be more specific about what will be left in the public sector? Will he spell it out? Does he say that he will hand the Crown Suppliers to the furniture industry, with its recent health and safety record? How will the national interest be served by doing that? Will such things as

[Mr. Doug Hoyle]

Ministers' cars be included? Will we see them driving Toyotas? What protection will there be for contracts, 95 per cent. of which are in this country at the moment and one third of which are placed with small firms, which the Government are supposed to uphold? Will that percentage remain in the future? Will the Minister be honest with the House and say that the matter bears the stamp of his political prejudice and hatred of the public sector, however successful it may be?

Mr. Chope: Certainly the decision bears the stamp of the Government's commitment to privatisation and to the benefits of a competitive environment. I have already answered points about effects on Government purchasing policy. There is no reason to suppose that the proportion of British goods will be reduced. Indeed, I look forward to the time when, instead of the proportion being 95 per cent., 100 per cent. of goods are British-made. I visited the "Better Made in Britain" exhibition, which was designed to try to encourage British firms to make products that are not yet available on the home market.

Mr. Kenneth Warren (Hastings and Rye): As my hon. Friend knows, there is a substantial Crown Suppliers facility in my constituency. Although I accept the challenge of privatisation, I ask him to be more specific about the time scale of the sale. As he knows, for many months, staff have been extremely worried about their future. They are highly skilled men and women, who deserve more recognition than merely being told that we are calling in more consultants to advise on the time scale. My hon. Friend knows full well my concern about the way in which leaks about the decision came out of the Department over a prolonged period. Parliament should be the first to be told.

Mr. Chope: On the last point, I certainly share my hon. Friend's concern 100 per cent. I appreciate his expression of interest in the matter. In Hastings, there are about 1,200 employees of the Property Services Agency, just over 100 of whom are employed by the Crown Suppliers. The timetable will depend upon the legislative programme. As knowledge about the announcement is becoming known, certain private firms are coming forward to express an interest in purchase.

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield): Does the Minister recall the critical part that was played by the Crown Suppliers in changing the Government's mind about furniture foam and getting them to introduce tough new regulations? Is he aware that the main company behind the Government's original flawed proposals on furniture foam, Hillsdown Holdings, is likely to be one of the main bidders for the Crown Suppliers? Therefore, will he deal specifically with my question? Is one of the aspects of the Crown Suppliers that is to be left in the public sector its safety role in providing objective advice to the Government to ensure that the public interest is not sacrificed for the commercial interests of the privatised company?

Mr. Chope: The Department of Trade and Industry deals with the safety role. It seeks the views of organisations in the public and private sectors. That has happened in the case of furniture foam. I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman seems to think that it would be advantageous for the Crown Suppliers to stay in the public sector. If they had been in the private sector and had been consulted about their views on furniture foam, they would have been able to publicise their announcement when they made it in September last year.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Although I welcome my hon. Friend's excellent, if overdue, statement, will he persevere in doing good? Will he shortly bring forward his proposals for the total privatisation of the Property Services Agency?

Mr. Chope: I heard what my hon. Friend said. As I have already said, we are moving to commercial accounts in the Property Services Agency, with a view to establishing a trading fund.

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): Having accepted that the Crown Suppliers are a successful public sector enterprise, why do the Government inhibit or prevent them from competing with the private sector, then use that inhibition as a justification for selling them off? Is it because the savings for taxpayers and ratepayers and the profits that are being made for the public are required to be handed over to the Tory party's friends in the private sector?

Mr. Chope: Not at all. The Government take the view that commercial enterprises are better run in the private sector. The essence of the Crown Suppliers' activities is commercial.

Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory (Wells): Will my hon. Friend give a rather more convincing reply to the questions that were asked by my hon. Friends the Members for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) and for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) about the Property Services Agency? Surely the logic that has quite rightly drawn him——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The statement is about the Crown Suppliers.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The logic that has drawn my hon. Friend to the right decision about the Crown Suppliers applies with equal force to the Property Services Agency. Surely there is no argument of principle or practice for retaining the PSA in the public sector.

Mr. Chope: There is a distinction between the Crown Suppliers and the Property Services Agency. The Crown Suppliers have been a trading fund for many years, but the PSA does not yet have proper commerical accounts, let alone a trading fund.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the House that legislation will be introduced. Will hon. Members ensure that their questions relate only to the Crown Suppliers?

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Does the Minister recall that on 9 December he answered a question from me about the Crown Suppliers by saying that he was considering the Coopers and Lybrand and the Dewi Jones reports? Does he accept that the main part of the Dewi Jones report stated that priority should be given to the introduction of improved working practices? What are his answers to the Dewi Jones conclusions? Is it true, as we read in the press, that the Chief Secretary to the Treasury is extremely sceptical about this privatisation on a falling stock market? What will happen to expert units such as those that look after Hampton Court and the Palace of Westminster? Will they be broken up and their expertise scattered?

Mr. Chope: It is not true that my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury was against this or had

reservations about it. Indeed, this matter was not his departmental responsibility. That proves that the purported leaks to the press suggesting that my right hon. Friend was against the privatisation were up the tree. I note what the hon. Gentleman says about the specialist work at Hampton Court and the Palace of Westminster. We shall consider whether that work should be part of the privatisation package.

Mr. Dalyell: And what about the Dewi Jones report?

Mr. Derek Conway (Shrewsbury and Atcham): Does my hon. Friend recall that, every time a Minister has come to the House to announce a privatisation measure, there have been whingeing voices, yet every time the measure has received the approval of Parliament it has been an enormous success? My hon. Friend's proposal today will be no less a success. The proposal will be welcomed not least in the less highly populated urban areas, such as Shrewsbury, where many local traders have not been able to come to terms with the preferred trading status of the organisation. Therefore, my hon. Friend's statement this afternoon will be very welcome in the more rural parts of the country.

Mr. Chope: I absolutely agree with my hon. Friend. The recent results of the National Freight Corporation are a further reminder of the success of privatisation.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): As it has already been stated and accepted that the Crown Suppliers buy 95 per cent. British products, what guarantees will the Minister write into the legislation to ensure that that continues in future? Can he be absolutely sure that overseas predators will not take a leaf out of the book of the Kuwaiti Investment Office and seek to take full advantage of the opportunities when privatisation arises? Will he also guarantee that no Tory Member of Parliament, either in the Government or outside, will be given the opportunity to become a director of any of the privatised companies that may emerge?

Mr. Chope: It is not possible for members of the Government to hold directorships in companies. All the interest that has so far been expressed in purchasing the Crown Suppliers has come from British firms.

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): Will my hon. Friend agree that, in delivering services to the public, the Government must always have regard to the fact that they have no funds other than those provided by the taxpayer? Therefore, in their capacity as trustees of the taxpayers' money, the Government must consider how to deliver those services most cost-effectively. If those services can be delivered most cost-effectively in the private sector, it must be common sense and morally right to do that.

Mr. Chope: I agree 100 per cent. That is why the Government's policy is to allow Departments to make their own purchasing decisions using their own resources, so that they can shop around. Firms will win Government business only if they are competitive.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Will the Minister guarantee that, if the Crown Suppliers are to be privatised, they will not follow the same path as Coventry Climax, which has suffered an 80 per cent. loss of jobs in five years? Will he guarantee that by saying that he will monitor what happens to the company after privatisation? The Department of Trade and Industry has always refused to do that. Making a last attempt, will he explain precisely which elements of the Crown Suppliers are supposed to remain in public ownership for security reasons? Is he not aware which elements are to remain, or is it a secret?

Mr. Chope: It is not a secret. Those aspects of the Crown Suppliers' activities that have security implications will remain——

Mr. Nellist: What are they?

Mr. Chope: I can name one—the secure car service. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would agree that it is appropriate that that should stay in the public sector. I am afraid that I cannot remember the hon. Gentleman's other questions, he asked so many.

Mr. Nellist: What about monitoring and job losses?

Mr. Chope: With regard to job losses, I should have thought that Opposition Members would look more positively at the proposal. Sussessful privatisations have often involved an expansion of the labour force. I hope that the Crown Suppliers will be equally successful.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Will the Minister accept that this is unacceptable? He has come to the Dispatch Box to make a statement, but he has not answered specific questions put to him by my right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) who asked him to tell us exactly what services and functions will remain with the Crown Suppliers. He should give us a list. It would appear that ministerial cars are involved. At the moment, it costs the taxpayer £2·5 million a year to provide him and his right hon. Friends with cars so that they can waltz around London and not experience the real traffic problems that the rest of us have to put up with.

Mr. Chope: I will take note of what the hon. Gentleman is saying if he is arguing for the privatisation of the ministerial car service.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): Will my hon. Friend make sure that, by inadvertence, he does not achieve something different from what he wishes? Would he in any such regulations or instructions use the word "United Kingdom" rather than "British" so that he does not exclude products from Northern Ireland?

Mr. Chope: My hon. Friend has made a very telling point, and I agree with him.

Mr. Boyes: We must insist that the Minister answers the questions posed by myself, my right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) and my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks). The Minister told my right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South that there are one or two bits beyond security. Will he define exactly what they are? Will he assure us that he intends to publish the Coopers and Lybrand and Dewi Jones reports?

Mr. Chope: Summaries of the Dewi Jones and Coopers and Lybrand reports have been prepared and copies have been placed in the Library. We do not propose to publish them in full because they contain commercially confidential information. Certainly some aspects of the Crown Suppliers activities will not be up for sale.

Mr. Tony Banks: What are they?

Mr. Chope: The details will become apparent after we have made progress and engaged a financial consultant to look at the matter in detail.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): On a point, of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will take points of order in their proper place.

Anglo-Irish Relations

4.18 pm

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"The conclusions reached at the meeting between the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and the Ministers of the Irish Government yesterday."

It is regrettable that I have to make this application as a matter of urgency and importance. The Government should have made a statement. They have been dodging it since we were promised an early statement on these matters 10 days ago by the Attorney-General.

The matter is urgent and important because this Government and the Irish Government have referred to the constraints and strains that have now been placed on Anglo-Irish relationships and the difficulties that have been raised about confidence in the Royal Ulster Constabulary. The level of public confidence in the RUC is now as low as it was at the time of bloody Sunday and the hunger strikes. While it is true for the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to say that he was not in office while the shoot-to-kill policy took place, he was in office when Stalker was obstructed in his inquiries into that policy.

We are entitled to have in the House the list of areas of concern and proposals for improvement that the Irish Government are said to have given to the Secretary of State for discussion by the Cabinet. We are entitled to know why the Irish Government felt it necessary to go to the Cabinet. Was it because they did not trust the Secretary of State? Was it because the Prime Minister had authorised the Attorney-General's statement a week ago last Monday? All that is happening against a background of a Greek chorus of the regular Stalker revelations that seem to contradict every item that the Attorney-General told the House about last Monday.

The replies to the Stalker revelations from the Secretary of State, the Home Secretary, the Attorney-General and the RUC have been deafening in their silence. The dogs have not been barking. They are hoping that the matter will go away. We are determined that it shall not go away. The House has a right to discuss such matters urgently in Government time, and that is what should be done.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) seeks leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the conclusions reached at the meeting between the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and Ministers of the Irish Government yesterday."

I have listened with care to what the hon. Member has said. He knows that when considering an application under Standing Order No. 20 I must have regard for the criteria laid down in the Standing Order. I regret that I do not consider that the matter he has raised as being appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 20. I therefore cannot submit his application to the House.

NHS (Industrial Action)

4.22 pm

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"Today's industrial action in the Health Service"

Quite candidly, there can be few applications under Standing Order No. 20 as clear-cut as this one. I have three minutes to convince you, Mr. Speaker, to make a simple decision. Which is more urgent and important—today's debate on the Licensing Bill, which will allow pubs to open for a couple of hours longer, or the reasons why tens of thousands of health workers in London, Coventry and throughout the country are on strike today?

The background to this escalating dispute is the massive £1,500 million of cumulative underfunding of the Health Service. The Chancellor would prefer that money to be used for tax cuts to the rich instead of providing guarantees of heart operations for the 100 bairns in the west midlands who are desperately waiting for them. It could be used for providing equipment that is now bought through raffles and jumble sales, or to give health workers a wage on which they can live, instead of the contemptuous 3 per cent. that the Government believe they can get away with, or to reopen wards and hospitals that have been closed by a Cabinet that has no idea about the NHS. Even the Secretary of State for Social Services went into a private hospital at £1,000 a week.

The Secretary of State this morning attended a conference in the Connaught rooms but paused for a few seconds inside the opulent entrance hall sharply to criticise the nurses in front of television cameras. However, he refused my request to meet nurses in uniform from Guy's hospital who were waiting outside and say the same things to their faces that he was prepared to say about them to the media.

In contrast, Opposition Members have spent most of the past eight hours visiting hospitals and talking to health workers. It is clear that it will not be long before the anger of working people boils over. *The Daily Telegraph* today reveals that 79 per cent. of voters support today's strike. When asked about the Prime Minister's statement that nurses were deliberately hitting at patients, 67 per cent. of Tory voters sided with the nurses and not with the Prime Minister. Workers throughout the country know that petitions, lobbies and arguments have never impressed the Cabinet. The only answer is action. In growing numbers, they realise that it is not the responsibility of health workers to take action to defend our NHS. It is the responsibility of all workers. That is why there are increasing calls on the TUC to turn Budget day into a one-day general strike to defend the Health Service.

If the House does not debate this crucial issue but instead spends the rest of the afternoon discussing pub opening hours, Parliament will be seen to be increasingly irrelevant and the support for national industrial action will grow. I urge you, Mr. Speaker, to accept this application.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) seeks to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter, that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"today's industrial action in the National Health Service."

Again, I have listened with great care to what the hon. Member has said, but I must have regard to the criteria of the Standing Order. I regret that I do not consider the matter that he has raised as being appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 20. I cannot therefore submit his application to the House.

Crown Suppliers

4.26 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the future of the Crown Suppliers."

My interest in this matter did not begin this afternoon; it is of long standing. On 9 December 1987, I asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he had to privatise the Crown Suppliers; and if he would make a statement.

The Minister replied:

"I am considering various possibilities for the future of the Crown Suppliers, following two reports by consultants, one of which concerned the feasibility of privatisation."

It was within your hearing, Mr. Speaker, this afternoon that the Minister was asked questions upon the Coopers and Lybrand report. Those questions were not answered. He was then asked questions about the Dewi Jones report, which were not answered. I do not know whether those reports are in the Library, but I asked for all information and I received a precis saying that Dewi Jones' general conclusion was

"that parts of TCS could be privatised, but that priority should be given to the introduction of a number of improved working practices."

Parliament needs to know a great deal more about that.

The Minister's answer continued:

"I have recently received detailed and comprehensive comments from representatives of the staff of the Crown Suppliers, and I do not propose to announce a decision until these have been fully considered." — [*Official Report*, 9 December 1987; Vol. 124, c. *176*.]

This afternoon we heard nothing about the full consideration of the views of the staff. I understand that 1,900 jobs will disappear and that there will be a loss of expert advice; 500 new jobs may be created, but that is far from clear.

Part of the trouble is that the Crown Suppliers dared to criticise the DTI and angered the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. They have also said that small businesses may be harmed. The press reports may not be far wrong about the Chief Secretary to the Treasury. However, the Minister must explain why that privatisation is to go ahead on a falling stock market and the consequences to the taxpayer.

There are urgent questions that are local to the House about the future expertise in the House of Commons. We are all concerned about matters that affect us, but there is an even greater problem in regard to the reconstruction of furniture in Hampton Court. It is an absolute traduction of the House of Commons for the Minister to make such a statement and hope to get away with it. The sooner that we have a debate on the issue the better.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) seeks leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the future of the Crown Suppliers."

I have listened with care to what the hon. Member has said. I was in the Chair when the Minister made his statement. I regret that I cannot rule that this matter is appropriate to be discussed under Standing Order No. 20. I therefore cannot submit his application to the House. I am sure that the hon. Member will have opportunities, and certainly when the Bill is debated, to bring his points to the Floor of the House.

Points of Order

4.28 pm

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I know that we are not allowed to challenge your judgment on individual matters relating to Standing Order No. 20. All hon. Members accept that. We have spent 20 minutes discussing the Moonies on a day when, for the first time in history, nurses in Britain have been driven by desperation to industrial action. It is possible, with great regret, to challenge the Speaker on a substantive motion. I say that because I am probably the only Member of the House who has moved a motion of censure on the Speaker. That was in relation to the refusal of an emergency debate that I sought to raise on the bombing of Oman about 30 years ago.

I beg you, Mr. Speaker, to reconsider the criteria of urgency. When the National Health Service is so poorly funded that nurses are out on strike, it must take precedence over the Moonies and the Licensing Bill. I ask you to reconsider the criteria.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: If the points of order are concerned with the same subject, I will take them together.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Surely on a day when the two main issues are the day of action in the National Health Service and a report from the Government on the Anglo-Irish discussions, it is astonishing that the Government should use an unusual parliamentary procedure to initiate a long discussion on the Moonies and to have a half-baked statement from a half-briefed Minister on the flogging off of the Crown Suppliers. Is it not also astonishing that it was two of my hon. Friends who had to make applications under Standing Order No. 20 for debates on the National Health Service and on the Anglo-Irish talks?

I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to review your decision. Surely the selection of the question to facilitate the statement on the Moonies was done only with your permission. If that was not the case, the Select Committee on Procedure should consider the matter because surely it gives enormous power to the Executive if it can choose an obscure written question on which to make a major statement on a day when applications from the Opposition show that the overriding preoccupation of hon. Members is with the day of action in the National Health Service and with the Anglo-Irish talks.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I ask you to reconsider the applications that were put to you. If it is to be relevant to the public, the House must reflect the preoccupations and concerns of the people. Today those preoccupations are not with the Moonies, and they are certainly not with the flogging off of the Crown Suppliers.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will deal with this matter straight away. When it was put to me that a written question should be answered in the House, the procedure was new to me. However, the hon. Gentleman will find that "Erskine May", on page 332, states:

"on a request by a Minister being made a question upon the paper for written answer has been answered orally at half-past three."

It is a rare occurrence, but it has happened before.

I have to have regard always—I said this yesterday and I do reflect every day with great care—to the criteria laid down under Standing Order No. 20: that is to say, whether to give precedence over the Orders of the Day for that day or for the succeeding day for an emergency debate. I also have to have regard to the other opportunities that exist—that is specifically laid down in the Standing Order—and not to give my reasons for so doing. It is a difficult judgment to make every day.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I ask you to investigate the circulation of the Order Paper and of *Hansard*? Last week, during an important Adjournment debate on the Health Service, not one Member of the Opposition was present. Therefore, their anger today must be totally synthetic.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Further to the point of order raised by my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) and my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden), Mr. Speaker. An enormous number of people throughout the country are expressing reasonable and legitimate concerns about the Health Service. I think that you would be the first to wish that Parliament was able — [HON. MEMBERS: "Where were you last week?"]—to reflect their anger and that Members of Parliament were able to represent their constituents. My point of order is that this afternoon a large number of Health Service workers, mainly nurses, went to Trafalgar square from the hospitals where they had been working or picketing. [HON. MEMBERS: "What is the point of order?"] It is an important matter——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Hon. Members should let me hear the point of order.

Mr. Corbyn: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am raising an important matter. It is a question of the access of people to Parliament to lobby Members of Parliament. When the group of nurses sought to leave Trafalgar square and walk, not in procession but as normal citizens, down Whitehall to Parliament, in order to enter the building and lobby Members of Parliament, they were prevented from doing so by a cordon of police across the road. So the nurses were unable to move freely to Parliament to lobby their elected representatives. I understand that some of the nurses have now managed to reach the House and will be lobbying Members of Parliament. Presumably Conservative Members will wish to hear their points of view since they are not prepared to go to the hospitals to listen to them. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): The Minister has a nerve to sit there pontificating.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) must contain himself.

Mr. Corbyn: Mr. Speaker, will you—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. How can I hear what the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) is saying if the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East, who is sitting next to him, persists in shouting into the same microphone?

Mr. Corbyn: I am asking you, Mr. Speaker, to rule that in accordance with the Sessional Orders that were passed by the House at the start of the session and of the new Parliament, the streets leading to Westminster are kept free and there is no let or hindrance to any person who

[Mr. Corbyn]

wishes to come to the House to lobby a Member of Parliament. It is clear that the police action was in breach of the Sessional Orders. I should be grateful if you would confirm that the Sessional Orders were approved, and communicate that fact to the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police so that he can ensure that they are carried out.

Mr. Speaker: The Sessional Orders are concerned with the rights of Members of Parliament to come to this place. I will look into the matter that the hon. Member has raised. I had no notification of a lobby of the House today. I normally get such notification on the day when a lobby is taking place.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Are you aware that there has been a great deal of obstruction and intimidation of hon. Members in getting to the House today to attend Parliament? Hon. Members have been obstructed by a flag-waving group of militants and Socialist Workers party supporters, with very few nurses among them, which prevented some of us from attending Question Time and part of the proceedings of the House today.

Will you please send a message to the police controlling that crowd that they should permit the access of hon. Members of Parliament to the House freely so that, having been elected, we can carry out our democratic job of trying to ensure through democratic means that the nurses and the National Health Service are properly looked after by Parliament? Does the attempt to disrupt Parliament by force not prove that the nurses are being cynically and politically exploited by the Opposition and by their supporting unions, COHSE and NUPE, and that this has nothing to do with the care of patients?

Mr. Speaker: I have already said that I will look into the question of any obstruction that has been caused, and certainly of obstruction caused to hon. Members. That would be contrary to the Sessional Order.

Mr. Wells: May I bring you the details?

Mr. Speaker: Yes, certainly.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You called my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) to order. I am not saying that you did so wrongly, but I should like to put it to you that my hon. Friend made his interjection because of the loud-mouthed comments from the hon. Lady who is supposed to be a Minister and who has consistently tried to intimidate Opposition Members and who, incidentally, is an absolute disgrace to the city of Liverpool.

Mr. Speaker: One of the problems that I face in the Chamber is that I hear what goes on through a microphone positioned above the hon. Member who is speaking, which is channelled to an amplifier in the wings of the Chair. I am afraid that I did not hear anything else.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): Further to the point of order raised by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), Mr. Speaker. You will recall that in 1976 the Labour Government announced cuts of 30 per cent. in the hospital building programme. Over five years, the pay of nurses decreased in real terms.

Mr. Speaker: Order. This seems to be an argument rather than a point of order.

Mr. Bennett: Did the right hon. Member for Chesterfield ever make an application under Standing Order No. 20 during those five years?

Mr. Speaker: I was not the Speaker at the time.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): You have quite properly said, Mr. Speaker, that you are guided by criteria that have been used by your predecessors. We did a little research a short while ago on what were Standing Order No. 9 applications — now Standing Order No. 20 applications—to see when they were granted. We found that, in the run-up to the so-called winter of discontent in 1978-79, when there was a Labour Government, many applications for debates under Standing Order No. 9 were made.

I do not know whether the criteria for accepting such debates were marginally different or whether Mr. Speaker looked at them differently, but our research in the Library shows that five applications were made by Tory Members —many of them to do with the NHS—and they were granted. I remember sitting over there, where Conservative Members now sit, watching them make their applications.

All I am asking is whether you will have a look at the criteria used then and see whether they have changed and whether the climate now is just as important, and to consider the environment outside this place as compared with our discussions about the Moonies and pub opening hours. Will you consider whether it is important to discuss what is after all, an historic event—thousands of nurses and other health workers going out on strike? Will you consider whether that meets the criteria for an emergency debate under Standing Order No. 20?

Mr. Speaker: I shall certainly look up what happened, but the criteria have not changed. I have a clear memory of what happened at that time—it was a very different situation.

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. While you are looking at the criteria, will you examine the criteria by which the Opposition are able to use Supply days and the criteria by which they can put down censure motions? Is it not a fact that what we have witnessed today is the possible leadership bid of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), as all the complaints have come from Back-Bench Labour Members? None have come from the Labour Front Bench.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. McLoughlin) has blundered onto an important aspect of the problem. Never during the time to which my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) referred, which I admit was a period of crisis, did nurses come out on strike. Nevertheless, applications under Standing Order No. 9 were granted, as were private notice questions. I respectfully submit that it is important to consider what happened during that time and to compare it with what is happening now. The situation now is much worse and ought therefore to be treated in a much more considerate manner.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We have a heavy day ahead of us —we have two major Bills to debate. I shall consider all

the points tht have been put to me. I have no doubt that the House will wish to return to this matter during Social Services questions on Tuesday.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): If I may by the way respond to Conservative Members who are suggesting that I have been smoked out——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This will have to be a fairly ingenious point of order.

Mr. Dobson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You know that it is usual for the Front Benches to speak towards the end of these exchanges. We recognise the dilemmas that you face. They have been made more acute today by the gross insensitivity of the Government who have used a fairly unused and archaic method to get the Moonies on the agenda. They have also made a statement about the Crown Suppliers on a day when, indubitably, the bulk of the British people are depressed at the thought that nurses have come out on strike for the first time in the history of that profession. That being so, my right hon. and hon. Friends will remain extremely worried and look to the support of the Chair such as the then Opposition Members received in 1978-79 in circumstances which we do not believe were any more severe than those which prevail today.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think that we can take this matter any further.

Mr. Nellist *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have heard the hon. Member once.

Mr. Nellist: Not on a point of order.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have heard the hon. Member shouting across the Chamber.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. One at a time please. I shall call the three hon. Members who have been rising and then move on.

Mr. Nellist: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The protection of the reputation of the House is one of your prime duties. I cannot compare the 1970s with the late 1980s except to say that I was just as involved then in opposing cuts as I am now. There is one difference about today. For the first time in, I think, 800 years, St. Bartholomew's hospital nurses are on strike. I know that you will not explain why an application under Standing Order No. 20 was not acceptable or why a request for a statement could not be met, but I would like to back up the point of order made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), particularly as we can spend 20 minutes on a written answer about the Moonies and we can enjoy the company of the junior Minister for health who, while my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover said thousands were out on strike, contradicted him, but was not prepared to get to the Dispatch Box to put those facts, as she sees them, before the House and be cross-examined on them. You, Mr. Speaker, are the only one who can judge the criteria and whether the Moonies and pub opening hours, or the hundreds of nurses outside the building and the thousands more throughout the country, count more in the public's attention.

I ask you, Mr. Speaker, if you do not make a decision today—although today is the day on which the strike is taking place—to come back tomorrow and say whether the criteria applied in the 1970s were different from those applied in the 1980s. It looks to me——

Mr. Speaker *rose*——

Mr. Nellist: I shall finish on this point.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am not having the hon. Member pointing his finger at me.

Mr. Nellist: It looks to me as though the Government have used the Moonies and the Crown Suppliers to cover up, through you, the fact that they are not prepared to answer questions on the Health Service.

Mr. Speaker: I do not decide whether the Government use the procedure to make a statement or to answer a question at the end of Question Time. That is not a matter for me. Provided that it is in order, it is done. It is not a decision over which I have any discretion at all.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I ask you to consider the traffic implications for this building which arise from the demonstration? I have visited four hospitals in my area today. Nurses and hospital staff have had a poster made which says:

"Hoot if you support the NHS and the nurses."

Car after car hooted. I can confirm that it is only the Tory Government who do not give a hoot for the NHS.

If the nurses and lobbyists come to the House with that poster, will they be allowed to show it? As an opinion poll shows that well over 90 per cent. of the British public support the NHS and the nurses in this campaign, it will be very noisy out there. May I have your assurance that there will not be a problem and that they will be allowed to show the poster?

Mr. Speaker: As long as they do so outside the Chamber.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I will keep this short, and I think that it is a genuine point. Surely, when a request for a statement comes to your office, you have to give your permission for the statement to be made. Do you acquaint yourself with the contents of that statement and decide whether it is worthy of being made that day?

It does not seem to make much sense that we can have this peculiar statement, using an arcane device, to hear all about the Moonies and to have a statement about the Crown Suppliers that left more questions unanswered than it answered, when a genuine desire for a statement on grave disputes in the National Health Service does not find favour. So that we can assist you, will you tell us the criteria?

Mr. Speaker: I have discretion in regard to Government statements. If the Government say that they will make a statement, we have to accept that. Similarly, if a Minister wishes to answer a question at the end of questions, as happened today, that also is not a matter for my discretion.

Mr. Heffer: On a further point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have listened to the hon. Gentleman once. I said that I would hear the three other hon. Members who had been rising. We must now go on to the ballot for notices of motions.

Mr. Heffer: On a different point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have heard the hon. Gentleman once.

Mr. Heffer: This is an entirely different point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. It may be, but I said that I would hear the three other hon. Members who were rising. The hon. Member was not one of them. We must move on to the ballot for notices of motions.

BALLOT FOR NOTICES OF MOTIONS FOR FRIDAY 19 FEBRUARY

The Members successful in the ballot were:

Mr. Malcolm Moss
Mr. Timothy Wood
Dr. John Marek

Transplant Notification

4.52 pm

Mr. Gwilym Jones (Cardiff, North): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to require health authorities in England and Wales and health boards in Scotland to establish an effective system of identifying potential organ and tissue donors and for notifying the same to an approved organ and tissue procurement organisation; and for connected purposes.

By this Bill, I seek to bring to the attention of the House a most important problem of health provision in Britain today. There are vital areas where demand is greatly increasing and where at least part of that increase is due to the very success of those areas. At the outset, it is appropriate to mention my gratitude for advice and support eagerly offered for bringing forward the Bill. As with so many parts of health provision, there are many admirable contributions from the professionals and equally from those who make considerable efforts in a voluntary capacity.

Various names readily occur—the Kidney Research Unit for Wales Foundation, the Welsh Kidney Patient Association, Professor Salaman of the university of Wales college of medicine. Mr. Ross Taylor of the Royal Victoria infirmary of Newcastle upon Tyne, and their colleagues and Miss Esther Rantzen and the "That's Life" television programme. All their contributions deserve tribute.

Few if any of us would say that we are completely satisfied with all that is being done. None the less, in being positive, it behoves us to say that tremendous advances have been made in the National Health Service. Treatments are now possible that not so long ago were but a dream for the highest levels of medical science, let alone being countenanced by the layman, particularly by the patients who would benefit. Not least has this been true of transplant surgery, and even now I doubt whether these advances are yet as widely appreciated as they deserve to be. Surgeons transplant corneas, kidneys, livers, pancreases, hearts, lungs, hearts and lungs together and heart valves, besides bone and skin tissue.

Nor is the scale of the operations readily known. Last year, there were three lung transplants, 65 heart and lung transplants, 247 heart transplants, 200 liver transplants, 1,159 cornea transplants and 1,566 kidney transplants. Imagine the change effected, the new life after a heart transplant, the change in quality of life with no more dialysis after a kidney transplant and the restoration of sight after a cornea transplant. Perhaps we cannot easily imagine these transformations until we have had that experience or closely known someone who has undergone transplant surgery, but clearly it must make a glorious difference.

The possibility of these transplants and the awareness of those possibilities inevitably provoke their own demand. Who would not wish to have the improved quality of life, in any of its different forms? Before, there were no waiting lists for treatments that were not available or did not exist. The total of more than 3,000 transplants carried out last year is, I am afraid, not sufficient. That pace will be unlikely to make a progressive reduction in the waiting lists. A continuing increase will have to be expected.

Let me refer to the situation for kidney patients. As I have said, in 1987 there were 1,566 kidney transplants. There are now 3,485 more people waiting for the same

treatment, and this does not include any who have not registered, for whatever reason. Additionally, it can be assumed that new patients will be diagnosed as in need of dialysis. Estimates based on a rate of 50 per million project 2,500 more requiring dialysis each year and, in turn, 2,500 more each year for kidney transplants. Therefore, a repeat of last year's transplant operations would not reduce the waiting list by that number of 1,566. Instead, the number will grow from approximately 3,500 to approximately 4,500.

The same could well be true for the other types of transplant, particularly for heart and lung transplants, where the ratio of transplants performed to the respective waiting list is greater again than the ratio for kidney patients. Understandably, there is no one simple reason frustrating greater progress but, above all, it is frustrated by the shortage in the number of organs becoming available for transplant. This was brought out in the report of the DHSS working party. That report estimated that there are 4,000 brain deaths annually — a number sufficient to match the need for kidneys, the largest requirement, if only a higher proportion of those with brain death were to become donors.

The working party brought forward its recommendations providing a voluntary code of conduct for organ transplant identification. This reaffirms the criteria for brain stem deaths, defines when organs need to be removed and expects the senior doctor involved to seek permission for removal of the organs. These recommendations make no difference, in that the most important aspect—the identification of suitable organs—remains voluntary. The results show that the voluntary approach is not adequate, and there is no encouragement to think that it will yet succeed at the levels necessary.

I feel that the time has come to acknowledge the inadequacies of the concept of voluntary approach and to move to legislation. My Bill would put into effect the aims of the voluntary arrangements by making a requirement that the necessary questions about donations are asked —the vital questions that are not now being asked often enough. It does not interfere with any doctor's clinical freedom, but I suggest that it is the only way to achieve a significant increase in organ donation, ideally to a sufficiency to match the presently rising need.

I do not pretend that these are the easiest questions to ask, however much they need asking. They come at a time of great emotion and grief. The loss of the loved one means that this can never be easy for either relative or doctor. However, that is no different from the feelings that prevail now under the voluntary arrangements. At less emotional times, almost every one of us would agree that these gifts of life represent one of the finest gestures that can be made. Extending or improving the life of another can be a great source of comfort in bereavement: the knowledge that that greatest loss can yet result in a gift of inestimable value.

What, then, is likely to be achieved? The Bill does not take an untrodden path. Essentially similar legislation is in force in the majority of states of the United States of America. Let me take the example of one state, Arizona, where the period immediately after the legislation came into force showed a threefold to fivefold increase in the number of organs identified for transplant compared with the number for the corresponding period before the legislation came into force. In the adjoining state of Nevada, there was no increase during that period. Nevada has since intoduced a transplant notification law.

A simple projection can be made to show what a threefold increase in the organs available could do for rising waiting lists. The working party report identifies that there is the potential for that increase in organ identification. The number of transplant operations needs to increase significantly. The difference that can be made to the quality of life justifies the steps that I propose. Accordingly, I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Gwilym Jones, Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson, Mr. Tam Dalyell, Mr. Ray Whitney, Mr. Jack Ashley, Mr. Tony Favell, Mr. Dafydd Wigley, Mr. Eric Forth, Dr. Norman Godman, Mr. Jeremy Hanley and Mr. Allan Rogers.

Transplant Notification

Mr. Gwilym Jones accordingly presented a Bill to require health authorities in England and Wales and health boards in Scotland to establish an effective system of identifying potential organ and tissue donors and for notifying the same to an approved organ and tissue procurement organisation; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 15 April and to be printed. [Bill 92].

Licensing Bill

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

5.2 pm

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am certainly not one to question your judgment—nor would any other hon. Member do so—but many people outside the House will wonder why amendment No. 1, which stands in my name and the names of many of my hon. Friends, was not included in Mr. Speaker's selection of amendments. It goes to the heart of the Bill on the question of permitted hours, giving the licensee scope and discretion in deciding for which 12 hours to open between the hours of 10 am and midnight. I feel that it should have been included in the selection, or that we should be told why it is not.

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I agree with the hon Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin). I had hoped that amendment No. 1 would be included. I am not questioning the judgment of the Chair, but it matters to many people in they industry what hours the work. The amendment would have provided us with the opportunity to help those who have to serve the public. I am not questioning your judgment in the slightest, but many people who work in the industry and have to open for these hours will be bitterly disappointed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I can say to both hon. Members and to the whole House that Mr. Speaker gives very careful consideration to all factors—including the length of time for which any particular subject may have been considered in the Standing Committee—before making his selection. I am sorry that I cannot help the hon. Members. They may be able to use their ingenuity to raise these points on the amendments that have been selected, although I am sure that if they do, they will be careful to remember the rules of order of the House.

New clause 2

SALE OF INTOXICATING LIQUOR ON LICENSED PREMISES TO PERSONS UNDER EIGHTEEN

1. — (1) Section 169 of the principal Act (offences on licensed premises in connection with the supply of intoxicating liquor to, or its consumption by, persons under eighteen) shall have effect with the following amendments.

(2) In subsection (1) (which penalises the sale of intoxicating liquor by a licensee or his servant to a person known to be under eighteen), the word "knowingly", in the first place where it occurs, shall be ommitted.

(3) After subsection (4) there shall be inserted the following subsections—

"(4A) Where a person is charged under subsection (1) of this section with the offence of selling intoxicating liquor to a person under eighteen and he is charged by reason of his own act, it shall be a defence for him to prove—

(a) that he exercised all due diligence to avoid the commission of such an offence; or

(b) that he had no reason to suspect that the person was under eighteen.

(4B) Where the person charged with an offence under subsection (1) of this section is the licence holder and he is charged by reason of the act or default of some other person, it shall be a defence for him to prove that he exercised all due diligence to avoid the commission of an offence under that subsection."

(4) For subsections (8) and (9), there shall be substituted the following subsection—

"(8) A person guilty of an offence under this section shall be liable to a fine not exceeding level 3 of the standard scale; and on a person's second or subsequent conviction of such an offence the court may, if the offence was committed by him as the holder of a justices' licence, order that he shall forfeit the licence."—*[Mr. Douglas Hogg.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hogg): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following: amendment *(a)* to the proposed new clause, to leave out lines 17 and 18 and insert—

'*(b)* that he had good reason to believe that the person was over eighteen'.

New Clause 7—*Under Age Drinking*—

'In section 169 (Serving or delivering intoxicating liquor to or for consumption by persons under 18) of the principal Act—

(1) In subsections (1), (5) and (6) the word "knowingly" shall be omitted wherever it occurs.

(2) After subsection (10) there shall be added the following subsection—

"(11) In proceedings for an offence under any provision of this section it is a defence to prove that a person charged with the offence believed the person to be of or over the age mentioned in that provision and had reasonable grounds for the belief.".'.

Government amendments Nos. 18, 19, 21 and 22.

Mr. Hogg: One feature of our debates on Second Reading and in Committee was the concern felt in the House and elsewhere about the problem of under-age drinking. That concern was also reflected in the report of the committee, chaired by Lady Masham, which was established by the Home Office. The new clause is our

considered response to that anxiety. It contains the proposals that we are bringing forward in the hope of resolving at least some of the difficulties.

I think that it would help if I spoke only briefly on the new clause and tried to identify only its major elements, because I know that many hon. Members want to participate in the debate. The main change that we propose is to delete the requirement of "knowingly" from the first limb of the offence in section 169(1). The justification for making that change is that it is too difficult to prove, in the context of that offence, that the person had the required knowledge. One of two things has to be proved in the context of that offence — either express knowledge that the customer is under age or a deliberate inattention to that possibility; closure of one's eyes to a fact would probably constitute the required degree of knowledge.

It is probably because of the difficulty of establishing the offence that the subsection has given rise to very few convictions. In 1986—the last year for which we have records — there were 165 convictions under that subsection in England and Wales. Bearing in mind that there are about 145,325 licensees, that is not very many. I recommend to the House that it delete the word "knowingly" from the first offence in subsection 1. That would transfer a burden to licensees that they did not previously carry.

One has then to ask whether the offence should be an absolute offence or one to which there should be a defence. That matter exercised the members of the committee, some of whom took the view that it should be an absolute offence to which there should be no defence. I do not think that it would be right in principle or practice to make it an absolute offence. Therefore, we have introduced a defence, which is set out in the new clause.

I make no apologies for the fact that the defence has been lifted — I think, without alteration — from the equivalent legislation in Scotland, the 1976 Act. I see that the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) is smiling. He is right that in this respect we have had something to learn from the Scots. I am delighted to pay tribute to the Scots. We took the defence provided in their legislation and incorporated into our own.

In the end, one has to ask, "Have we got the balance right? Is the defence too liberal or too oppressive to licensees?" No doubt hon. Members will wish to address their attention to that question. I can give only my view, which is that we have the balance about right. It appears to have worked in Scotland, where there have been significantly more convictions, having regard to the number of licensees, than we have in this country.

The hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) is looking at me with a questioning eye. Let me give him the figures. In Scotland, there were 106 convictions in 1986, against 13,900 licensed premises.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hogg: I should not have mentioned the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Anderson: If the Minister will allow me, I shall ask him a pertinent question. As there are now more liberal laws in Scotland — presumably the law in this respect was previously the same—what, if any, is the difference in the number of convictions before the law was liberalised and under the current position when the law is now substantially more liberal than in England and Wales?

Mr. Hogg: If I had been the hon. Gentleman, I should have asked precisely the same question, being anxious to torment the Minister at the Dispatch Box. I must confess that I do not know the answer. I have the figures only as far back as 1979 — *[Interruption.]* Well, I willingly acknowledge that the hon. Gentleman has a good debating point. What I do know is that, having regard to the number of licensees, more convictions have been obtained in Scotland—as a proportion of the number of licensees —than has been possible in England and Wales during comparable periods. That is basically because transferring the burden of proof has made prosecution easier. Without apology to the House, I believe that we should make the offence easier to prove. Either we are serious in trying to tackle the problem of under-age drinking, in which case we go along the kind of route that I have outlined to the House, or we are not.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Is not the number of convictions, 165 out of 296 prosecutions, as high a figure as there is generally in criminal convictions where there have been pleas of not guilty? What is my hon. Friend complaining about?

Mr. Hogg: I was pointing out to my hon. and learned Friend that there are about 145,325 licensees. Anybody who has studied the evidence, read the Masham report or even had regard to the evidence of his own eyes, knows perfectly well that a lot of under-age drinking is going on, both in public houses and through the purchase of alcohol from supermarkets. Having regard to that evidence, the fact that there were only 165 convictions in 1986 suggests, to me at least, that the offence is too difficult to prove.

I advise my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence), whose experience is as great as my own—some might say that it is greater in the context of criminal cases — that in this case the concept of "knowingly" is extraordinarily difficult to establish. I find it difficult to see how one could establish that against a licensee in a busy pub at night. Therefore, I am not in the least bit surprised to find that that aspect of the law is little enforced.

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): Why is the emphasis in the proposals on punishing the licensee? Why does my hon. Friend not seek to punish the youngsters who knowingly try to mislead the licensee? Why does he not seek to punish perhaps the parents of those youngsters who go in, knowingly, to deceive a licensee? Why is my hon. Friend being so hard on the licensee in this respect?

Mr. Hogg: I suspect that many hon. Members will say that I am not being harsh enough and that the defence is too liberal. I advise my hon. Friend that it is already an offence to sell alcohol to those who are under age. The question is whether we are serious about that offence. My hon. Friend's intervention suggests that he does not think that we should be in a position to enforce the law against a licensee. I take a different view and I think that it is a question of balance. I am commending to the House an offence that will be committed when there is an occasion to sell to an under-age person. That will be matched by a defence, which I hope has been drawn in sufficiently wide terms so as not to punish people for honest mistakes——

Mr. Dicks *rose*——

Mr. Hogg: If my hon. Friend wants me to give way again, I shall of course do so.

Mr. Dicks: I make the point about punishment for the young person who knowingly tries to deceive the licensee and possibly some kind of punishment against that young person's parents, who should be responsible. My hon. Friend is putting the emphasis on the licensees, who have a difficult job. Why is he not taking some action against others who deliberately break the law by seeking to drink when they are under age?

Mr. Hogg: I advise my hon. Friend that it is already an offence for an under-age person to buy a drink. That is already on the statute book. If my hon. Friend would care to refresh his memory on that point, it is in section 169(2). Is my hon. Friend really saying that in the absence of knowledge, we should prosecute the parents of a child who goes into a pub? I would not subscribe willingly to such a proposition.

We have got the balance about right. Of course, it is a question of judgment and I am sure that I shall be told by other people that I have been too liberal to licensees. However, I present this proposal to the House on the basis that it is a balanced approach, which is likely to make the law more enforceable but in a way which is not unduly oppressive to licensees.

5.15 pm

Mr. Anderson: On the obligation of young people—the point raised by the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks)—the Minister will recall that the Masham committee drew attention to the problems of the police in obtaining the age of young people which might assist them in obtaining a conviction. The Masham committee made the specific recommendation that it should be an offence for a young person to refuse to disclose his age to a police officer, who reasonably suspects him of being under age, so that the law can properly be enforced. As that would usefully have buttressed the Government's proposals, why did they reject that recommendation of the Masham committee?

Mr. Hogg: That recommendation is contained in paragraph 155 of Lady Masham's report. I came to the conclusion that it was wrong and I shall tell the hon. Member for Swansea, East why I thought that it was wrong. It is a basic principle of English law that one is not obliged to incriminate oneself. The hon. Gentleman is as well aware of that principle as I am. It is an offence for an under-age person to buy alcohol in the circumstances that we are discussing. That being so, had we acceded to Lady Masham's recommendation, we would have been putting on an under-age person an obligation, backed by criminal law, to make a statement which could itself prove that that person had committed an offence. I do not subscribe to that proposition, because it infringes all the principles about self-incrimination. That is why the Government and I declined to follow that piece of advice. The hon. Gentleman may not agree, but that is the reason.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): Does my hon. Friend not agree that, if it is difficult for police officers to ascertain the ages of youngsters in public houses, it is 10 times more difficult for licensees to do so?

Mr. Hogg: Undoubtedly, it is not always easy for a licensee to do so. That is why, when we created the defence which features in the new clause, we created a defence of a kind which we think that a licensee will be able to establish so that he cannot be said to be either negligent or culpable in the sense that we mean it.

We have the great advantage of the Scottish experience in this regard, as in many others. I am not aware that the licensees of Scotland are up in arms against the defence that is provided for in Scottish legislation. That is why I find incorporating the Scottish example so useful. We are building on a tried and tested precedent which I do not think has given rise to the kind of problem that my hon. Friend has outlined.

Mr. Hoyle: As the Minister seems to have armed himself with a lot of statistics, can he tell me how many supermarkets have been prosecuted?

Mr. Hogg: The short answer is no, Sir. However, if I can find out before the debate has concluded, and if there is a convenient peg on which to hang that piece of information, I shall provide it; otherwise, I shall try to write to the hon. Gentleman at his and my convenience. I do not know the answer to his question at the moment.

Sir Dudley Smith (Warwick and Leamington): My hon. Friend is being very helpful, and it is appreciated by everyone. He has reminded the House that it is an offence for a young person who is under age to seek to buy alcohol in a public house. He gave us the figures for licensees' convictions, but has he any knowledge of the number of young people who have been convicted in recent years of having committed that offence? If he does not have those figures to hand, will it be possible for us to have them later?

Mr. Hogg: I am afraid that my answer is exactly the same as that which I gave to the hon. Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle): I do not have that particular statistic to hand, but I will try to obtain it before the end of the debate. If I fail, I will write to my hon. Friend the Member for Warwick and Leamington (Sir D. Smith)—and I apologise to him.

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): I note that my hon. Friend does not have those figures to hand, but he will know that the OPCS survey — upon which the Government sat for a year before its disclosure—gave clear figures about the harm being done to young people drinking in public houses—they were not getting their liquor from supermarkets. He must have access to those OPCS figures and therefore must know the size of the problem. Perhaps that information will assist him to answer my hon. Friend the Member for Warwick and Leamington (Sir D. Smith).

Mr. Hogg: As is so often the case, I am grateful to my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine). My right hon. Friend is right to say that there is a problem of under-age drinking, both in public houses and as a result of purchases at supermarkets. If the House is conscious of its obligations it has jolly well got to do something about that problem. The conclusion that I have drawn—I believe that it is shared by my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point—is that section 169(1), in its present form, is defective.

Sir Bernard Braine *indicated assent.*

Mr. Hogg: I note that my right hon. Friend is nodding in agreement.

The proposals that I have put before the House are designed to make that law more enforceable without, at the same time, being unreasonable to licensees. I commend the new clause to the House on that basis.

Mrs. Ann Taylor (Dewsbury): We believe that it is entirely appropriate that under-age drinking should be the first subject of debate on Report, because it is an important topic. It exercised our minds a great deal in Committee and the Committee regarded it as an important priority.

We first raised the problem on Second Reading and then followed that with several amendments in Committee. At a superficial glance it would appear that the Minister has listened to what we have said and taken on board some of our concerns about this grave problem, which is presently affecting so many young people.

The Minister ended his speech by saying that under-age drinking is a major problem in this country. I do not intend to rehearse all the statistics that we quoted on Second Reading and in Committee, but we should be under no illusion about just how major a problem it is. I wish to emphasise the scale and nature of the problem of under-age drinking. The Minister said that we could see the evidence with our own eyes, and that is true. All the evidence, including Government-sponsored research from the Health Education Council, from Action on Alcohol Abuse and from the Masham report, mentioned by the Minister, which reported while the Committee was still sitting, indisputably proves that under-age drinking is a major problem.

Let me remind the House of one or two important statistics so that we get this problem into perspective. A survey conducted by the Health Education Council showed that 65 per cent. of all 14 and 15-year-olds have drunk alcohol on more than one occasion. The Masham report showed that 50 per cent. of 15-year-old boys had had a drink in the previous seven days. It also showed that 61 per cent. of 17-year-old boys and 54 per cent. of 17-year-old girls had had a drink in the previous week. The majority of 16 and 17-year-olds do their drinking in public houses. That information shows that under-age drinking in public houses is a major problem and one that we are right to concentrate our attention upon.

A further survey conducted by Exeter university showed that not only are young people drinking, but that they are also drinking far too much for their own or anyone's good. They are consuming, on average, 10 units of alcohol a week, which means that many must be consuming more. When we consider that level of consumption in comparison with the figure suggested by the Department of Health and Social Security as the average, safe intake for adults, it gives us an alarming picture of the likely future trends of alcohol problems.

I do not believe that it is alarmist to say that today's under-age drinkers may become tomorrow's alcoholics. If we allow under-age drinking to continue at its present rate, we are storing up many future problems for those individuals and for the country.

Alcohol abuse, especially by young people, is a major problem. We are all aware that alcohol abuse costs this country £2 billion a year. It would be interesting to consider what the Health Service could do with that money today, but perhaps we should not go down that road. It is clear that alcohol is a major problem for young people, because alcohol abuse kills or seriously injures ten times as many youngsters as are killed or injured by drug abuse. However, quite rightly, we spend a lot of time and money discouraging young people from taking drugs, but we do not pay the same attention to discouraging young people from drinking alcohol.

We all enjoy alcohol from time to time, and we probably regard ourselves as social drinkers. Therefore, we often shy away from giving advice and paying attention to the problems that come with alcohol abuse. As the Minister has suggested, we should start the debate in agreement by acknowledging that there is a major alcohol problem and acknowledging its extent.

The next stage is to decide what we should do about the problem. In Committee, I said that there were no quick answers, no simple solutions and no easy, straightforward changes to legislation that could cure the problem at a stroke, once and for all. However, I believe that we agreed in Committee—indeed, the Minister acknowledged it—that some action was needed. The Minister has said that there should be changes to section 169 of the principal Act. I accept that that is necessary.

In Committee, I pointed out that landlords and bar staff have difficulty in recognising who is 17 and who is 18. However, the fact that it is sometimes difficult to judge a person's age exactly should not be used as an excuse to do nothing about the problem. We cannot say that, because it is difficult in some instances to tell a person's age, we should ignore the problem.

The Minister has presented the House with the new clause and said that he believes that it will help the situation. I do not believe that it will make any significant difference and for that reason my hon. Friends and I have tabled amendment *(a)* to new clause 2. I would also recommend the House to consider carefully new clause 7, tabled by the right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine). Why has the Minister apparently changed his mind since we discussed the matter in Committee? We discussed the matter as recently as 12 January, only 22 days ago, yet it seems that the Minister has reconsidered the matter since then.

On 12 January, when the Minister discussed this matter in Committee, he said that it was difficult to prosecute to prove the concept of "knowingly". He repeated that assertion today, and we agree with the Minister. However, in Committee, he went on to say that he favoured a "statutory defence along the lines of the Firearms Act 1968." The Minister considered that that would be the proper way forward and would be a tighter way of righting the law so that we could get the balance right between making sure that the problem was tackled and that landlords were protected in the necessary way.

The Minister went on to say:

> "The defence would be that the person doing the supplying had a belief that the person was over age, and that he had reasonable grounds for that belief." — [*Official Report, Standing Committee H*, 12 January 1988; c. 337.]

The Minister clearly said that the landlord should have reasonable grounds for the belief that the person was 18. That was his suggestion as recently as January, and that was the suggestion on which he sought consultation on 22 December in his letter to interested parties. The Minister owes it to the House to explain what has happened in the past 22 days to make him change his mind from the preferred solution, which we would have found acceptable and which he outlined in his letter and proposed on 12 January.

5.30 pm

All the responses that I have seen to the Minister's letter of 22 December are either in favour of his proposals or have said that the Minister is not going far enough. On 12 January, no hon. Member objected to the Minister's proposals. The Institute of Alcohol Studies suggested this proposal to the Wakeham committee. Action on Alcohol Abuse said that the proposals in the Minister's letter did not go far enough. The Justices' Clerks Society wants the sale of alcohol to under-18s to be an absolute offence—not something with which I agree—and wants to go further than the Minister's proposals. Why has the Minister backed down so completely from his assurance of 12 January?

The Minister is simply proposing the reintroduction of "knowingly" in another way. To say, as the new clause says, that the landlord should have

"no reason to suspect that the person was under eighteen"

is almost meaningless, because it does not oblige the landlord to make any attempt to find out a customer's age. Landlords can make genuine mistakes, and we all recognise the difficulties. Some landlords — perhaps a minority, but still a significant number—will think that it does not matter if they serve people under the age of 18 because the law is woolly and they will get away with it time and again.

Our amendment *(a)* tries to deal with that. We agree that selling to someone under 18 should not be an absolute offence. We should allow for a mistake that is genuine, but not provide a blanket dispensation for landlords to sell to people under 18 without obliging them to make checks. The Minister's statistics on convictions in Scotland prove little. We all know that convictions in England and Wales have been reduced dramatically over the past 10 years simply because the law was not operable. In England and Wales in 1985 there were 744 convictions, whereas in 1975 there were nearly 4,000. One reason for the reduction in the number of cases brought to the courts is that the law was so woolly and it was difficult for charges to be pressed.

The Minister said that either we are serious about trying to tackle the problem of under-age drinking or we are not. We agree that there is a distinction to be drawn between those who are serious about tackling this problem and those who merely pay lip service to it. We had hoped that the Minister would take the matter seriously. Our amendment is the serious way of tackling this problem. I urge the House to support amendment *(a)* and new clause 7.

Sir Bernard Braine: The House may recall that on Second Reading my main anxiety was that the Government were not prepared to tackle the problem of under-age drinking. I could not understand why the Government, introducing the first Licensing Bill for decades, appeared unwilling to tackle a problem graver than illicit drug-taking. About 1,000 young people die every year as a result of alcohol abuse. More young people die every year or have their health gravely impaired through alcohol abuse than heroin abuse. I am delighted that the Government have seen the error of their ways and are now prepared in new clause 2 to begin to move on this issue.

I say "begin to move" because new clause 2 differs from the amendment which, in a letter of 22 December, the Home Office indicated it would recommend to the Wakeham committee. The amendment was to delete the word "knowingly", so making the offence absolute, but to introduce a defence for the licensee, namely:

"The person charged to prove that he or she believed the other person to be of or above the age . . . and had reasonable ground for the belief."

I am not concerned that the Government have changed the defence to "due diligence". After all, that is the wording of other sections of the Licensing Act 1964 in relation to young people, and it is a defence used in other statutes, such as the Fair Trading Act. I object to the inclusion in new clause 2 of the additional defence of the landlord,

"*(b)* that he had no reason to suspect that the person was under eighteen."

To prescribe an additional defence weakens the measure so much that we might as well have been left with the present wording of the Act, to wit "knowingly sold". The onus will still be on the prosecution to prove that the licensee "knowingly" sold to the person under age.

It is difficult to escape the conclusion that the Government have bowed to pressure from the Brewers Society and other drink industry representations on this matter. The Justices' Clerks Society, which has a special expertise in this area, is of the view that selling to youngsters under drinking age should be an absolute offence. In discussing the Home Office recommendations of 22 December and my new clause 7, the clerks said that they would go along with it because

"it was a step in the right direction",

but they did not believe that it was good enough. Nor do I. The Government's amendment, including the words,

"had no reason to suspect that the person was under eighteen",

is nowhere near good enough.

I am dismayed, too, that, under the weight of evidence collected by Government statisticians, public concern and the wise counsels of a working party established by the Home Office, the Government are so weak-kneed that they have to bow to a vested interest. I feel so strongly about this issue that I shall press my amendment to a vote, unless my hon. Friend the Minister assures me that the second part of the new clause touching on a defence will be withdrawn.

I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) and her colleagues who served on the Committee, particularly for bringing the issue of alcohol and young people to the fore. This is a national scandal, and I am grateful to all who drew attention to the matter.

It is said that the Government did not have an amendment ready for Committee stage where it could have been discussed and improved. I am pleased to note that some of my hon. Friends are beginning to see the necessity of Government action after the information supplied by the Opposition — alas, not by the Government. However, it was given to them.

In that respect, I note the comment made by my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) during the 10th and final sitting of the Committee:

"I have been brooding on the issue for a while. . . . The more I think about this the clearer it becomes that some of the things said in earlier debates are valid . . . If there were alternative places for these young people to drink, to gather and to talk, I believe that many of those who now get hooked"—

"hooked" is the right word to use—

"into drinking alcohol would be perfectly happy not to do so."

Youth leaders in my constituency, and no doubt in many other constituencies, have been saying for years that the problem is getting out of hand. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State paid tribute to the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent, but he also paid tribute to the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson), stating:

"He will recall that we had talks about a possible way of amending the law. We discussed — the hon. Gentleman mentioned it in the Committee, as did I, in further discussion — the deletion from the offence of the word "knowingly" and the inclusion of a statutory defence along the lines of the Firearms Act 1968."

We should note the words:

"We felt that that might be a proper way forward."— [*Official Report, Standing Committee H*, 12 January 1988; c. 336-37.]

I consider that it is

Why this change of mind? Why has the Bill been worded in this way? Why move even further away from the expert opinion of the Justices' Clerks Society? Who is the Minister trying to placate? Why am I so deeply concerned? I am so concerned because I consider the facts. One out of every five 15-year-old boys drinks 25 units of alcohol per week. The safe limit for adult males is 21 units. One out of every 10 15-year-old girls drinks above the safe limit for adult women of 14 units of alcohol each week.

By the age of 15, alcohol consumption is normal and it takes place illegally on licensed premises. Two out of five boys and one in three girls have been drunk on more than one occasion. One in five boys and one in eight girls have been unable to go to school after drinking. Where does this evidence come from? Have I plucked it out of the air? It comes from Government-sponsored research.

Yet, in an answer on 17 November, the Minister of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten), said that the number of licensees found guilty of "knowingly" selling to under-18s had gone down from 248 in 1979 to 165 in 1986. It was appalling that the Minister could not give any figures for the period to 1979. Why not? Nobody had bothered to collect them. That is why I hope hon. Members will support my new clause.

We must monitor the effects of liquor licensing, without which we are floundering in the dark. My hon. Friend conceded that the reason why few licensees are brought to court and convicted is the difficulty of proving that they have knowingly sold to under-age drinkers, the consequent waste of police and court resources and the Government's insistence on reneging on their promise to include words such as:

"That he had no reason to suspect that the person was under 18."

This will render section 169 of the Licensing Act 1964

The Government must know that public and press opinion wants tighter measures. If the House represents the nation, it should know that the national and local press have been arguing for these for months past. I have sheaves of reports from provincial newspapers, but I shall refer only to two of them. The *Colchester Evening Gazette* of 19 January, under a headline, "A Welcome Crackdown", stated:

"The Government's planned blitz on under-age drinking is long overdue. The law, as it stands, does not do enough to discourage the sale of alcohol to people who are obviously too young. The well-worn argument is that it is difficult to tell a person's age accurately, and teenagers invariably look older than they really are. In that way, those who sell alcohol illegally are able to shift the blame from themselves. Some, it appears, take the view that it is up to the person whose age might be in doubt to produce proof that he or she is over 18. Too many blind eyes are being turned. And far too many young people are becoming dependent on alcohol from an early age.

Teenage drinking has become a growing worry, with the problems it causes increasingly more apparent. Those problems have surfaced time and again in Colchester town centre, where gangs of youths swigging from bottles and cans have, at times, made Saturday shopping a misery. A police woman, beaten up in Colchester town centre last year, for example, blamed the easy availability of drink for many of the problems. Anything to discourage alcohol abuse among the vulnerable under 18s is to be welcomed."

Let me quote now from the *Yorkshire Evening Post* of 19 January which, under a headline "Alcohol Abuse," states:

"The Government's latest moves to combat the problem of under-age drinking are a disappointment. While the announcement of stiffer fines for publicans serving alcohol to under 18s is welcome, more could be done to tackle the problem at its roots.

The proposed legislation seems to ignore 50 recommendations made by an independent working party on young people and alcohol headed by Baroness Masham. The proposed Government Licensing Bill does not have the teeth to bite the bullet; it avoids direct action in favour of renewed publicity and educational campaigns. Until we see the authorities armed with a positive mandate to fight this problem it will continue to plague society.

And today's young drinkers often grow into tomorrow's social outcasts."

The great playwright, Arthur Miller, once said that a newspaper is a mirror reflecting the views of society. I guarantee that such views have appeared in every provincial newspaper in the country over the past year, and, if hon. Members read their local newspapers, they must know the truth.

5.45 pm

Mr. Colvin: I must declare an interest before my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) calls me to task, as I am a licensee. The licensing trade shares the view expressed by my right hon. Friend. Surely it is not so much the licensee as the off-licensee who is at fault. There has been an increase in fines from £100 to £400, but that is nothing compared with the loss of livelihood if he is caught selling drink to under-age drinkers. Surely, therefore, we should tackle the off-licence trade.

Sir Bernard Braine: We have been told that there are very few prosecutions. For once, I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin). The overwhelming majority of licensees would like to see the law strengthened. They want to keep orderly houses. In some cases, it is impossible for them to do so. It is high time that the police were given the powers to deal with some of the matters that will emerge from this debate.

I have been to the south and the north, so I must also refer to a midland newspaper. The headline of the *Wolverhampton Express and Star* of 19 January stated:

"Get tough to dry out our teeny tipplers."

The article continued:

"The astounding statistic that half of all 11-year-old boys and one third of 11-year-old girls drink reveals the necessity for urgency by the Government.

Though there obviously are landlords who knowingly serve drink to people under-age, guessing people's ages is no simple matter these days. There is also the problem that"——

Mr. Hoyle *rose*——

Sir Bernard Braine: I shall give way in a moment, but, out of respect for the people of Wolverhampton, who loyally support this newspaper, I wish to finish the quotation. The article continues:

"it is physically impossible for a landlord to know exactly who is in his pub at busy times, and it is a simple matter for an 18-year-old to buy for a minor. However, as the problem has already reached epidemic proportions, there is no alternative but to make landlords doubly aware of the onus that is on them."

Mr. Hoyle: Is the right hon. Gentleman suggesting that any landlord has served an 11-year-old child in a pub? If that is so, the landlord deserves every punishment.

Sir Bernard Braine: I am merely reporting what the newspaper says. Before the hon. Gentleman shakes his head, let me say that newspapers reflect information collected by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, in a survey commissioned by the Government, to establish what was happening with teenagers in public houses. I am not the authority. The Government have the information. Let them provide it; let them publish it; and let us discuss it. If newspapers faithfully report what is happening, we should praise, not question or condemn, them.

Mr. Anderson: Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that it is a question not of knowing the information—that is already available in numerous reports—but of enforcement and commitment? It is on those tests that the Government fail.

Sir Bernard Braine: I fear that I must agree with the hon. Gentleman. That is the purpose of my amendment, and it will be the purpose of much of what I have to say.

In a letter dated 10 December 1987 to my right hon. Friend the Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons, the Institute of Alcohol Studies said:

"A tightening of the law in this respect would show that the Government has taken the problem seriously and would be an important safeguard against any adverse effect the Bill might have on this problem . . . . At present the law is difficult to apply and one cannot expect police forces to try to enforce it or for magistrates courts to spend time in trying to prove that alcohol had been 'knowingly' sold . . . . Parents should accept their responsibilities but this cannot be effectively done if the law colludes with a bad situation and offers little help to conscientious parents."

The letter goes on to hope that the Government would reply properly:

"This would be a clear signal that the Government has a real concern about the problem and is determined to stamp it out."

The only answer that we have received from the Government is tepid. I hope that the House will reject it and support my amendment, which goes much further in heeding those who deal with alcohol abuse — the Institute of Alcohol Studies, those who administer the law, the Justices' Clerks Society and the vast majority of magistrates, teachers and caring members of the public. They cannot understand why a problem affecting our youth—our lifeline to the future—is treated so lightly.

Mr. Greg Knight (Derby, North): On reflection, does not my right hon. Friend consider that he is being a little unfair to the Government's new clause? Does he accept that there is a difference between the use of the word "knowingly" and the use of the defence mentioned in new clause 2, whereby the landlord would have to prove that there was no reason for him to suspect that the person was under 18? Does not new clause 2 put the landlord on guard, which is very different from the existing words in the statute?

Sir Bernard Braine: For reasons that I shall not repeat —many hon. Members wish to speak—I made it clear that the Government have weakened their position by inserting a second defence, and I think that that is wrong.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Perhaps it would help the House if I were to explain that if new clause 2 is accepted, I am prepared to call amendment (*a*), in the name of the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) for a division, and I shall ask her to move it formally at the appropriate time.

With regard to new clause 7, which is being discussed with this group, the Chair will come to a decision when one has been made on new clause 2.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): I shall add such weight as I have to the Government's position on this matter.

I support the anxiety that has been expressed about the problem of under-age drinking. It is notable that the House has accepted that absolute criminal responsibility, which is repugnant in principle and frequently inequitable in practice, is not the proper way to deal with the problem; not least because, as has been mentioned, the person who knows his or her age best is the under-age person to whom drink is supplied. Frequently, for the purposes of prosecution, the person who has committed an offence must be called as a witness to bring home a conviction against the licence holder or the person who has suppplied alcohol illegally.

The Minister referred favourably to the Scottish position. The relevant provisions in the Licensing (Scotland) Act 1976 are to be found in sections 68 and 71. With slight alteration, the Government propose a defence in terms such as are provided by section 71 of that Act.

It is important to realise that that statutory provision represented a departure from the position prior to 1976, when the offence could be committed only knowingly. The Clayson committee, whose report formed a substantial basis for the Licensing (Scotland) Act 1976, spent much time and devoted much of its energy considering whether "knowingly" should remain. It resolved that it should not, and the defence now provided by section 71 of the 1976 Act is a consequence of its recommendations.

It must be emphasised that previously in Scotland, and currently in England, the existence of the word "knowingly" in the definition of the offence necessarily meant and means that it is for the prosecution to prove, expressly or by implication, that the person charged committed the offence in the knowledge of what he or she was doing.

The Government's proposals, which reflects the terms of section 71 of the 1976 Act, puts the obligation of proof fairly and squarely on the person charged. It says so in terms. If people who are charged fail to prove either that they used due diligence to prevent the occurrence of the offence or that they had no reason to suspect that the person concerned was under 18, they will fail to satisfy either of the twin arms of the defence and inevitably will be likely to be convicted.

It is important to understand that the proposal represents a substantial change in the onus of proof with regard to knowledge or implied knowledge. Anecdotal

evidence is notoriously unreliable in these matters. There is little doubt that, prior to 1976 in Scotland, successful attempts to bring home a conviction in relation to an offence in which the word "knowingly" appeared were extremely few and far between.

I do not say that what is right for Scotland is necessarily always right for England and Wales, nor that what was right for Scotland in 1976 should necessarily still be right in 1988. The proper approach is to consider whether there is any evidence to suggest that in Scotland the section 71 defence gives unreasonable protection to licence holders or stands in the way of prosecution or conviction. In my judgment — I accept that it is entirely a matter of judgment — the Government have achieved a proper balance between the public interest and that of licence holders. Occasionally, in our desire to underline the problem of under-age drinking, we tend to forget that licence holders have rights.

Although the Opposition will have a free vote, I shall be happy to support the Government's proposal in this regard if it is pressed to a Division.

Mr. Colvin: I declare an interest as a licensee, a modest one. It may be necessary to quantify one's commercial interests in having a pub. I can only say that mine is more a local social necessity than a commercial enterprise. Without it, I do not think that the parish council or the parochial church council would have anywhere to meet. That is one reason why I am a publican. I took the pub to prevent it from being knocked down and the area developed as a housing estate.

Having read from cover to cover the *Official Report* of the deliberations of Standing Committee H, I too am impressed by the time spent discussing the dangers of alcohol abuse and under-age drinking. Concern about under-age drinking is felt not only by hon. Members but by the public, publicans and the trade. That is why we welcomed the launch on 12 November 1987 of the campaign "Age Watch" to alert the public to the problem and remind staff in public houses of the penalties for selling drink to those under 18.

6 pm

I congratulate the Government on setting up the working party on "Young People and Alcohol" under the chairmanship of Baroness Masham. The working party's report to the ministerial group on alcohol abuse, under the chairmanship of my right hon. Friend the Lord Privy Seal, led to Government new clause 2. I noted with interest the ministerial group's seven-point plan. The first proposal is:

"To tighten the offence of selling alcohol to under-age drinkers and incease penalties for those found guilty of doing so."

Secondly, the group calls for the

"Creation of a new offence making it illegal for wholesalers to sell alcohol to persons under 18."

That is very welcome. Thirdly, it proposes:

"New regulations to require the alcoholic strength of pre-packaged and dispensed drinks to be clearly shown."

Fourthly, it calls for

"Information aimed at particular groups such as young people."

The fifth proposal is:

"To request the BBC and independent broadcasting authority to review the way alcohol is presented to TV viewers."

I think that hon. Members agree that that is important. The sixth proposal is:

"To request the IBA and the Advertising Standards Authority . . . to take a fresh look at advertising codes of practice."

The seventh proposal is:

"Encouragement of the industry to increase promotion of low and non-alcoholic beers and wines."

That is what the ministerial group wanted. So far, all we have is the Government's proposal, which we are debating.

The licensee, especially the publican—the on-licensee —is in no way interested in selling alcohol to those under 18. A conviction for doing so can result in loss of licence, livelihood and even the licensee's home. No responsible licensee would wish to take such risks when the penalties are so severe. The £100 fine—which will be increased to £400—is almost immaterial when compared with the other penalties that could befall any licensee who broke the law.

The inclusion of the word "knowingly" in the Licensing Act 1964 has given some protection to the innocent licensee, but has still made it possible for irresponsible people to be prosecuted. Although I accept that the law regarding the sale of alcohol to young people needs tightening up, I do not believe that the removal of the word "knowingly" is the right way to do so.

Notwithstanding the principle in British law, to which my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State referred, of avoiding the danger of self-incrimination, I think that there could be more prosecutions under the existing law. Those under 18 can be prosecuted for purchasing and consuming alcohol on licensed premises — including registered clubs, but excluding private functions held on the premises. It would help if the consumption of alcohol by under-18s in public places was banned.

The debate once again raises the knotty issue of the introduction of identity cards for everyone over the age of 18. That would assist not only the publican but the police and my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State, who is also dealing with the knotty problem of firearms legislation. I welcome the crackdown on under-age drinking, but I do not believe that the Government have found the best way of doing it. I shall decide whether or not to support the Government's proposal after hearing the response by my hon. Friend the Minister. The other place must take on board what is said here and perhaps alter the Bill accordingly.

Mr. Hoyle: I had better declare at once that one of the organisations whose view I may express is the National Association of Licensed House Managers. It is right that the association's view on such an important matter should be heard in the House, because it is a responsible body. I cannot think of anyone in the House or outside it who condones under-age drinking. It would be silly to do so. There is great concern that this is a growing disease, and I agree with every word that has been said about the consequences. It is a tragedy that so many young people find it easy to get hard liquor.

I do not believe that deletion of the word "knowingly" will end the problem. Most licensees do not want under-age drinkers on their premises. That can be a nuisance and can create a nuisance outside the premises. The licensee's difficulty is in detecting who is under age. The NALHM, as a responsible body, takes every precaution it can to avoid selling alcohol to those under age, and that approach is also taken by the staff.

[Mr. Hoyle]

It would be silly to say that that applies to every licensee. Of course it does not. There are one or two people who should be punished and convicted. However, one legal opinion says:

"I know of no other occupation where an employee is automatically guilty of an offence as a result of lies, or deception by customers. That is the position the Licensee will be in. Further, in no other occupation is it so easy to become disqualified as a result of the dishonest activities of third parties."

There are many consequences of conviction. It is not just the fine; it is the loss of livelihood. A licensee can lose his home as well. A heavy penalty can result from conviction so it is not in the interests of a licensee—whether a house manager or a tenant—to permit a person who is under age to drink on the premises.

Mr. Anderson: The question is whether the lawyer who proffered the legal opinion to which my hon. Friend referred had bothered to read the Government new clause. If there had been deception on the part of the young person, that would certainly provide a defence to the licensee under the Government's proposal. Either the legal opinion has no weight or it is out of date.

Mr. Hoyle: My hon. Friend knows that often it is the licensee who is in court, not the person who committed the offence of drinking under age. Often it is that young person who prosecutes the person who sold the drink.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: I want to emphasise a point and reassure people working in the industry. We are not saying that everyone who serves someone under the age of 18 has committed an offence; we are saying that he has committed an offence if he did not take steps to ascertain the age of the customer. Our amendment says that if the licensee had good reason to believe that the person was over 18, that will be a defence. The reason that the young person may give may not be substantiated later, but if the licensee acted in good faith and genuinely believed the customer to be over 18, that would be a defence in court.

Mr. Hoyle: Yes, I understand that, but good reason could be interpreted widely in that connection. That is why I prefer the word "knowingly". If the act was knowingly done, the licensee should have taken every precaution. If the change goes through, it could lead to many honest people being put in difficulty.

It is also necessary to stop up the other loophole through which young people can easily obtain drink—I refer to supermarkets and off-licences. When I asked the Minister how many supermarkets had been prosecuted, he said that he would have to go away to get me the information. It is very easy for young people to get drink from such places. In bygone days, which Conservative Members profess to like—the Victorian and Edwardian eras—they sent the child with a jug to get the beer for the father when he came home. Now, however, a youngster can go into a supermarket and buy a can of beer, not for his parents, but for himself.

That is the difficulty and the weakness in the present law. I am foursquare behind anyone who wants to try to prevent young people from drinking, but it seems to me that nothing is being done about this easy method by which young people can obtain liquor. We have seen it happen at football grounds near which all the pubs have been closed. Young people have gone on to the grounds with crates of beer and drunk them there. That beer was not obtained from public houses, but from supermarkets.

Mr. Colvin: Does the hon. Gentleman acknowledge that the tighter the licensing hours are, the less often will people drink in pubs and the more will they drink at home? One of the results of the introduction of flexible hours in Scotland has been that more people — particularly women—have drunk in pubs. So drink has not been purchased in supermarkets and taken home, where the children can get their hands on it. It is drink in the home that is bad. The only sociable and responsible place for people to drink, therefore, is in the public house.

Mr. Hoyle: We find ourselves today in a position that did not exist a few years ago—before the advent of supermarkets and the ease of obtaining liquor in them. I am asking that attention should be paid to that, and that the law should be tightened up. A few prosecutions would help. As has been pointed out, youngsters of both sexes become addicted to alcohol because it is so easy to go into supermarkets, see the liquor on display, fill up baskets with it and take it away. That is the problem.

I shall listen to what the Minister says, but to believe that deleting the word "knowingly" will make a great deal of difference to under-age drinking is wishful thinking—unless we are prepared to pay some attention to the ease with which drink can be obtained outside of licensed premises, and especially in supermarkets.

6.15 pm

Sir Dudley Smith: I begin by declaring an interest. One of my management consultancy clients is a leading company in the drinks industry.

My main interest in the Bill is that it does a great deal for tourism. I represent a part of the country that is foremost in the business of tourism, for which the Bill would be beneficial. If an offence is blatant, no one would condone it and it should be severely punished. But unless it is, a sense of great injustice is often felt by the licensee who has been convicted, having used his best endeavours to find out the age of the customer concerned. I welcome the realistic provisions that my hon. Friend the Minister has brought forward.

One of the points that needs emphasising again and again—as it was by my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin)—is that the drink industry has no interest in trying to sell to under-age children in public houses. I am sure that the hon. Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) would agree with that. Not only is it socially undesirable, but it means that the licensee will probably—almost certainly—lose his licence and livelihood, and the industry will be slurred by the event. So it is not trying to sell to people who are under age.

It has often been truly said that the great difficulty is being able to define what age a person is in an on-the-spot judgment. That is particularly difficult with young women, who often look much older than they are. I agree with hon. Members who have said that there should be some imposition on the culprit. There should certainly be a greater onus on the individual to prove that he or she is over the age of 18 when he or she tries to buy liquor in a public house.

I asked my hon. Friend the Minister whether he had the figures for the number of convictions of such people, and

he was good enough to say that he would try to find out. I suspect that they will be minimal, and that hardly any young people up and down the country had been prosecuted for endeavouring to obtain liquor, when under age, in public houses.

As someone in the industry pointed out to me the other day, young people are eager enough to prove that they are under age when trying to obtain concessionary rail fares, so they should be obliged to prove that they are over the age of 18 and are legitimate customers.

The licensee is involved in this almost intractable problem in several areas. My hon. Friend has removed the word "knowingly". Obviously, when a person has committed an offence by knowingly selling to an under-age person, he deserves to be and should be punished. When he has acted carelessly, that, too, is a good ground for his conviction. But when he has sold to under-age people mistakenly — provided that it was a genuine mistake—and his judgment has subsequently proved to be wrong, he should not be guilty of a criminal offence.

I agree with the Minister that it is important to enter a defence in the clause. That is essential, and the balance is now probably about right. It is important to be rigorous. I agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) that there should be tough measures against people who deliberately try to encourage under-age young people to drink and who supply them with drink. We should also be rigorous, because, although my right hon. Friend does not agree with them, the Bill's provisions extend the licensing hours and liberalise the public house. To balance that, there should be a much tougher attitude to those who supply drink to under-age people.

People sometimes forget that licensees can refuse to serve anyone. It does not have to be somebody who is drunk or about whose age he has doubts. A licensee need not serve anyone. Of course, he exercises his judgment. In future, as a result of the Bill, the licensee will err more on the side of caution. That will be a good thing. It may cause a certain amount of distress. Refusal often causes offence when a customer is innocent. There is nothing worse than an over-age person being accused of being under-age by a licensee or his assistant. In such circumstances, they will suffer. By erring on the side of caution, we have got the balance right.

Mr. Anderson: I regret that, unlike other hon. Members, I am not able to declare an interest.

Mr. Greg Knight: What is the hon. Gentleman's religion?

Mr. Anderson: I am a Christian.

I sympathise with some of the points that have been made. The hon. Member for Warwick and Leamington (Sir D. Smith) made a valid point about the culpability of a young person. He will recall my intervention during the Minister's speech. The Masham committee made a specific recommendation that a young person should be legally obliged to declare his age to a police officer who reasonably requires it for the purpose of a prosecution. The hon. Gentleman will recall that the Minister's response was that the imposition of such an obligation on a young person would breach a fundamental principle of our law, that of self-incrimination. One understands that self-incrimination is a cardinal principle of our law, but it can be breached and it has been breached if something is considered sufficiently important to do so.

The Government's response to the Masham committee recommendation demonstrates that they have failed to show any real commitment to the enforceability of the provision. One imagines that it is extremely difficult for magistrates to know that a young person is under the age of 18. How can a police officer, the Crown prosecution service, or anyone prove that point? A young person is under no obligation to attend a court unless he is summonsed, and he is unlikely to wish to give evidence on behalf of the prosecution. One can well understand that, unless a police officer is furnished with such a legal course, the number of prosecutions will continue to be few. By failing to accept the Masham committee recommendation, the Government have undermined the possibility of enforcing the law in that respect.

My hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) mentioned off-licences. Members of the National Union of Licensed Victuallers in my constituency, who, incidentally, do not accept the 11-to-11 fundamental change in the Bill, are concerned about the fact that the spotlight is constantly turned on the licensee rather than on supermarket owners. Therefore, it is said that the Government have chosen to deal only with that part of the matter.

The hon. Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) will surely accept that the current law, as the Government have argued, is not enforceable. The object of the change is not to ensure the conviction of licensees but, rather, to act as a deterrent to a minority of licensees who willingly choose to serve under-age drinkers, or fear that other licensees in their area will do so and pinch trade from them, and therefore acquiesce. At the moment, it is quite clear that, because of the inability to enforce it, the current law is not a deterrent. I judge the success or otherwise of the law not by examining the number of convictions but by its impact on the incidence of under-age drinking. That is the purpose of the legislation.

I approach the Government's amendment more in sorrow than in anger. I thought that we had reached a broad consensus in Committee. The Minister put forward his preferred solution, the Firearms Act 1968 precedent. When he examined the various options and formulae that may be applied in place of existing ones, surely his civil servants would have referred him to the Scottish precedent. It is the most obvious one to consider. He chose to reject it.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): For the benefit of hon. Members who were not on the Committee, will the hon. Member share with us what the Scottish precedent is?

Mr. Anderson: Briefly, the Scottish precedent is the amendment that the Government now propose in place of the formula that they stated to the Committee that they would prefer, which they set out for consultation in a letter dated 22 December. The Government's amendment is based wholly on the Scottish precedent.

A series of options were before the Minister. When they liberalised the law, it was sad that the Government did not, of their own volition, immediately appear before the Committee and say, "We are altering one side of the equation. We are liberalising the law. It is a relatively

[Mr. Anderson]

modest increase." The Home Secretary talked about ending the "dead afternoon". In view of road traffic accidents, perhaps that was an unfortunate phrase to use.

The Government claimed that the increase was modest, but they certainly altered one side of the equation. Our complaint throughout was that they failed to alter the other side of the equation. It follows as night follows day that, if the law is liberalised and alcohol is more freely available, it is likely to lead to greater consumption. If there is such a correlation, unless there are adequate safeguards, it will lead to the drink-related problems that we discussed in Committee.

I am sure that the Minister, as a reasonable man, will accept that it was unfortunate that, when the Government appeared before the Committee with the proposition to liberalise the law, they failed to make any provision in respect of under-age drinking, when all the facts relating to the incidence of under-age drinking, alcoholism and alcohol-related problems generally were available to the Government. That is a sad sign of the Government's priorities in respect of alcoholism.

The Minister will recall that the establishment of the Wakeham committee was mentioned in Committee. A cynic might say that the Wakeham committee was cosmetic — to head off criticism of the Government's lack of action on alcoholism. We asked how often the Wakeham committee had met. We were told that, since its establishment in September until that time, it had met on only one occasion. Again, that is a sign of the Government's lack of commitment. We mentioned that, in his last Budget, the Chancellor did not raise the amount of duty on alcohol in line with inflation, as one would have expected. That is likely to lead to increased consumption.

There is an obvious, well-established correlation between the price of alcohol and its consumption. Had the Government been seriously concerned about it, they would certainly have increased relevant duties in line with inflation. We wonder whether, in his March Budget, the Chancellor will continue to allow the real price of alcohol to fall and thereby increase consumption, without introducing any of the safeguards for which we have been pressing.

If the man from Mars were to visit this country and looked at the Government's expenditure and advertising priorities, he would imagine that the real problems facing us were drug abuse and AIDS. So far, more than £17 million has been spent in this country in an effort to stamp out the drugs menace. In 1985, 11 people died after using heroin. In all, 99 people died from the illicit use of drugs. So far, 293 people have died as a result of contracting the AIDS virus and that has triggered the Government into spending £20 million on publicity.

We must compare those figures in 1985 with the figures for alcohol abuse. It is estimated that in 1985 between 25,000 and 40,000 people died as a result of alcohol abuse.

6.30 pm

Sir Bernard Braine: That is a good argument and it must be ventilated. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that currently 20 per cent. of acute beds in our hospitals are occupied by people suffering from alcohol-related disease? One cannot minimise the costs to the community and the country as a whole of alcohol when it is consumed to excess. That is the main reason why the Government have lost an opportunity to tighten the controls. Does the hon. Gentleman agree?

Mr. Anderson: Of course I agree with the right hon. Gentleman. The figures showing the total cost to the country of alcohol abuse are readily available. However, I will not rehearse the figures because I want to make progress.

I have already said that our approach to the Bill is to try to balance the liberalisation with certain safeguards. I have referred to the Government's manifest failure to do that and our sadness about the fact that the Government have retreated from their commitment in Committee. I therefore want to consider the current position.

We have clear evidence of substantial flouting of the law concerning the supply of alcohol to under-aged persons. I want to take issue with my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, North on this issue. I have considered the results of two surveys. The first, entitled "Adolescent Drinking", was commissioned by the DHSS from the Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys. The second, entitled "Drinking among Schoolchildren", was carried out by the schools health education unit of the Health Education Authority by the university of Exeter.

The OPCS survey discovered that 19 per cent. of 13-year-old boys, 22 per cent. of 14-year-old boys and 44 per cent. of 15-year-old boys who drink, obtained alcohol in pubs. The conclusion was that a significant minority of 13 and 14-year-old boys, a substantial minority of 15-year-old boys and the vast majority of 17-year-old boys obtain their alcohol in public houses. Although we should consider off-licences and supermarkets, the evidence commissioned by the Government suggests that, towards the upper end of the age scale, the majority of young people obtain alcohol in public houses. I could give other relevant figures to my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, North about that.

Mr. Hoyle: I am indebted to my hon. Friend for those figures. My hon. Friend's conclusion is that young people go to pubs as they get older. However, they are getting alcohol at a very young age. They are not getting it from public houses; they get it from off-licences and supermarkets. Nothing is being done about that. The crux of the matter is the question where they start their drinking. Where they get the taste really matters, because the problems lead on from there. That point is not dealt with in the Bill.

Mr. Anderson: I understand my hon. Friend's puzzlement and the anger of licensees. The Government have failed to consider that matter in the round or to consider supermarkets and off-licences. I hope that my hon. Friend will accept the findings for what they are.

The findings reveal that there is a substantial evasion of the law. They also show that there is great difficulty about enforcement of the current law, and I call in aid the Masham committee recommendations. I recommend that my colleagues read those recommendations. It is also clear that the Government introduced a proposal in Committee which covered the essential points that we were seeking to cover. The Government said that they would try to tighten the law.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) has set out the nature of the undertaking made by the Minister in Committee. I concede that he provided

himself with a small escape window by saying that he had to clear the proposal with his colleagues and that it was open to consultation. We then received a letter that was sent out for wide consultation. In his proposed amendment to section 169 of the Licensing Act 1964, the Minister proposed that there should not be an absolute obligation on the licensee, and no reasonable person would oppose that. The Minister referred to the precedent of section 24 of the Firearms Act 1968 which has been reproduced by my hon. Friends in an amendment today.

When the Minister introduced his proposal, I am sure that he was convinced that, it was the best option available. It was the option most likely to do the job. I am also convinced that, having the advice of the civil servants and through his own substantial legal knowledge, the Minister would have surveyed all the options, including the Scottish option which the Government are now proposing. However, he has changed his position.

I am sure that the Minister will accept that the Scottish option is a substantial dilution of the original proposal. Therefore, the question arises why, having gone so much further along the road in the light of the consensus in Committee, the Minister has now retreated. We accept that the Government amendment, as proposed, is a substantial improvement on section 169 of the Licensing Act 1964 and may provide a greater deterrent for errant landlords. However, why have the Government made the change?

I give the Minister the benefit of the doubt. I believe that he was probably got at. Perhaps some of his elders, and those wiser than the Minister, reminded him of the Government's obligations to the brewing trade and said, "Young man, you're going too far. This is not acceptable." I pay tribute to the Minister. He was extremely courteous in Committee. He tried to be as helpful as possible and he took us into his confidence. However, we now see what by any definition is a substantial dilution of the original proposal. The House is bound to ask why that has happened.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It might help the hon. Gentleman to know that the amendment represents my considered view. I have not been got at. I am not the kind of character at whom people get.

Mr. Anderson: If that is the Minister's considered view, I remind him that in December he put before the Committee the earlier formula based on the Firearms Act 1968 and that also was his considered view. I was about to quote a little jingle, but it is probably not appropriate.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: I shall rescue the House from my hon. Friend's jingle and ask him to reflect that the Minister gave us an indication of his preferred route. He said that his preferred amendment would be one in which the licensee had to show that he had reasonable grounds to believe that a person was over the age of 18.

Whatever variation the Minister came up with, it should incorporate the principle in our amendment *(a)*. The new clause does not fulfil the basic commitment that the Minister gave in Committee that defendants would have to show that they had reasonable grounds to believe that a person was 18.

Mr. Anderson: I accept my hon. Friend's helpful point. I have conceded to the Minister that, although his proposal is an advance on the existing law, it is a substantial retreat from what he had originally proposed, and the reasoning that he gave in Committee for that original proposal, made when the Scottish option forumula was before him.

I am sceptical about the Scottish experience. I have already told the Minister that the Scottish formula does not go much beyond shifting the burden of proof. Essentially, if we compare the number of convictions in Scotland with that in England and Wales, we are not comparing like with like because the law is much more liberal in Scotland. The sample was only small. I think that the Minister said that there were 160 convictions in Scotland. That small sample may have resulted from other factors, such as the enforcement policy of the police force. One cannot draw any helpful conclusion from the Minister's points about the Scottish experience.

If we are to be true to the scale of the problem in Britain, our aim must be to find effective safeguards. As we know, substantial vested interests are involved. I would not have made the partisan point about the link between the Conservative party and the brewers that was made by right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine). Far be it from me to make such points, although cynics might say that the right hon. Gentleman was being a little unfair in talking about the traditional and historic links—indeed, the financial links—between the brewing industry and the Conservative party. I would be the last person to make such allegations.

The Government, by their new clause, have let down the Committee. They have gone back on their pledge, and the formula that they now propose should not be accepted by the House.

Mr. Lawrence: I must first declare an interest, not only as the Member for Parliament for the brewing centre of England, Burton-on-Trent, but as the chairman of the Burton breweries charitable trust. However, I shall confine my remarks to new clauses 2 and 7.

I agree with all hon. Members who have said that alcohol abuse and under-age drinking are serious problems that must be dealt with. I join hon. Members on both sides of the House in welcoming the initiative taken by my right hon. Friend the Lord President of the Council and his Committee. I hope that he comes up with a substantial contribution to the reduction of those problems.

New clause 2 will do absolutely nothing to solve those problems. It will be an irritating waste of time and place some licensees at risk. Therefore, it is simply not worth the candle.

The deletion of the word "knowingly" shifts the burden from the prosecution to the licensee, to displace what, but for the defence, would be an offence of strict liability. That is not the right approach to dealing with under-age drinking.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House have urged the removal of "knowingly" and of the defences as well. I do not think that that strict liability would work either. Sometimes, there are good reasons for having strict liability offences. Those reasons are much loved by Governments, but usually they should be resisted in the interests of civil liberty because they involve the conviction of people who have behaved blamelessly, and who do not need to have their conduct changed in any way because it was wrong.

6.45 pm

Strict liability offences cause great distress, grievance and resentment. They certainly would cause great resentment to licensees, because the consequences of a conviction for an offence of strict liability would not only be a fine. Licensees would lose their jobs because it would be difficult for them to get a licence before the licensing justices if there had been a conviction for allowing sales of alcohol to people under the age of 18. I am pleased that the Government have not gone down that strict liability road.

I do not accept new clause 2, or new clause 7—if my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) will allow me to dissent from his views—first, because I do not believe that it is particularly fair or practicable to make life more difficult for licensees. Our pubs are changing. They are getting more family-oriented. We have had debates in the House about how we can best reduce crime associated with alcoholism. The licensing trade—I have been lobbied by licensees but not by the Brewers Society or by the breweries—has been trying hard to make pubs more welcoming and socially amenable places. We hope that, by encouraging families to go to public houses, there will be less violence, because there is less violence in social activities that involve the whole family.

More of such centres for decent social contact are springing up in large numbers all over the country, reviving the historic and traditional importance of the public house. Young people throughout the country, in villages, suburbs and town centres are meeting in public houses to consume soft drinks or non-alcoholic liquor. They are meeting on warm summers evenings in the new gardens in the public houses.

In the old days, we banned children from public house premises. Now we welcome young people — not necessarily children—to the non-drinking areas of public houses. Youngsters who are coming into adulthood are welcomed into pubs, provided that they treat them as reasonable, decent places in which they should not drink. In those changed circumstances, the publican is no longer behind the bar of a small pub where he can observe everything that goes on.

It is simply not practicable or fair to expect the new kind of publican in the new kind of pub to supervise every nook and cranny of his premises, as he could in old-fashioned small pubs. Even if he could, what would he find? How can one run a pub if one has for ever to go up to young people who look as if they are over 18 and ask for proof of their age? Some of them even have beards at the age of 18. The girls all look beautiful and mature over the age of 18. One cannot run a pub on the basis of continually going up to young people and saying, "Please show me some proof that you are over the age of 18." So my first objection is that in the new circumstances it is not practicable or fair to place such burdens upon publicans.

Secondly, if I may say so to my normally logical hon. Friend, there seems to be little logic in deleting the word "knowingly" in regard to sales to under-18-year-olds but retaining it for allowing the consumption of alcohol on the premises or for allowing others to sell to someone under age. If there is merit in keeping "knowingly" for those offences and not requiring the burden to pass to the publican, why does the same merit not apply to this clause? What elements are different? Why draw a distinction? Why be illogical? The changes proposed are illogical, unfair and impracticable and will irritate licensees who will feel that they are at risk.

More important than those reasons is the fact that the proposed change is unnecessary in practice, considering how little good it is likely to do. First, it is my view, after many years of experience in the courts, that few local magistrates who have to try licensees will convict under these proposals if they would not have convicted under the law as it stands. The difference between whether in all the circumstances the licensee was so careless as to turn a blind eye to the obvious or to refrain deliberately from making inquiries, the results of which he might not care to have —which, under our law, are sufficient to prove that the licensee knew that the sale was to a person under age—and whether he exercised due diligence is almost certainly non-existent in practice.

The difference is too esoteric for a lay magistrate. It will make a lot of money for lawyers, which is not a cause that is normally attractive to my hon. Friends. But it will make no difference to the lay magistrates, who just ask themselves the simple question: has the licensee taken reasonable steps, or has he not? Whether he sells knowingly, or not knowingly but with no due diligence, seems unlikely, in practice, to make a ha'porth of difference. The magistrates will convict.

Equally, if the bench thought that the licensee had put up enough notices and had sent enough staff round to ask about people's ages to discharge the proposed defence, it would have acquitted him under existing law. So what, in practice, does my hon. Friend think the proposed change will achieve?

Secondly, it is unnecessary to introduce this change into the law because the police, if they use their powers, have a ready means of stopping a licensee from selling to youngsters who are under age. The police warn them. They say, "It has come to our attention," or "We have been drinking in this pub and we see too many youngsters being served drinks. If you do not put your house in order, we will oppose your licence at the next licensing session." That happens. That is why there are so few prosecutions. When the police warn licensees, any licensee who wants to remain in business puts his house in order. That is the best he can do. The licensee will be irritated if we try to change the law and have higher expectations of him.

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State, knowing that I was concerned with these matters, was good enough to write to me explaining the Government's position. Among other matters, he explained that the existing law makes it difficult to bring proceedings and secure convictions. I do not know why it will be easier to bring proceedings under the proposed changes.

My hon. Friend helpfully gave me the figures for 1986: there were 296 prosecutions and 165 convictions. I cannot think of any other branch of the criminal law where the conviction rate is so high. Generally, the acquittal rate is over 50 per cent. in all cases in magistrates courts or Crown courts where pleas of not guilty are entered. The figures given by my hon. Friend show that the conviction rate is over 50 per cent., so I do not know what he is complaining about. It seems to be as easy to get convictions under the existing law as it is in any other branch of the criminal law. So that reason which he gave in his letter scarcely seems to be justified.

As to the position in Scotland, just because there are more prosecutions and convictions I do not know that that

tells us much. Scotland is different. It is smaller; the system is different; and the police approach is different. We can learn lots of things from the Scots, but, because changes in the law in Scotland have achieved a marginally higher conviction rate, that does not necessarily show us that there has been a substantial reduction in alcohol abuse or under-age drinking. I am not convinced about that.

Of course, the licensed trade knows how concerned the Government are about sales to people under 18, which was another reason given in my hon. Friend's opening. He said that the change would bring home to the licensee the importance of the matter. Licensees know already how important it is. They do not need an insignificant, irritating change in the law to bring home what is desperately important to them if they are not to lose their jobs. The trade has no wish to offend against the law. Brewers do their best to get rid of bad licensees.

When there is no evidence of a wholesale betrayal of responsibility by licensees, and when the proposals are so illogical, unfair and unnecessary, why should we bother about changes which will only irritate a decent group in society who are doing a job for which we all have much regard?

I come back to the point that I made at the beginning. The Government's proposal is an irritating waste of time. We should spend more time implementing some of the other recommendations of the Masham report. There will also be excellent recommendations which would do something about alcohol abuse and under-age drinking which I have no doubt my right hon. Friend the Lord President will produce in due course.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): The biggest tragedy today is alcoholism among the young. Sadly, once they are hooked they are all too often hooked for life. Much as I dislike smoking among the young — I am always getting at my children about it — drinking is infinitely more serious. It changes the character of the person. Years ago I used to practise in the divorce court. I never had a client divorcing a partner for smoking, but I had many who did so because of drinking and the conduct that flowed from it.

The peak age of delinquency is 15. I believe that much crime at that age is alcohol-induced. Drinking leads to football hooliganism, to school truancy and to many of the sex offences committed by the young. Mugging and many forms of crime are committed to get money to buy drink. It is vital to take every possible step to curb this scourge. Therefore, I am sorry that the Government have greatly weakened the prospect of enforcing the law on under-age drinking by the inclusion of subsection 3*(b)*. I much prefer the new clause of my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine).

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: I apologise to the House and to my hon. Friend the Minister. I was giving evidence to a Select Committee from 5 o'clock until 6 o'clock, which is why I missed the earlier part of the debate.

I think that we can easily lose focus and come to believe that drinking in pubs is conterminous with consuming alcohol. That certainly is not the case. To bring in an absolute offence which the accused person has to prove his way out of does not deal with the problem, because so much of the problem is not in public houses anyway.

It is entirely healthy that young people should get into the habit of going to public houses before they can legally consume alcohol. They can get into the habit of going with their parents, drinking soft drinks and eating meals so that they come to associate going to pubs with enjoying themselves without consuming alcohol rather than, at the age of 18, suddenly being able to go to pubs and drink alcohol.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will therefore put pressure on his friends in the brewing industry to reduce the price of non-alcoholic drinks in pubs. The mark-up rate of such drinks is a scandal, and it must be one of the reasons why so many young people drink beer. It is cheaper than Coca-Cola.

7 pm

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: I think that the public interest is served by the opposite approach. There is now at least as good a profit margin on soft drinks as on alcohol. Once upon a time it paid a licensee to push alcohol rather than soft drinks, but I understand that the profit margin on soft drinks is now such that there is no incentive to the landlord to push alcoholic drinks any more.

We spend much time in the House concentrating on inner cities, but, in rural areas, it is in public houses that young people meet. Most days of the week, there is no other place for them to meet. In small villages, there is no youth club and there is often no public transport, so young people must meet in the pub or not meet other young people.

I see no reason, because of the undoubted problem of under-age consumption of alcohol, to produce an injustice so that licensees, acting in good faith, can easily be penalised. It is not possible to prove a negative. The one person who knows that an offence is being committed is the person who buys the alcohol when under age. That is the person who ought to be prosecuted far more frequently and punished much more severely. That is the person who knows without any doubt that an offence is being committed.

Young people who are just over 18 resent bitterly any implication that they are what are termed children. It is to them insulting to be asked whether they are over 18. If they are under 18 and they say that they are over 18, there is no way in which the landlord can tackle that person unless he or she knows that young person personally.

I cannot tell what age people are. It is a problem from the age of about 15. We have to ask whether they are wearing make-up, what sort of clothes they are wearing and, as has been suggested, whether they have a beard. There is a problem unless, as some licensees recommend, we have indentity cards, but that is not a course of action that I recommend.

My hon. Friend the Minister and the police should concentrate far more on the person who undeniably and knowingly commits an offence and, by so doing, is not just putting the licensee's livelihood at risk, but putting the roof over his head at risk. The pub is his home and his family's home as well in the representative case. In villages especially, it is a caricature of a pub to represent it merely as somewhere where alcohol is sold. People who know the very large number of good pubs would not so categorise it.

In much of the area that I represent, the pub is the old persons' club, in effect. An old person will drink perhaps half a pint of beer in the whole evening and play whatever the local games are. They vary from one part of the

[Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop]

country to another. They have heat and company at the expense of the licensee, who does not chase them out, because that is part of the atmosphere of the public house.

In some of the areas that I represent, when there is a bad winter, I have known it not to be exceptional but almost to be expected that the licensee provides free meals twice a day for old people who live in their bungalows when, owing to the snow, they cannot get out and buy their normal supplies. Nobody regards that as an act of sainthood. Rather, it is regarded as just being a good neighbour and a good publican in an area of mutual support, which many of our villages are.

Mrs. Llin Golding (Newcastle-under-Lyme): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. What has this to do with the point under discussion?

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: If the hon. Lady listens, she will learn, to her advantage. What is under discussion is whether the law should be left as it is—when an offence is committed if the licensee knowingly sells alcohol to a person who is under age, or whether the balance of proof should be altered so that the full weight of the law falls, as I believe it should, on the person who knowingly commits an offence, who is the person who buys the drink, and we do not put, the great expense of defending him or herself someone who, in the vast majority of cases, does not know and cannot know. That is the dilemma for the licensee, however conscientious and however good.

If, out of what I can call only terror tactics, licensees are prosecuted when they have not sold drink with a guilty mind and knowingly and are ruined, the only way in which licensees will be able to protect their livelihood will be by chasing young people out into the street. That will include some who are over 18, because licensees will not be absolutely certain that they are over 18. I do not believe that we will then have a healthier society. Such people will be able to buy all the liquor they want, as they do at the moment, from off-licences, where the control is very much less. They will then drink on street corners, in cars, out in the open and in the other places which, in the real world, exist and are used.

That is why I believe that the existing law, though not perfect, needs tightening in the direction of more prosecutions and more penalties for those who commit an offence knowingly — the purchasers — rather than tinkering, as my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence), who is a distinguished silk, advised the House, for purely cosmetic purposes in such a manner that innocent licensees will inevitably be caught out by a few rogues.

Mr. Couchman: As ever, I shall declare my interest, which is as a multiple licensee operating a small company which has the tenancies of five public houses in London. I do that because I speak with some knowledge and experience of enforcing the present law.

I welcome the recommendations of the committee chaired by my right hon. Friend the Lord President of the Council. I believe that all responsible licensees will welcome those recommendations. Licensees generally do not want under-age drinkers in their pubs. They are, frankly, a pain in the backside. They threaten the livelihood and the licence of the licensee, and the roof over his head. Enforcing the law with under-age drinkers is difficult, as many hon. Members have already said. Under-age drinkers, and those just turned 18, become aggressive and noisy and they upset older and more mature customers. No one honestly likes the young trade.

So far, no one has mentioned the fact that 14-year-olds may already enter public houses, although not to drink. However, because of the difficulty in preventing those over 14 from drinking once they enter public houses, or from being bought drinks by other people — acknowledging that to be an offence—many publicans decide that it is better to enforce a no-under-18s rule and, even now, a no-under-21s rule in many public houses in London.

I spent four years running a large discotheque public house. Three nights a week, I used to stand at the door and try to determine who was and who was not over 18, because we had a no-under-18s rule. If, in particular, the young girls seek to deceive, with make-up and dress, they will succeed many times. We asked for birth certificates. They produced those of their older sisters.

We have talked about identity cards. I share the apprehensions of my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) about identity cards, but the only sure and certain way of being able to enforce the law would be to issue photo-identity cards, of the type that we, as Members of the House, carry, and ones that carry a date of birth.

Like many other hon. Members, particularly the hon. Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle), I believe that the chief source of supply of drink to those under 18, and particularly those substantially under 18, is the off-licence trade. Those outlets are much less well controlled. There is no outlet in this country that is as heavily constrained and controlled as the public house.

On a number of occasions I have listened to my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) speak on the subject of under-age drinking, and I know that he has particular feelings about the matter. However, what changes at 18? One day, one is a day off 18 and is not allowed to drink in a public house, and the next day one is 18 and suddenly becomes able to do so. I am enthusiastic about the possibility of youngsters being introduced to drink in a slow and controlled manner, perhaps by their parents, so that when they do become 18, they drink in a public house in a more mature way.

A happy experiment is the recent opening in Brixham in Devon of a pub called the Minnows Arms, which is open to serve strictly non-alcoholic beers, wines and cocktails to children between the ages of 11 and 16. Adults will be banned from the pub, which will serve from 6.30 pm to 9 pm. That is a sensible experiment, which tries to introduce young people to the environment of the public house without the dangers of under-age drinking. There are many sides to the argument.

I am apprehensive, as I am sure many of my fellow licensees are, about the new clause, because it shifts the balance, as my hon. Friend the Minister admitted, from a person being innocent until proven guilty to that person being guilty until proved innocent, and that is contrary to natural justice. It is a fearsome weapon in the hands of anti-drink policemen who have the responsibility of enforcing the licensing laws in their area. There are more of those than the public perceives.

I hope that my hon. Friend will think again about introducing the clause. If he will not do so, I should prefer the House to accept the Government new clause, rather than the new clause of my right hon. Friend the Member

for Castle Point or amendment *(a)*. I hope that, even at this late stage, my hon. Friend the Minister will say that the Government will think again about whether they have the balance right.

7.15 pm

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) emphasises that this has been a vigorous debate. Two competing points of view have been presented. My right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) said that we have not done anything, but my hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham said that we have placed a fearsome weapon in the hands of the police. My view is that we have followed a careful road down the middle and have got it about right.

We want to be clear that we are talking about a major change in the law. If the new clause is accepted, the prosecution will no longer have to prove the element of knowing, there being prima facie evidence of an offence at the moment of the sale to the under-age person. At that moment, it will be open to the prosecution to commence proceedings. That is a dramatic change and I point out to my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point that it is an important step in the direction to which he is pointing.

The question then is whether it should be an absolute offence in the true sense—that is, one to which there should be no defence—or whether there should be a defence. The common view in the Chamber has been that there should be a defence. Therefore, the essential dispute is about the nature of the defence. I willingly acknowledge and concede that in Committee I pointed to the firearms model on a number of occasions as one that struck me as attractive in the context of what we are doing. However, what I have brought to the House is something different. Therefore, it is fair to ask, "Why is there a difference?" The answer is that I changed my mind, and I shall explain why.

In the case of the sale of a firearm, the position is different in two major respects. First, the sale of the firearm is perhaps a more serious and grave act than the sale of a drink. That is a qualitative judgment, but it is mine. Secondly, the sale of a firearm is a more leisurely transaction than is the sale of a drink at a bar counter. When one is selling a firearm, one can make the kind of inquiry which it is not reasonable to require of licensees at a bar. Therefore, there is a difference.

If one uses the same language in the context of a drink offence as is used in the context of a firearms offence, one may find the courts applying precisely the same tests and asking licensees to adopt the same standards. I have been persuaded that that would be wrong. It is not a question of being got at. It is a question of being persuaded, and this is the view that I offer to the House.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: I see other possibilities than the provisions of the Firearms Act 1968. However, in Committee the Minister did not commit himself to that procedure. He was careful to say that he believed that there should be a defence whereby the seller of the drink had to prove that he had reasonable grounds for the belief that the person was over the age of 18. Will the Minister comment on our amendment, because that allows for a defence? It allows for the defence that the licensee had good reason to believe that the person was over 18. Would that not satisfy the criterion that the Minister was trying to find in Committee?

Mr. Hogg: That is a perfectly logical and sensible position for the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) to adopt. It is a question of balance. The hon. Lady is, in effect — although not quite — describing the firearms defence. For the reasons that I have outlined, I think that the firearms defence imposes too high a standard on licensees. I accept that it is a matter of judgment. I am not suggesting that the hon. Lady's position is illogical, untenable or unsustainable, but I think that it places too heavy a burden on licensees.

I am encouraged in this matter by the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell), because, as the House will appreciate, he has the advantage of being a Scots lawyer and has direct knowledge of the way in which the Scots have been using the legislation in Scotland. His remarks were important. He said that the legislation had resulted in more convictions but that it had not enabled landlords to get off on technicalities and that the nature of the defence had not proved obstructive in bringing prosecutions in proper cases.

In the end, it is a matter of balance. I offer the judgment that the balance in the new clause is the correct one.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 289, Noes 47.

Division No. 164] **[7.21 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Alton, David
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beith, A. J.
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fearn, Ronald
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian

Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Janman, Timothy
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon Sir Charles
Morrison, Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon C.
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Richard Ryder and
Mr. Stephen Dorrell.

NOES

Anderson, Donald
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Bermingham, Gerald
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Caborn, Richard
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Corbyn, Jeremy
Crowther, Stan
Cummings, J.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Dixon, Don
Duffy, A. E. P.
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
George, Bruce
Golding, Mrs Llin
Hinchliffe, David
Illsley, Eric
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McFall, John
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Michael, Alun
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Paisley, Rev Ian
Pike, Peter
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Ms Joan
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Turner, Dennis
Wigley, Dafydd
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David

Tellers for the Noes:
Sir Bernard Braine and
Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Clause read a Second time.

Amendment proposed: (a), in new clause 2, leave out lines 17 and 18 and insert—

'(b) that he had good reason to believe that the person was over eighteen'.—*[Mrs. Ann Taylor.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:

The House divided: Ayes 66, Noes 291.

Division No. 165] **[7.35 pm**

AYES

Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bermingham, Gerald
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Caborn, Richard
Corbyn, Jeremy
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, J.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
George, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Haynes, Frank
Hinchliffe, David
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
John, Brynmor
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Livingstone, Ken

McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Michael, Alun
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Neill, Martin
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter
Quin, Ms Joyce
Richardson, Ms Jo
Robertson, George
Ruddock, Ms Joan
Sheerman, Barry
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Tellers for the Ayes
Mrs. Llin Golding and
Mr. Dennis Turner.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Staml'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Janman, Timothy
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parry, Robert
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wigley, Dafydd

Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Peter Lloyd.

Question accordingly negatived.

Clause added to the Bill.

New clause 3

PROHIBITION OF UNSUPERVISED OFF-SALES BY PERSONS UNDER EIGHTEEN

"The following clause shall be inserted after section 171 of the principal Act—

171A.—(1) In any premises which are licensed for the sale of intoxicating liquor for consumption off the premises only or any off-sales department of on-licensed premises, the holder of the licence shall not allow a person under eighteen to make any sale of such liquor unless the sale has been specifically approved by the holder of the licence or by a person of or over the age of eighteen acting on his behalf.

(2) The reference in subsection (1) of this section to an off-sales department of on-licensed premises is a reference to any part of premises for which a justices' on-licence has been granted which is set aside for use only for the sale of intoxicating liquor for consumption off the premises.

(3) A person guilty of an offence under this section shall be liable to a fine not exceeding level 1 on the standard scale.". — *[Mr. Douglas Hogg.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following; amendment (a) to the proposed new clause, in line 6, leave out from 'liquor' to end of line 9.

Amendment (b) to the proposed new clause, in last line, leave out 'level 1' and insert 'level 3'.

New clause 6—*Under-age sales*—

'(1) In section 170(1) of the principal Act, for the words from "on a first conviction" to the end there shall be substituted the words "to a fine not exceeding level 3 on the standard scale".

(2) The following section shall be inserted after section 171 of the principal Act—

"171A. No person under the age of 18 employed in premises in respect of which an off licence has been granted shall be permitted to sell intoxicating liquor. The holder of the licence shall be liable to a fine not exceeding level 3 on the standard scale.".'.

Mr. Hogg: New clause 3 is part of our response to the problem of under-age drinking.

The Masham report expressed the desire that the law regarding off-licences should be changed so that persons under the age of 18 who are selling alcohol should at least be supervised when they do so. I agree with that proposition because when people under the age of 18 are selling alcohol in off-licences there is an increased danger that they will sell to under-age persons or that they may sell to somebody who is already intoxicated. The purpose of the new clause is to impose an obligation that each sale should be supervised by somebody over the age of 18.

Sir Dudley Smith: I am not trying to catch my hon. Friend out; this is a genuine inquiry. Is it a fact that the people who assist in public houses must be over the age of 18?

Mr. Hogg: Yes. Under-age persons may not assist in public houses.

It has been discussed whether we should put a total prohibition on persons under the age of 18 selling alcohol in off-licences. I would not commend that to the House because I believe that that would affect the ability of such persons to obtain employment in the retail sector. I believe that that would an undesirable state of affairs.

I commend the new clause to the House on the basis that it is the proper solution to the problem and will not have the adverse consequences to which I have just referred.

Sir Bernard Braine: I shall be brief. The purpose of new clause 6 is to remove an absurd anomaly in the law whereby young people under 18 are allowed to sell in supermarkets and elsewhere a product which they are not legally permitted to buy. In promoting greater consistency in the law, my new clause 6 is entirely in line with what is described as being a main aim of the Bill.

I am glad that in tabling their new clause the Government have moved from their untenable position in Committee where they refused to concede to the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) and her hon. Friends that allowing sales of alcohol by under-18s could even be regarded as an anomaly. If I may say so in all humility, I believe that my new clause 6 is superior to that tabled by the Government in that it has greater clarity, straightforwardness and practicality.

The Home Office working group on young people and alcohol under the chairmanship of Baroness Masham briefly examined the issue of under-age sales, and its recommendations prompted this new clause. The Justices' Clerks Society has also expressed its dislike of the anomaly of under-age sales and wishes to see it removed. The Masham committee recognised that allowing sales of alcohol by young people under the legal age was an anomaly which might have undesirable consequences. As the committee pointed out, it may be difficult for a 16-year-old to challenge a 17-year-old who seeks to buy alcohol, and this anomaly in the law may help to undermine other legal controls on under-age drinking. I am sure that the House will recognise the truth of that, including my hon. Friends who strongly support extended drinking hours.

One aspect of the problem not yet mentioned is that not all supermarkets have separate drinks departments but, as was observed recently by the Professional Advisory Committee on Alcohol for Scotland, some

"display alcohol openly on shelves amongst other consumer goods, thereby placing the supervision of sales on the shoulders of the busy check-out girls",

who may themselves be under age. The Committee continued:

"It is anomalous that whilst it is illegal to employ anyone under the age of 18 in a public bar or licensed canteen, no such restriction is in force in the case of off-licensed premises or supermarkets. If legislation to restrict the sale of alcohol to a separate counter were included, it could also be enacted that staff on such a counter are subject to the same age restrictions as those which apply in public bars".

That is an eminently sensible argument, but it would be equally sensible to approach the problem from the

opposite direction by enacting new clause 6 precisely in order to give supermarkets a strong incentive to create separate drinks departments.

The argument for my new clause is straightforward and I need not detain the House much longer. The Masham committee stated the crucial points in paragraph 147 of its report, which reads:

"It is significant that off-licences are cited as a major source of alcohol for teenagers; and it is equally significant that some major retailers insist that staff under the age of 18 may not authorise off-sales, since they recognise the difficulties a 16 or 17-year-old may have in enforcing the law."

If responsible retailers are already imposing their own prohibition on under-age sales, surely this is an instance where the law should follow the example already set by the responsible to curtail the activities of the less responsible. Moreover, the example of responsible retailers shows that any practical difficulties involved in enforcing an 18-or-over rule cannot be insuperable.

On the question of practicability, the Government's proposal, perhaps contrary to first impressions, is inferior to my new clause 6. As I understand the Government's proposal, it is that each sale of alcohol must be specifically supervised by the licensee or his agent over the age of 18. The difficulty is in imagining how exactly this will be managed in a busy supermarket at peak shopping time. Those who do their own shopping, as I do, will readily recognise the truth of that. The sheer inconvenience of an under-age sales assistant having to call over the licensee or his adult agent each time a bottle or can of alcohol appears among a customer's purchases will surely lead either to impossible delays or, to avoid such delays, the law being widely disregarded.

It will be far better to agree now to a clear-cut, simple measure which can be enforced. My hon. Friend the Minister has the opportunity to do that, and I recommend new clause 6 to the House.

Mrs. Golding: It is apparent from new clause 3 that the Minister does not know and does not care about the problems facing many people on housing estates and in other areas where sales from off-licences cause young people to gather together to drink alcohol obtained from those off-licences.

Does not the Minister know of the time spent by the police in moving youngsters on? Is he not aware of the abuse of local people, and of the threats and damage to their property? If the Minister had my postbag, he would know of the anger felt by many decent people about the apparent lack of control of off-licence sales. What is his answer to those people? It is new clause 3, which continues to allow young people under the age of 18 to sell drinks in off-licences.

The new clause states:

"the holder of the licence shall not allow a person under eighteen to make any sale of such liquor unless the sale has been specifically approved by the holder of the licence or by a person of or over the age of eighteen acting on his behalf"

But what does that mean? What does "specifically" mean? The dictionary meaning is "definitely", "particularly", "not generally or vaguely". Does that mean that permission must be given for every individual transaction?

If so, let us consider what a sale is. It is the presenting, choosing, advising, obtaining from the cellar or shelf, wrapping and taking of money. All that is involved. Does the clause mean gaining approval for every one of those actions for every individual sale? If so, it cannot be practical in a busy off-licence.

Is the law enforceable? If not, it should not become law. If the new clause means that if the holder of the licence gives his approval a 16-year-old can be employed and the supervision is much less, that is wholly unacceptable. It does nothing to prevent the intimidation of a young salesman by less desirable elements in his age group to persuade him, by threats, to sell them alcohol, knowing them to be under-age.

The Government have had the opportunity in this Bill to prohibit young people under 18 from serving in off-licences. That they have not taken this opportunity shows once again that they are not concerned about young people and alcohol abuse. The control of the sale of alcohol is for adults; it is not for children. It is time that the Government and the House recognised that, and they should accept amendment *(a)*.

8 pm

Mr. Garry Waller (Keighley): I wish to raise two points relating to new clause 3. First, I am concerned about the words "specifically approved". Despite the use of the word "specifically", it is a vague term. My hon. Friend the Minister may say that these words will have to be interpreted by the courts if a dispute arises about what they mean. I am not in the business of providing work for lawyers and I wish to provide more specific wording so that everyone can be clear about the meaning.

In a chemist's shop, for example, when a preparation is sold, the assistant must hold up the item so that the pharmacist can specifically approve it. Unfortunately, the situation in most supermarkets is not as it is in branches of Boots. For example, in modern retailing, it is frequent practice for sales to take place by means of a laser scanner. The assistant need not press any buttons, but simply moves the items, including perhaps a bottle of spirits, under the scanner, so that the price is computed automatically. It would be helpful to know how such a problem could be tackled by the words "specifically approved". Would it be necessary for the assistant to ring a bell every time—a practice already operated by many responsible retailers?

Secondly, is it right that there should be no defence to a charge under this provision if, through no fault of the licensee, a sale is made by someone under 18? For example, a young person may lie about his or her age. He or she may go to some trouble to give the impression to the licensee that he or she is over 18. The licensee may have no reason to think that the young person has lied and is under 18. As the clause stands, the licensee would have no defence, yet the person who had lied about his or her age and made the sale would have committed no offence. Should there not be a defence that the licensee had used due diligence and was, therefore, not at fault?

As a further example, the person who makes the sale may disobey the rule laid down by his or her employer. The young person may be in a hurry and the supervisor, who is over 18, may be some distance away as a queue builds up at the check-out desk. The young person may make the sale, without the approval of the person over 18. Again, the check-out girl or boy has not broken the law under the provisions of the new clause.

As the new clause stands, the licensee must carry the can, although he may have gone to great trouble to impress on the check-out assistant that the law must be obeyed. Should there not be a defence, if the licensee has used as much diligence as is humanly possible to prevent

[Mr. Garry Waller]

an offence taking place? I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to enlighten me on that point, before we go any further.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I shall answer the points raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller). It is important to consider the new clause closely. An offence occurs only if the licence-holder allows a person under 18 to make a sale unsupervised. If the person under 18 makes a sale which is not allowed, and therefore acts contrary to the instructions which he has been given, the licence-holder is not committing an offence, because he has not allowed the sale.

My hon. Friend the Member for Keighley asked whether there should be a defence when the employee lies about his age. Perhaps we are piling difficulty upon difficulty, because, in most cases, an employer would want to find out the age of an employee and would take positive steps to do so. With great respect to my hon. Friend, this difficulty may not occur.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) asks that we should adopt one of two alternatives—that there should be either a shop within a shop or a prohibition on the sale of alcohol in off-licences by those under 18. I ask my right hon. Friend not to push the latter proposition to a Division, because it would be immensely damaging to the employment prospects of those under 18. That is my answer to the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding).

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport) *rose*——

Mr. Hogg: I shall give way in a moment.

At one stage, I was attracted by the concept of a shop within a shop, as suggested by my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point, but it would be unduly burdensome on small retail shops and it would be difficult to differentiate in law between a supermarket, where it might be possible to implement such a proposal and a small corner shop, where it would not easily be possible.

Mr. Favell: In respect of the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller), that each sale must be specifically approved, does my hon. Friend the Minister anticipate that it will be impossible for a sale of liquor to be made on off-licence premises unless somebody over 18 is present?

Mr. Hogg: That is my conclusion and that is what we intend. I commend the new clause to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 4

Transfer of powers with respect to general orders of exemption in London

'In section 74(6) of the principal Act (discharge of power to make exemption orders in City of London and metropolitan police district)—

(a) after the word "district", in the first place where it occurs, there shall be inserted the words "subsection (4) of"; and

(b) for the word "references", there shall be substituted, in the first place where it occurs, the words "the reference" and in the second and third places where it occurs, the words "a reference".'. — *[Mr. Douglas Hogg.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

This is a rather curious and narrow clause which will commend itself to the House and, therefore, I shall deal with it briefly. General orders of extension are, except in London, dealt with by justices. In London, they are dealt with by the two commissioners of police. There does not appear to be a good reason why the two commissioners of police in London should deal with the general orders of exemption. They do not want to continue to do so and justices are willing to undertake the burden. I therefore commend the new clause to the House.

Question put and agree to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 9

SALES TO OR BY PERSONS UNDER 18 OF INTOXICATING LIQUOR ON WHOLESALE PREMISES

'The following section shall be inserted after section 181 of the principal Act—

"Sales to or by persons under 18 of intoxicating liquor on wholesale premises.

181A.—(1) In any premises from which he deals wholesale the wholesaler or his servant shall not sell intoxicating liquor to a person under eighteen.

(2) In any premises from which he deals wholesale the wholesaler shall not allow a person under eighteen to make any sale of intoxicating liquor unless the sale has been specifically approved by the wholesaler or by a person of or over the age of eighteen acting on his behalf.

(3) A person under eighteen shall not in premises from which intoxicating liquor is dealt in wholesale buy or attempt to buy such liquor.

(4) In proceedings for an offence under subsection (1) of this section

(a) where the person charged is charged by reason of his own act, it shall be a defence for him to prove—

(i) that he exercised all due diligence to avoid the commission of an offence under that subsection; or

(ii) that he had no reason to suspect that the other person was under eighteen; and

(b) where the person charged is charged by reason of the act of some other person, it shall be a defence for him to prove that he exercised all due diligence to avoid the commission of an offence under that subsection.

(5) A person guilty of an offence under subsection (1) or (3) of this section shall be liable to a fine not exceeding level 3 on the standard scale.

(6) A person guilty of an offence under subsection (2) of this section shall be liable to a fine not exceeding level 1 on the standard scale.

(7) In this section "wholesaler" and "wholesale" have the same meaning as in section 4 of the Alcoholic[1] Liquor Duties Act 1979.".'.—*[Mr. Douglas Hogg.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): With this, it will be convenient to discuss the following: amendment (a) to the proposed new clause, in line 10, leave out from 'liquor' to end of line 12.

Amendment (b) to the proposed new clause, leave out lines 22 and 23 and insert—

'(ii) that he had good reason to believe that the other person was over eighteen; and '.

Mr. Hogg: This is yet a further example of the Government's intention to meet the problem of under-age drinking. We seek to introduce further restrictions on the sale of alcohol to and by young persons. We are applying

to wholesalers the same restrictions on the sale of alcohol to and by 18-year-olds as are currently applied to on and off-licence premises. I commend the new clause to the House.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: We support the new clause and its addition to the Bill. However, I suspect that few people will be affected by it. It is unlikely that the majority of people under 18 purchase liquor in bulk from wholesale premises. Nevertheless, we welcome it, and the proposal was recommended by the Masham Committee.

I shall ask the Minister one or two minor questions about the new clause, because we intended to move an amendment that would omit the necessity for the sale to be specifically approved by a wholesaler, which would be an absolute barrier to any sales in any circumstances by people under the age of 18.

We believe that there should be no difficulty in finding someone over the age of 18 in wholesale premises to make those sales. I ask the Minister to consider that point and possibly to amend the Bill in another place.

My other point concerns a recommendation in the Masham report that is connected with the point about wholesale premises. The Masham committee recommended that this provision should be extended to registered clubs. It was thought that it might be necessary to give the police the right to enter such premises, and I can foresee difficulties in that regard. That may be why the Minister left that section out of the amendment, but I should be grateful if he would give his feelings and ideas, because it also may need to be the subject of an amendment at a later stage.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Two points have been raised by the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor); the first relates to clubs. I prefer to be candid with the House, and I usually am—that implies that on occasions I am not. I shrink from the concept of applying the licensing law to clubs. If we were to start applying it to clubs, we should open a Pandora's box which would probably prevent the passage of the Bill. We should not change the law relating to clubs by a side wind. If we want to do so, we must do it in a Bill primarily designed for clubs.

With regard to the hon. Lady's other point, I have no doubt that it will be possible to find many people over the age of 18 who are willing to sell in wholesale premises. If we were to adopt the hon. Lady's suggestion, we would necessarily exclude those under the age of 18. I do not wish to do so, because of its impact on their employability.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 1

Coach Services

'In section 199*(d)* of the principal Act, for the words "or railway passenger vehicle" there shall be substituted the words "railway passenger vehicle or advertised, timetabled road passenger coach service with serving staff.".'.—*[Mr. Roger King.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

The purpose of the new clause is to bring up to date the position of a new branch of transportation—inter-city road passenger coach services—which is left out in the cold, in that it is unable to offer for sale alocholic refreshment on its vehicles.

I have looked at section 199*(d)* of the principal Act to see whether exemption from the licensing laws enjoyed by railways, aircraft and ships could be extended to road passenger vehicles on scheduled services with staff on board.

8.15 pm

One of the greatest successes of the Government since 1979 has been their policy of deregulation. The passenger coach industry was one of the first to be deregulated. It has enjoyed extraordinary success as it has developed into a formidable system, with thousands of services being provided throughout the length and breadth of the country.

When the principal Act was devised in 1964, this type of service did not exist. Coach services were in their infancy and were not integrated into a national system. But now they are, and they can be seen on our roads system, operating to the requirements of the passengers whom they serve.

It is a national system; it is sophisticated and respectable. It offers a highly competitive service compared with other modes of transport. It has been sufficiently competitive to force the railways and airlines into competition. In turn, they have reflected, with their improved services, the greater desire of customers to use them.

Our legislation has opened up the service of road transport to a wide new market. Although coach services cannot compete directly on time, they offer good comfort and a much cheaper service. The latest coaches are not remotely like the traditional football charabancs of the past. They are very sophisticated vehicles, with double-deck construction, air conditioning, aircraft-style seats, video cassette machines, toilets and hostess services. Such service has transformed the principle of coach services. The customer has the highest level of comfort on board, and food is also available.

Coach services at present are denied the opportunity to sell alcoholic refreshment, which should be put right. One can take drink on board the coach and the operator can give drink away. There is no reason why coach operators should not be allowed to sell drinks on their vehicles. Other modes of transport are allowed to do so.

I have been in correspondence with my hon. Friend the Minister to explain why this new clause should be agreeable to him. He has been kind enough to reply, and it seems that there are one or two obstacles that the Home Office and certainly the police find unacceptable. First, there is the worry about football hooliganism. We all agree that we should combat the evils of football hooliganism, which often arises as a direct result of excessive alcoholic refreshment. That problem has not been created by inter-city scheduled coach services any more than by inter-city rail services. If we are to ban the consumption of alcohol on a scheduled coach, we must ban alcohol on a scheduled train. It is often going to the same place as an ordinary road coach. To say that a coach operator, operating a timetable scheduled service, attracts football hooliganism is to say that British Rail suffers from the same problem, which it does not.

Sir Dudley Smith: Is not most football hooliganism caused by young louts taking drink on board? I have some sympathy with my hon. Friend, but would there not be the same problem?

Mr. King: Scheduled inter-city coach services have been with us for a number of years. There is no evidence that football supporters use those services. It is a scheduled service travelling from point A to point B, not to football grounds. However, the problem might occur with private coach operators. The Government have been keen to eliminate that problem by extra policing at football grounds. The problem cannot be laid at the door of scheduled coach services. If it were, it would have been self-evident in the services already provided.

The Home Office is equally worried about an inebriated passenger on a coach presenting a danger to the driver — hitting him on the head and causing an accident. However, that could happen if he takes his own alcohol on board. The provision of a hostess or steward on the coach would surely eliminate that possibility. In any case, that can happen on a train. The new sprinter trains have alcohol available on them, so it would be easy for an inebriated customer to walk up to the cab, force the door open and accost the driver. That does not happen, so that argument does not stand up.

It is argued that it would create confusion among continental coach operators who see drinks being provided on one type of coach and wonder why they are unable to provide them. If one travels in any country, one should acquaint oneself with the local laws of the land. I see no difficulty in a foreign operator understanding the difference between his tour operation and a scheduled inter-city coach service.

I shall not press the new clause, because I understand that there are problems, but it is worthy of further examination, with a view to including it in forthcoming legislation. The argument that the new clause might attract other amendments to the Bill does not hold water. We are talking about one element of public transport which is denied the opportunity to compete in the way allowed to other transportation modes.

A train will leave Birmingham and travel towards London and a scheduled coach will do the same, travelling on the M1. For three miles they will travel side by side, offering exactly the same services. They are after the same market. One is allowed to sell alcoholic refreshment when it feels like it and the other is denied that opportunity. As our attitude to travel changes, our attitude to the law should change as well. I hope that, in any future revision of our licensing laws, the Government will look carefully at this proposal. There are not many passenger coach operators, but they operate throughout the country with advertised scheduled services. I hope that the Government will allow them to operate on equal terms with operators of other modes of transport.

Sir Bernard Braine: I mean no disrespect to my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King), for whom I have great affection, but this is a dangerous proposition. There is enough trouble on trains now from people who consume too much liquor, but at least passengers have the opportunity to move down the train. Such movement is impossible on a coach.

There is a growing tendency — my hon. Friend the Member for Northfield seems to think that the law should be brought into line with this growing tendency — for more and more drinking to take place in public, outside public houses and clubs. One sees this disgraceful situation in any London tube station, but especially the large ones. There are used lager cans on the platform and the rail tracks. The abuse is growing every week.

My hon. Friend the Member for Northfield said that coach travellers take their liquor aboard. Of course they do. That is a well-known fact. They take crates of it aboard. I have just received a letter from one of my constituents, which states:

"My wife and I are the proprietors of a seasonal business in Southend on the front. Every year is getting worse as far as behavioural problems with language, shoplifting, fighting and sexual abuse, all drink related. My wife is verbally abused, and I myself last year had to call the police several times to our premises. I am 47 years of age and am now at the age when I feel threatened and feel that we can no longer enjoy a happy successful occupation in my trade."

My constituent refers in particular to the coach trade. He tells how people come down in coaches, flock into the pubs and, after the pubs close,

"for the next 3 or 4 hours wander round town carrying packs of beer or whole bottles of spirit or cider. They come into our shop and try to steal what they can, and if we object they are abusive, foul-mouthed and dangerous. Nine times out of ten, these coach parties are drunk when they hit town and go from bad to worse."

My hon. Friend the Member for Northfield made his case moderately and eloquently, but I beg the House not to encourage such behaviour and to compare the coach trade with the railway trade. I would have liquor banned on the railways as well. The Royal College of Psychiatrists has warned us more than once that if we wish to preserve the health of our young people, we may have to drink less rather than more. The object of the Bill, and of all the proposals along those lines which provide for longer hours, is to make the consumption of alcohol easier.

There is a price to be paid. The hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson)—I do not know whether hon. Members picked it up, but they should have done —said that it is a well-known fact, established all over the world, that with the increase in the consumption of alcohol there is an automatic increase in the harm done. I make a plea for restraint. That is what the law should observe. I hope that the House will reject this preposterous proposal.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: On the face of it, this is quite an attractive measure. It has been attractively argued by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King). However, I must say, although for slightly different reasons from those advanced by my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine), that I am not persuaded of the merits of the new clause.

There are substantially three reasons for that. First, it could give rise to control problems on coaches. It seems to me that passengers on a coach have too ready access to the driver and that is a distinction between coaches and, for example, trains. Secondly, I suspect that the measure would be used by football supporters, at least sometimes, and that would tend to get around the control imposed by the Sporting Events (Control of Alcohol etc.) Act 1985. Those two considerations have influenced the police to oppose this suggestion. Thirdly, I have some sympathy with the point made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point that a passenger on a coach cannot move away from a person drinking in the same way as a passenger on a train. That distinction needs to be noted.

I should like to be candid, once again. I am against Christmas trees of Bills. I have a feeling that if I were to yield on the new clause, I might find it more difficult to maintain the purity of the Bill that hitherto we have been able to establish. For those reasons, I do not commend the new clause to the House.

Mr. Roger King: I have listened with interest to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State and my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine). My right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point made no distinction between the tour tripper going to the seaside on a charabanc and the passenger on inter-city scheduled coach services. There are wide differences, and the two are not to be compared. Of course, there are always problems with tour trippers who go out for the day and with football supporters.

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State also made a mistake, if I may use that expression, in suggesting that if drink were allowed on board an inter-city road coach it would attract football supporters. They can use the coaches now and bring their alcohol on board, but there is no evidence that they have done so. By the same token, why is British Rail allowed to run its scheduled Inter-City services to those cities to which football supporters are going, with full drink and refreshment facilities available, but coaches are not?

The logic is that, if drink is not allowed on the road coaches, it cannot be allowed on the rail system. As for moving away from a person who is drinking, my experience is that it is difficult to do that if the train is crowded. During my frequent rail travel I do not see many instances of excess alcohol consumption. The advantage the coach would have is that an attendant would be visible and present on the same deck as all the passengers. However, I understand what my hon. Friend has said, so I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

New Clause 5

MONITORING

"The following section shall be inserted after section 88 of the principal Act—

"88A. The Home Office, the Department of Health and Social Security and the Department of Transport shall monitor the effects of changes in licensing hours on alcohol consumption and alcohol-related problems in relation to public order, road safety and public health in England and Wales.".'.—*[Dr. Moonie.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

8.30 pm

Dr. Lewis Moonie (Kirkcaldy): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

I feel marginally—I regret to say, only marginally—warmer towards the Bill than I did on Second Reading and in Committee. It still lacks several essential components, especially in the clause on the monitoring of its effect. It is sad that someone must move a new clause asking the Departments involved to monitor the effects of the changes. Unfortunately, they do not do that in any constructive way, and perhaps hon. Members agree that they should.

The new clause would ensure that the Departments discharged the function that they should, and monitored the effects of this major change—despite the Minister's having called it a minor one—in the licensing laws. The clause in the Bill involves an increase in the time available for the consumption of alcohol on weekdays by 30 per cent., which is a major change. All changes in the law, in price or in the length of time in which there is access to alcohol produce changes in consumption. That has been proved by countless examples that have been quoted earlier in the debate, and I do not propose to go over them again, but merely to mention other countries in which there have been changes, such as Canada, Australia—there have been changes state by state there — and Finland, in which there is interesting parallel of the laws having been tightened up, followed by a fall in problems and consumption, and then liberalised, followed by a corresponding rise.

Scotland has been mentioned at length in support of the Bill. There was evidence after the Clayson proposals were implemented that the consumption of alcohol fell there. However, it has been clearly demonstrated that that fall was spurious; it was caused by other factors and not by the change in licensing laws.

The need for monitoring has, if anything, been underlined by the Scottish experience, by the lack of data on which we can rely and by the ambiguity of the statistics quoted at such great length——

Mr. Menzies Campbell: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that it was one of the recommendations of the Clayson committee that there should be monitoring such as he is now suggesting?

Dr. Moonie: I am indeed. Again, it is a sad comment on the state of affairs in Scotland that there has not been adquate monitoring of the effects of the proposals, nor has there been full implementation of the Clayson recommendations. Had they been properly implemented, that might have led to a change of the type for which we were hoping from the Bill.

If the availability of statistics is inadequate, it could be improved. Statistics are available. What is not available is some rational means of collecting and collating them so that they can be compared year by year and their effects noted. Increased consumption means increased problems —of drink-driving, and of injury and death caused by the same, particularly in the late afternoon. That is when a large amount of the extra time will fall—just when our children are returning home from school. That is when drunken drivers will be disgorged on to the streets and into their cars to cause mayhem. That is not an attractive prospect. If we do not bring in new legislation to combat it, we should at least examine it.

I want to quote from a letter to the Home Office from the Royal College of Psychiatrists, commenting on the Government's consultative proposals:

"Paragraph 10 of the document states that action is more likely to be effective if it is focused on particular problems rather than if it is co-ordinated across a range of policies. At the same time the Government is making a change in one policy, namely, the extension of licensing hours, without any consideration of other policies which are yet to be developed, even though it is acknowledged that licensing controls have played a significant role in preventing nuisance, and in maintaining public order and safety. It is therefore totally inconsistent to introduce one measure, at this point, which will undoubtedly increase the availability of alcohol to the population as a whole.

There is evidence of a rise recently in overall alcohol intake and in death from cirrhosis. It is at least likely that the increased suicide rate in younger males may be related to alcohol problems, as well as to unemployment. Many reports indicate that some 15-30 per cent. of general hospital

[Dr. Moonie]

admissions are related to alcohol problems. The present time, therefore, is hardly propitious for an extension of licensing hours. The proposal indicates a lack of concern on the part of the Government about the damage which alcohol does to the community and the individual and also the enormous costs incurred by the Health and Social Services, in terms of disease, morbidity and child care.

Those European countries which have more liberal licensing laws also seem to have a higher level of overall consumption of alcohol and a higher level of alcohol related disease. All the evidence points to the fact that increasing the accessibility to alcohol by whatever measure increases its consumption . . .

However, since the extension of the licensing laws in Scotland, there has been a marked increase in the combination of alcohol and self-poisoning. There has also been a recent acceleration, compared with England and Wales, in the rise of female deaths from cirrhosis . . .

We do not accept that the licensing laws are in any way a hindrance to the tourist industry".

One of the reasons for liberalising them is the tourist industry.

"They may indeed be regarded as part of the British scene like 'Beefeaters' and other innocuous eccentricities. We believe that a unilateral act of increasing the licensing hours can only lead to increased problems from alcohol, particularly in those who are most vulnerable, i.e. those who already have a high alcohol consumption and also young people whose drinking is already causing considerable concern."

I have quoted extensively from the letter because it underlines the royal college's concern about the effects of the Bill.

Mr. Favell: The hon. Gentleman is a Scottish Member. Scotland already enjoys sensible licensing laws allowing people to drink during the afternoon. I am a regular visitor to Aviemore, where the slopes close at 4 pm. After skiing, people in Scotland can go for a drink during the afternoon. Does the hon. Gentleman think that skiing would be as popular in Scotland if people were given a cup of tea after they came off the slopes?

Dr. Moonie: I shall be happy for English ski resorts to be granted the same privilege. I cannot think of any off-hand, but I am sure there must be one or two. With that in mind, I want to quote from Saunders on licensing laws:

"A central concern about the extensive granting of 'all-day' licensing is that as with all forms of drug use availability is a key factor in determining levels of harm. As noted above the lesson of Europe is that those countries with little or no legislative controls on alcohol use have the highest rates of alcohol related mortality. All day licensing makes us more like the French not only in drinking style but also in terms of patterns of problems. The French experience is one of infrequent drunkenness but extensive alcohol related mortality (9). It is possible that in Scotland we have created the basis for an explosion of physical damage from alcohol use which will over the next decade become increasingly evident in our general medical wards. With regard to this it is important to note that between 1976 and 1983 alcohol consumption in the UK as a whole rose by 4·5 per cent. but in Scotland per capita consumption increased at a disproportionate level—up by 13 per cent. The enthusiasm with which the Brewers Society is currently campaigning for extended hours south of the Border has no doubt been induced by their appreciation that more hours means more sales. From a public health perspective this inevitably means more harm . . .

In Britain alcohol has never been controlled for health reasons, so it is likely that the Brewers Society will succeed in their campaign. Therefore, the next decade will be one in which Britons"—

meaning the English, I presume—

"consume more alcohol and experience more alcohol-related problems. When this melancholic fact is achieved the alcohol producers will have succeeded in making us more like the French."

I ask the Minister at least to accept the premise that there may be ill effects of the Bill. I trust that he does not hope to cover them up by failing to look adequately at the statistics. Will he undertake to instruct the Home Office to work with other Ministries to make a careful study of the available statistics as they arise? Will he assure us that, should there be clear evidence of harm resulting from the Bill, he will think again?

Sir Bernard Braine: The new clause concerns the vital need to monitor licensing law changes in relation to public health and social well-being. It will require the Home Office, the Department of Health and Social Services and the Department of Transport to monitor the effects of changes in licensing hours on alcohol consumption and alcohol-related problems in respect of public order, road safety and public health in England and Wales.

The new clause is entirely constructive. It will in no way damage the main aim and purpose of the Bill or provide any impediment to its full implementation. It merely ensures that adequate information about effects is made available. I hope that the House will consent to it. I remind the House that it consented to an identical clause that was moved on the Report stage of the Licensing Bill which was introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart). That Bill had the Government's approval.

The hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) put her finger on the crucial consideration. In Committee, she observed that almost all debates had been taken up not with differences of political philosophy or moral points of view, but with arguments about matters of fact. Surely few hon. Members would wish to see extended drinking hours if there were no reasonable doubt that the result of such reform would be more deaths and injuries on our roads, more outbreaks of public disorder on our streets, and even more pressure being placed on the Health Service. Equally, few hon. Members would object to extended drinking hours if there were clear evidence that no harm would result.

Unfortunately, debates on this Bill and on previous Bills—I have taken part in such debates for over 20 years—have been obstructed and prolonged by a lack of basic information. The Scottish experiment has completely failed to produce conclusive evidence on either side of the debate because it was not properly monitored. On Second Reading, the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) said:

"The Clayson committee was concerned to ensure proper monitoring of the effects of changes in Scottish legislation, but that has not happened. I hope that, recognising some of the apprehensions voiced today, the Government will feel that that should now be done in the whole of the United Kingdom. Indeed, it may be a topic for consideration by the interdepartmental committee." — [*Official Report*, 9 November 1987; Vol. 1427, c. 63.]

That advice should have been taken. The hon. and learned Gentleman spoke in favour of the Bill. He was a member of the Clayson committee. I should have thought that his view had added weight, and I endorse it fully.

8.45 pm

In his reply, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State said that he agreed that it would be necessary to monitor the effects of the Bill and that the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys had already undertaken

an up-to-date survey of drinking habits in England and Wales to provide data against which any changes could be measured. I have had on more than one occasion to point out to the House that that same monitoring did take place, but that the Government sat on the findings for over a year. I am glad that they have now seen the light, but it is not nearly enough. Many other aspects of the matter need to be examined in depth. If the Scottish experiment is any guide, even the OPCS survey, which the Minister mentioned, may turn out to be of only limited usefulness.

I have lost count of the number of occasions on which the OPCS survey, "Drinking and Attitudes to Licensing in Scotland", has been cited as providing conclusive proof that extended drinking hours in Scotland have had no adverse affects but, possibly, some beneficial effects. In the view of one neutral reviewer, Dr. Philip Davies, the study "provides very little empirical evidence to support those who wish to see a further relaxation in licensing laws on either side of the border."

I do not think that I am distorting Dr. Davies' views by adding that neither does the Scottish survey provide clear evidence against further liberalisation. That is the precise point that I make. For example, Dr. Davies points out that questions about alcohol problems or the abuse of alcohol were beyond the remit of the survey and that, similarly, questions regarding drinking practices in relation to eating out or other social activities were not asked.

Therefore, the survey provides no information about whether married couples are drinking together in pubs more frequently now than they were before relaxation, or whether they are using pubs more frequently for eating out or other recreational activities, with or without their children. In other words, the survey provides no information about whether licensing reform in Scotland has encouraged more civilised drinking, as the Clayson committee had hoped. The fact is, however, that those who drank heavily before the Scottish reform now drink more heavily. There is some evidence, therefore, that the reforms are not all what their advocates had claimed.

Although I am pleased to know that the Government have already laid a small part of the foundations for monitoring licensing law changes south of the border, I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will assure the House that the surveys that are planned for England and Wales will be rather less incomplete and superficial than their Scottish counterpart. I hope that he will also accept that, although drinking surveys are important, they are only one part of the picture. We also need detailed studies of the matters that were excluded from the Scottish survey, for example, alcohol abuse.

The Erroll committee strongly recommended that detailed monitoring of licensing law changes be carried out, and suggested that an interdepartmental working party should be created to direct and supervise the work. That was an excellent suggestion. I spent years advocating something along those lines. The Wakeham committee is now in existence, and I warmly welcome it. If there is one Minister in whose judgment and integrity I have supreme confidence, it is my right hon. Friend the Lord President and Leader of the House. The Government made a wise choice in putting him in charge of the interdepartmental committee.

Mr. Greg Knight: Is my right hon. Friend aware that some hon. Members might support him if he were to state that he supported one of the other recommendations of the Erroll committee, which was that public houses should be open until midnight?

Sir Bernard Braine: I have heard some odd, peculiar and irresponsible suggestions in the years but——

Mr. Knight: It is in the Erroll Committee report.

Sir Bernard Braine: No Government have ever dared to implement the Erroll committee's recommendations. There is now an attempt to move a little in that direction. So far, no Government have ever done so, because of the known and uncontrolled harm that is done. My hon. Friend must not push me too far, or I shall trot out the case in detail. The Erroll committee was not wholly wrong. It was wise in making that one suggestion. We must not take away that little credit. Indeed, the Government and supporters of further licensing liberalisation should welcome the clause. I gave way to my hon. Friend because I thought that he, for whom I have great respect, was going to say that.

There is a direct precedent. Following the passage of the Defence of the Realm Act 1916, some provisions of which this Bill seeks to reform, the Central Liquor Control Board was established to monitor its working and effects. If the changes that are brought about by the Bill are monitored in the same meticulous way as the Defence of the Realm Act was monitored by the Central Liquor Control Board, in five years we shall have the facts and experience to make rational decisions about the role that opening hours should play in national policy.

I stress that between the two wars under that regime this was the most sober country in the civilised world. The deterioration in behaviour with regard to alcohol goes back only 15 or 20 years. During that time we have seen a huge increase in alcohol consumption and a huge increase in harm. That is the lesson that I am trying to put over today. It is a difficult task, but it must be done.

Once we have proper monitoring, we can formulate policy along the lines confirmed by careful social investigation and no longer be in the present position of having to take steps in the dark. I do not deny that the required monitoring system would be extensive. One of the main distinguishing features of alcohol abuse is that it impinges on almost every aspect of social life. That is precisely why we should be so cautious about extending drinking hours. There is no need for me to describe at length all the various manifestations and consequences of alcohol abuse. However, I am bound to say that as a result of the helpful intervention from my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight)——

Mr. Douglas Hogg: He did not mean it.

Sir Bernard Braine: He challenged me and I responded.

I remind the House that the Bill is designed to increase the availability of a substance that is already an important contributory factor to approximately one in five admissions to general medical units. It is responsible for 40 to 50 per cent. of violent crime and approximately one third of divorce petitions and cases of child abuse. It is by far the single main cause of death and injury on our roads. Need I say more? [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] The truth shall make ye free. There are times when it is necessary to say these things so that hon. Members may understand that their liberalising efforts may have worthy objectives, but they carry a heavy price.

[Sir Bernard Braine]

Alcohol abuse is a problem for all society, not merely for a small minority of unfortunate individuals. I will not claim that it can be proved in advance that the Bill will make matters worse. I cannot say that. I can merely say that there is an obvious danger that it will do so. We are therefore under a considerable obligation to discover what the effects will be. Special social impact surveys will be needed to provide that information. The monitoring process must be regular and consistent, not spasmodic or erratic. It will also be necessary to ascertain regional variations in patterns of alcohol use and abuse. The effects of the Bill may differ from one part of the country to another. It may differ between urban areas and rural areas and it might vary between the north — which has a tradition for hard drinking — and the south. Those differences must be identified and understood.

While the monitoring process will undoubtedly require considerable activity and expertise, it should not place an impossible burden on the three Departments named in the new clause. Increasingly, data on alcohol-related problems are being gathered, although as I suspect the Wakeham committee has already discovered, the information is far from complete.

Some district health authorities have already begun to measure the incidence of alcohol-related accidental or non-accidental injuries presented to accident and emergency departments in a given locality according to the hour of day and the day of the week. Health authorities are also already improving their capacity to measure by means such as hospital activity analysis data the number of patients being treated for alcohol-related disease and the financial cost to the taxpayer of such treatment.

If the Government are undertaking a review of the Health Service, including its costs, organisation and administration, they should consider alcohol abuse very closely. The cost to the nation as a whole is very high. Similarly, it would not be too difficult for the home accident surveillance system to be adapted to identify the contribution of alcohol abuse to home accidents including fires, the importance of which has been recognised in recent publicity.

I remember the surprise I caused when commending some time ago the practice of one chief constable who listed whether alcohol was related to every charge on his records. That was not then a common practice in the police, but it should have been so that we could understand the total cost of alcohol abuse.

Equally, there is no reason why social services and probation departments as well as the police should not be able to develop systems for the routine monitoring of caseloads and offences to identify the contribution of alcohol abuse. At the moment, individual pieces of research suggest strongly that alcohol abuse is a significant factor in all those areas, but we need to know much more. The Bill is before the House; why is the opportunity not being taken to include such a provision? I am here to help the Minister to move in the right direction.

Whatever form the monitoring process takes, the public health and social well-being of the community requires that the results should be made widely available and of course to Parliament. This may or may not be the last occasion when an attempt will be made to change the licensing law, although I cannot believe that another Bill of this scope will be presented to the House in the foreseeable future. The least that we can do now, if we vote the Bill into law, is to ensure that a comprehensive monitoring process is established to bring the facts to light and inform those who have responsibility for public health, public order and public safety. The new clause can be regarded as a threat to licensing reform.

Mr. Charles Irving (Cheltenham): I rarely intervene in debates, but it is rather cold at this end of the Chamber. I think that the boiler has fused. I am so interested and excited by my right hon. Friend's dissertation. Is he suggesting that all the new regulations should apply to the House of Commons? As temporary landlord of the bars and facilities here, I should be grateful to know, so that I can make appropriate preparation.

Sir Bernard Braine: I should not be drawn in that direction, but many of our constituents ask why the bars in the Houses of Parliament are outside the licensing law. If the matter rested with me, they would not be. I understand that this has something to do with the fact that we occupy a royal palace which is not subject to the normal licensing laws. I will not defend that for a moment. However, my hon. Friend, who presides as Chairman over the House of Commons Catering Sub-Committee with such grace, charm and high competence—never has the food here been so good—must address himself to that point. I should not tread any further down that inviting but perhaps rather dangerous road.

The least that we can do now if we vote the Bill into law is to ensure that a comprehensive monitoring process is established to bring the facts to light and inform those responsible for public health, public order and public services. The new clause can be regarded as a threat to licensing reform only by those who fear the facts. I cannot believe that the House will take such a view and prefer ignorance to knowledge. I therefore commend the new clause to the House.

Mr. David Hinchliffe (Wakefield): I shall speak briefly in support of the new clause. My only interest in the debate is to represent the well-being of my constituents in Wakefield. I never cease to be amazed in such debates to see the number of Conservative Members who directly represent business interests. Tonight, Conservative Members have excelled themselves.

9 pm

It worries me that people outside the House assume that hon. Members come here to represent their constituency interests. We know exactly what interests Conservative Members represent in tonight's debate. As the right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) said, we are debating what is virtually a brewers' charter. The Bill is a brewers' charter. It is in the interests of the brewers and the business people who sit on the Conservative Benches. The Bill is a present from the Conservative Government to those who have loyally supported them in the past. [HON. MEMBERS: "Absolute nonsense."] It is a fact. The right hon. Member for Castle Point virtually conceded that point in his earlier comments. It is amazing that the Government can find legislative time to discuss extending drinking hours but not the real issues that have been touched upon — those relating to the problems of alcohol in our society. Those problems worry me, they worry other hon. Members, and they certainly worry my constituents in Wakefield.

The problem of drunken driving has been referred to in the debate. Every year there are 100,000 drink-driving convictions, and every year accidents involving drivers who are drunk cost the country £89 million. There is a public clamour for random breath tests. We should be discussing those issues instead of extending drinking hours. We should be discussing family problems, marital violence, marital breakdown and child abuse related to drinking. The Government should be giving the House time to discuss those issues instead of what we are debating tonight. My hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) has referred to the £2 billion that alcohol-related illness costs the National Health Service.

I should like to say a few words about drink-related crime. It is quite clear that there is a definite connection between offences that occur late at night and the amount of alcohol that people have consumed. I shall not go into great detail on the points that I made in Committee about the concern in my west Yorkshire constituency about drink-related offences which occur late at night, at around the time when pubs and clubs are closing.

Drink-related crime has reached a crisis point in west Yorkshire, and I suspect in certain other parts of the country. The Minister will recall that I mentioned in Committee the police figures for the Wakefield sub-division of west Yorkshire police. My constituency has the largest percentage of offences for violence against the person in the whole of west Yorkshire. That is because there is more drinking in Wakefield than elsewhere in west Yorkshire. It is accepted that we have more late-night licences. People come from as far away as London on trips to Wakefield, which is deemed to be a drinking town. It is not my constituents who are the drinkers. The problem is that people come from outside to my constituency. They come in busloads. Football supporters use my constituency for late-night drinking.

The huge crime figures, which have increased recently within the Wakefield sub-division, clearly correlate with closing time. The police say that around closing time in Wakefield city centre — Wakefield is small, with a population of less than 60,000 people — as many as 6,000 people can be milling around in various stages of intoxication. That is the cause of problems in Wakefield. Shortly before Christmas, 37 people were arrested for drink-related offences in Wakefield city centre in one night. The local police station had great difficulty in accommodating them.

We need to have encompassed in the legislation a review of what exactly is happening as a result of drinking. The local authorities in the Wakefield area are blamed for that problem. We are told — this point was made in Committee—that local authorities can block those late-night licences through their entertainment licensing powers. I made the point in Committee that the authorities in Wakefield attempted to do that, but time after time on appeal they have lost and had costs awarded against them in their efforts to defend the interests of my constituents. The local people are desperate for action, but it will not come from this legislation.

Mr. Waller: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the new restriction orders, which are an intrinsic part of the Bill, address directly the problem of which he has just spoken?

Mr. Hinchliffe: I accept that, but I am concerned about entertainment licences. That problem is not dealt with in the Bill, despite the fact that I raised it several times in Committee. The only way to deal with it is to follow the provisions of new clause 5 and hope that subsequently the Government will realise the extent of the problem in many parts of the country because of drink-related crime. The Government are totally oblivious to this worrying problem.

I want to make three points, to which I hope the Minister will respond. It is vital that the Government examine the evidence from the police in areas such as west Yorkshire about drink-related offences. They will get a message contrary to what they are providing for in the Bill. The problem, which will be evident from the figures provided by the police, should have been tackled in the Bill.

The Government should also take action to curb the increasing problem of late-night establishments which charge inflated admission prices of £4 or £5 and then sell beer or lager at 10p a pint. That is a financial incentive to people to get blind drunk. I accept that the Government do not want to get involved in market forces, but this practice encourages people to get drunk and commit crimes. Local authorities should be given real powers to block late-night entertainment licences and to tackle the problems of late-night drinking in areas such as Wakefield.

The Goverment are unbelievably complacent about the real problems referred to by the right hon. Member for Castle Point and by my hon. Friend the Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie). The provision for monitoring is essential. It is crucial to ensure that people's real concerns about alcohol are tackled by Parliament.

Sir Dudley Smith: Monitoring would have limited value. I intervene only to answer the hon. Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie). While we all accept that alcohol abuse leads to severe illness and death and to big social problems, restrictionism does not always equate with sobriety.

Last week I was talking to a leading Swedish politician whom I know well. He told me that in his country alcohol is extremely expensive and that there are many restrictions. Has that caused a lowering of alcohol consumption? It has not. Alcoholism is on the increase in Scandinavia, and particularly in Sweden. It has reached the stage where large numbers of people, including families, have their own stills to make alcohol. That is against the law, but the Government, presumably abandoning the monitoring that they had undertaken, have turned a blind eye to what is happening. They do not prosecute the individual; they prosecute only when a person gets ambitious and starts selling the product.

I am not suggesting that we will get to that position. Indeed, the liberal and far-sighted approach of the Government in this excellent Bill will assist us in being sensible about the problem. Time and again one hears from the critics a tale of woe and disaster. The one way of countering the problem is to stop drinking altogether or to restricti it severely. In some parts of the world restricton has been attempted but has not worked.

Mr. Anderson: I should like to respond to the hon. Member for Warwick and Leamington (Sir D. Smith). All the figures that I have seen, both national and international, suggest that there is a correlation between availability and consumption and between price and

[Mr. Anderson]

consumption. I hope that the hon. Gentleman accepts that it is important that the facts be established. I do, and that is why I support new clause 5.

I hope that everybody agrees that we need an informed debate on this vital issue. There must be greater public knowledge about it. We need legislation which is not a stab in the dark but based on the best available knowledge of what the effects of that legislation are likely to be. I hope that the Government will monitor those effects and will publish their findings. The hon. Member for Warwick and Leamington can feed in his own considerations, and we can all come to reasonable conclusions on the basis of knowledge rather than our respective presuppositions.

We also need enforcement and action. Our fear is that the Government may not want too much knowledge as they might be forced, as a result of public opinion, to take some action which they found distasteful. The right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) observed that if the Government want to save money on the National Health Service, they should address themselves to the enormous financial burden on that service caused by alcohol abuse. That burden can be increased or decreased by Government policy on alcohol.

We need monitoring, as it is quite clear from what the Minister and the Secretary of State have said that the Government take a dynamic view of the liberalisation of the licensing laws. This is only the start. The Secretary of State said on Second Reading that he would go much further. There is a dichotomy between his restrictionism with regard to refugees and immigration and his liberalism concerning the licensing laws. He favours more liberalisation for Sundays and, given half a chance, the Government would add to the liberalisation represented by the Bill. The Government are approaching the matter on an incremental basis. They will go step by step towards, possibly, total deregulation. It is therefore all the more important that we should know what the consequences of such action might be before it is taken.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie) said that the Welsh Office is mentioned in an amendment which we are to consider later. I shall not bore the House with the arguments that I made in Committee, but there is indeed a Welsh dimension. The scale of the problem is much greater in Wales, so I hope that the Welsh Office will take a role in the issue.

If the Government do not want to know the facts, they will continue to stumble along in the dark. It seems that they are unprepared to research the effects of the changes. Perhaps the findings of such research would be unwelcome to them.

9.15 pm

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I do not commend the new clause to the House. My reasons are both broad and narrow, and I shall deal with the latter first. This House should not impose statutory obligations that are incapable of enforcement. The new clause seeks to do just that, because, although it specifies objectives, it does not specify means. Nor does it say what has to be done to comply with a statutory obligation. On those narrow grounds alone, the new clause is defective.

Secondly and broadly, the problem is not lack of information—there is plenty of information—but lack of interpretation of the information. We can have all the information that we like, but I strongly suspect that my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine), with all the eloquence for which he is noted, would argue for a different conclusion to be drawn from that information from that which I would draw.

Government Departments such as the Home Office, the Department of Transport and the DHSS accumulate a vast body of information relating to the problems of drink, their consequences and their characteristics. In places like this, we are concerned not with lack of knowledge but with the interpretation to be placed on it. That being so, although I greatly admired my right hon. Friend's speech, I cannot commend his new clause to the House.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 69, Noes 270.

Division No. 166] **[9.16 pm**

AYES

Allen, Graham	McCartney, Ian
Alton, David	McCrea, Rev William
Anderson, Donald	McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*	McNamara, Kevin
Barron, Kevin	Mahon, Mrs Alice
Beggs, Roy	Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Beith, A. J.	Maxton, John
Bermingham, Gerald	Michael, Alun
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard	Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*	Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*	Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*	Morgan, Rhodri
Campbell-Savours, D. N.	Murphy, Paul
Cryer, Bob	Paisley, Rev Ian
Cummings, J.	Parry, Robert
Cunliffe, Lawrence	Patchett, Terry
Dalyell, Tam	Pike, Peter
Dixon, Don	Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Doran, Frank	Richardson, Ms Jo
Douglas, Dick	Robertson, George
Duffy, A. E. P.	Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Faulds, Andrew	Short, Clare
Fearn, Ronald	Skinner, Dennis
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*	Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Flynn, Paul	Spearing, Nigel
Foster, Derek	Steel, Rt Hon David
Golding, Mrs Llin	Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Hardy, Peter	Turner, Dennis
Haynes, Frank	Wallace, James
Heffer, Eric S.	Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Hinchliffe, David	Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Howells, Geraint	Wise, Mrs Audrey
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*	
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine	Tellers for the Ayes:
Kilfedder, James	Dr. Lewis Moonie and
Lestor, Miss Joan *(Eccles)*	Mr. Eric Illsley.
Livingstone, Ken	

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan	Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Alexander, Richard	Boswell, Tim
Alison, Rt Hon Michael	Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Allason, Rupert	Bowis, John
Amess, David	Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Arbuthnot, James	Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*	Brazier, Julian
Aspinwall, Jack	Bright, Graham
Atkins, Robert	Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Atkinson, David	Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*	Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Baldry, Tony	Buck, Sir Antony
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony	Burns, Simon
Bendall, Vivian	Burt, Alistair
Benyon, W.	Butler, Chris
Bevan, David Gilroy	Butterfill, John
Blackburn, Dr John G.	Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter	Carrington, Matthew

Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Crowther, Stan
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Janman, Timothy
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Hon Sir Charles
Morrison, Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon J. D. *(S'ford)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Peter Lloyd.

Question accordingly negatived.

New Clause 8

GARAGE SALES

After section ((3) of the principal Act, there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(3A) premises which in whole or in part are engaged in the retailing of petrol or derv to motorists or other users of motor vehicles shall be disqualified for receiving a justices' off-licence."—*[Sir Bernard Braine.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

9.30 pm

Sir Bernard Braine: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

The purpose of the new clause is to prohibit the granting of off-licences to petrol stations and garages. The arguments in favour of the clause are simple, obvious and self-evident: alcohol and driving are plainly mismatched.

I have been unable to obtain up-to-date information about the number of off-licences granted to garages and petrol stations, but I understand that the number is not large—probably less than 100. Indeed, I understand that licensing committees are more likely to refuse than to grant such a licence. However, the fact that applications are being made is a cause for concern. The purpose of the clause is to ensure consistency of practice by giving licensing committees clear directives, which I believe the vast majority would greatly welcome. Some directives would also be particularly welcome to the licensing justices in the vast majority of areas which have, quite rightly, held out against the granting of such licences.

[Sir Bernard Braine]

The police would also welcome the clause. Indeed, it was prompted by a letter to me from the Police Superintendents Association of England and Wales, which stated that, at the last executive committee meeting of the association in December, a motion was put forward by districts and subsequently adopted as official policy of the association, seeking the abolition of a loophole in the liquor licensing law created by section 4 of the Alcoholic Liquor Duties Act 1979. That section allows liquor to be sold in bulk as a wholesale transaction without the need for any particular form of licensing control of the premises concerned.

The letter stated:

"In this respect many garage forecourts are supplying bulk amounts of alcohol to motorists and general shoppers, which the Association feels is in direct conflict with the duty of the police to reduce drinking and driving, apart from any other reasons to tighten up control over this kind of outlet."

The House will be aware that police superintendents are senior field officers and their view should not be taken lightly.

Mr. Roger King: Would my right hon. Friend care to explain the problem that might be encountered at hypermarkets, where the sale of petrol is undertaken on the same premises where food and alcoholic drinks are also for sale?

Sir Bernard Braine: At this late hour I am not prepared to go into detail. All I will say is that the principle enshrined in my clause should commend itself to all hon. Members. However, I am not prepared to be diverted.

Mr. Greg Knight: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Sir Bernard Braine: I will not give way because Mr. Speaker clearly wants the business to move on.

The arguments in favour of the clause are straightforward. First, given the large number of outlets for alcohol that now exist, it can hardly be claimed that sales from petrol stations are necessary for the convenience of the customer. Secondly, sales from petrol stations are totally and inherently inconsistent with the whole aim, purpose and direction of national policy against drinking and driving.

I am not in a position to claim that alcohol sales from petrol stations have led directly to drink-drive accidents because if that were the case it would not be apparent from the official statistics. However, the fact is that alcohol sales from petrol stations give entirely the wrong message. The whole purpose of the Department of Transport's campaign is rightly to dissociate drinking from driving and driving from drinking. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight) understands that.

The codes of advertising practice—albeit voluntary—prohibit the association of drinking with driving in advertisements. Therefore, it is difficult to understand how an actual physical association between the two activities can be justified. Motorway service areas are, of course, already prohibited from selling alcohol.

It may be argued that my new clause is unwarranted because there is no essential difference between driving off having stacked up the boot of one's care with alcohol bought at a local supermarket and doing the same thing with alcohol bought at the petrol station. I submit, however, that there is a fundamental distinction between the two cases. The function of legislation is not merely to affect behaviour in an immediate direct sense; in a democratic society such as ours, legislation also has an educational function. It is an important way in which our society makes a statement to the effect that some way of behaviour is unacceptable.

Granting licences to petrol stations makes exactly the opposite statement to the one we wish to make. By definition, the essential aim and purpose of petrol stations, unlike supermarkets, is to serve motorists. The idea of serving motorists with alcohol is anathema to everything that the Department of Transport is trying to accomplish through its campaigns and publicity.

The passage of the new clause will cause little, if any, significant inconvenience to the public and, indeed, strengthening the arm of the licensing benches to refuse inappropriate applications for licences from premises, the primary purpose of which is to serve drivers, would meet with the approval of the great majority of the public and those responsible for safety on our roads. I commend the new clause to the House.

Mr. Anderson: Many of the considerations that apply to motorway service stations also apply to the new clause. The particular problem of hypermarkets could be solved by the words "primary purpose" or "ancillary to" if there were an appropriate qualification. I hope that at least the principle of the new clause commends itself to the Minister.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The House would like to express its thanks to my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) and to the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) for the brief, clear way in which they have advanced the argument. There are three reasons why I cannot commend the new clause to the House.

First, the general powers which enable justices to refuse licences are sufficient. That probably explains why there are only about 150 garages with off-licence facilities.

The second reason relates to the problem of hypermarkets. Hon. Members will know of the increasing tendency for out-of-town supermarkets and hypermarkets to sell both alcohol and petrol. One cannot honestly say that that was mistaken. If we follow the route of the hon. Member for Swansea, East, we shall reach every kind of complexity.

Thirdly, in some—not many—small rural areas local stores sell groceries, alcohol and petrol. They serve a local need and it would be wrong to stop them. For those reasons, I cannot commend the new clause.

Question put and negatived.

New Clause 10

DELEGATED POWER OF LICENSING JUSTICES

'In section 6 of the principal Act (provisional grant of new licence or removal), in subsection (4), after the word "justices" there shall be inserted the words

"or a single licensing justice with delegated powers authorised under Schedule 1 Part I Paragraph 7 to this Act.".'.—*[Mr. Waller.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Waller: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take new clause 11—*Adjudication of application by single licensing justice—*

'The following paragraph shall be inserted after paragraph 6 of Schedule 1 Part I to the principal Act—

"7. In the case of an application under section 6(4) above licensing justices may adjourn the hearing of such an application and delegate its adjudication to a single member of the licensing committee.".'

Mr. Waller: Like the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe), who came to the Chamber, made his diatribe against Conservative Members and departed, I speak for my constituents and I am concerned on their behalf alone.

The existing law on the issue of licences is inconvenient not only for many new supermarkets and premises but for the public. Retailers who are opening new stores face a particular problem with section 6(4) of the principal Act, in that licencing justices can have a provisional grant of a justices' off-licence declared final at a transfer session only when such premises are completed in accordance with plans deposited. That leads to difficulties, as such sessions may often be held only five times a year. The likelihood of a new store being completed in accordance with the deposited plans on one such day during the year is rather remote.

Consequently, a company opening premises on the day after a transfer session may face the prospect of not being able to sell liquor for a considerable period—perhaps as long as 10 weeks. It is difficult to see that any public good is achieved thereby. For example, when the Gateway store in Lavender Hill opened, it faced a delay of three weeks before it could sell liquor. In other cases, the opening of a store has been delayed because it did not coincide with the transfer sessions. Although the Bill contains a provision to change the number of licensing sessions to be held, the minimum number of such sessions will remain unchanged. The Bill does little, therefore, to improve the situation.

New clauses 10 and 11 seek to enable the applicant who applies for a final order under section 6(4) of the 1964 Act to apply for the matter to be heard upon the date on which the premises are declared to be completed. A store would already have been granted a fire certificate by the local authority. I hope that my hon. Friend will be able to say that he sympathises with and will consider ways of taking on board this point.

The proposal would delegate power to one licensing justice to hear the application, rather than inconvenience, the bench and require the minimum of three justices, as are required to attend a licence transfer session. I do not foresee that any disadvantages will flow from this proposal and I hope that the Minister will accept it.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My hon. Friend the Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller) has asked me to say two things: first, that I sympathise with the point; and, secondly, that I shall consider ways of taking it on board. I shall do both of those things.

Mr. Waller: In view of that response, which, albeit brief, I take to be sympathetic, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 1

MODIFICATION OF PERMITTED HOURS

Mr. Colvin: I beg to move amendment No. 2, in page 1, line 11, at end insert—

'(2) In section 60(1)*(b)* of the principal Act (permitted hours in licensed premises on Sundays, Christmas Day and Good Friday) for the word "five" there shall be substituted the word "three" and for the words "beginning at two in the afternoon" shall be substituted "between two and seven in the afternoon.".'.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take amendment No. 4, in page 1, line 11, at end insert—

'(2) In section 60(1)*(b)* of the principal Act (permitted hours in licensed premises on Sundays, Christmas Day, and Good Friday) the words "with a break of five hours beginning at two in the afternoon" shall be omitted.'.

Mr. Colvin: We might describe one of these amendments as frivolous and the other as eminently sensible. Both relate to the permitted hours issue on Sundays. Amendment No. 4 is rather impractical, at least in political terms, as it attempts to treat Sundays like other days of the week by abolishing the need for licensees to close during the afternoon. In the light of the Shops Bill, I do not think that the House is ready for such a change. I am sure that the time will come for such proposals, so for the moment I shall not seek to press amendment No. 4.

Perhaps it would be advisable to remind the House of the licensing law on Sundays, Christmas day and Good Friday. The permitted hours are from 12 noon to 10.30 pm, with a break of five hours beginning at 2 pm. Pubs are therefore closed between 2 pm and 7 pm, a total of five hours. My proposal would limit the closing to three hours only, leaving it to the publican to decide during which of the three hours between 2 pm and 7 pm he would close.

I realise that I am on extremely dangerous ground, as I have dared to touch on the issue of Sunday trading. This is only a modest inching forward on this issue; it is not even a step forward, but it is a modest move in the right direction towards what we might describe as "sense on Sunday". I am mindful of the ignominious fate of the Government's Shops Bill, defeated in the House by an unholy alliance of the official Opposition, the trade union movement and a number of Back Benchers, no doubt with marginal seats, who demonstrated the truism that a politician's mind is conditioned by the state of his seat.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): That is a monstrous, disgraceful and utterly untrue statement. I ask my hon. Friend to withdraw it.

Mr. Colvin: With respect to my hon. Friend, I shall withdraw it. If I have touched on any sensitivities, I withdraw that statement unreservedly.

Sir Bernard Braine: Would my hon. Friend also withdraw it in respect of myself? Over the years, I have been consistent on this subject. It has not affected the vote in my constituency, which, I am happy to say, has increased at every election.

Mr. Colvin: If it needed to be shown that Sunday trading is a sensitive issue, I have done so. I unreservedly apologise to my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine).

Amendment No. 2 also questions the Government's commitment to reforming the laws on Sunday trading. They should be a little more courageous than they have been in this Bill.

9.45 pm

I draw the House's attention to a commitment in the Conservative party manifesto of the last general election. The relevant paragraph appears immediately before the commitment to reforming the licensing laws. It reads:

"We will, therefore, look for an acceptable way forward to bring sense and consistency to the law on Sunday trading."

In that regard, I suggest that amendment No. 2 would be a sensible first step.

Earlier my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) said that public houses in Britain are changing very fast. Many public houses now offer meals. To cope with the provision of meals, a measure of flexibility in Sunday opening hours would merit serious consideration.

What I am proposing would ensure that Sundays were still treated specially. One cannot change that by law. I do not believe, as do my hon. Friend the Minister and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, that the amendment would jeopardise the Bill. On Second Reading, they were questioned about their attitudes on changing the Sunday trading law. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State was pressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Devizes (Sir C. Morrison) to say whether he would agree to changing the law on Sunday hours. The hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) asked:

"Is the right hon. Gentleman saying that he would vote against an attempt to extend the Bill to Sundays?"

The Secretary of State said:

"I am not. I am simply stating facts."—[*Official Report*, 9 November 1987; Vol. 122, c. 41.]

When pressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellet-Bowman), he was still a little ambivalent. There is much support, not only on the Conservative Benches but in the Government, for a change in the law on permitted hours on Sundays. I have heard no good arguments advanced for preserving the status quo. No doubt hon. Members who feel strongly on the subject will make their views known.

We must accept that the social scene in the United Kingdom is changing very fast. In keeping with the efforts that are being made to encourage tourism, particularly in rural areas, licensees should be given an opportunity to respond to the demands of their customers.

Essentially, we are talking about an element of choice, and choice is an important Conservative principle. At present, public houses open at midday and have to close at 2 pm. Two hours is not long to eat a lunch on Sundays. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State looks very much like a port and pheasant man. He has already admitted in another debate that he is a shooting man. I am sure that, when he has finished his lunch on Sunday, he will not be able to enjoy his glass of port before being driven home by his wife, who has been drinking Perrier water, because there will not be time to do so. That is ridiculous.

If we accept, as I believe we have, the arguments in favour of a change in the so-called permitted hours from Mondays to Saturdays, surely it is inconsistent and illogical not to reform the hours on Sundays, Good Fridays, and Christmases as well.

I am sorry that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) is not here to move this amendment. He has taken part in previous licensing reform debates and was present during the lobby of Parliament last December. He told some 400 assembled licensees in the Great Hall that he favoured a change in the licensing law operating on Sundays. A number of Opposition Members favour a change in the law on Sundays with regard to licensing, although they do not favour a change generally with regard to retail trading.

This is not what is described a probing amendment. It is essentially a prodding amendment to persuade the Government to think again. We shall listen carefully to my hon. Friend the Minister.

Sir Dudley Smith: I support my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin), who has moved the amendment in a moderate way. Three headings need to be taken into account. First, I do not think that there is any hon. Member who does not believe that this change will eventually come about. I emphasise the fact that this is a modest move, which paves the way for future change. If the change is not made now, and the amendment is not accepted—I do not expect that it will be—surely it will come within the next decade.

Secondly, the present Sunday opening hours are not understood by foreign tourists. They find all our licensing laws puzzling, and Sunday hours are especially puzzling. As my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside said, many modern public houses serve food. Many foreign tourists eat in public houses and it becomes something of a liability if the bell is rung at 2 o'clock.

Thirdly, I submit that a limited change is sensible and would not cause any more disturbance than now occurs on Sundays. I support the movement to keep Sunday special, with only limited shop opening. I abstained in the vote after the Sunday trading debate. I am certainly not a free-for-all man in respect of Sundays. In speeding this legislation on its way, we should take account of the position on Sundays and provide for a modest increase in hours.

Sir Bernard Braine: I oppose the amendment, which is clearly against the public interest and which, moreover, runs counter to many of the assurances given with regard to the modest scope and purposes of the Bill.

I wish to be fair to the Government. I voted against the Bill on Second Reading because, with the Wakeham committee having just been established—a development which I warmly welcomed—I did not believe that this was the appropriate time to meddle with the licensing laws and because the Bill did not at that time include any safeguards in relation to the problem of under-age drinking.

I am glad to concede that the Government have taken important steps towards the inclusion of additional safeguards. Whether I vote against the Bill on Third Reading depends on the outcome of the drink industry's attempts to obtain longer opening hours. I shall await what my hon. Friend says about that with the greatest of interest.

I am pleased that so far, during Second Reading and in Committee, the Government have honoured the assurances that they gave the House about Sunday opening. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will continue to resist pressure from the drink industry with the utmost vigour.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Would it help my right hon. Friend to know that we have no intention of departing from the assurances that we have already given?

Sir Bernard Braine: I did not think for one moment that my hon. Friend would depart from his assurances, but it

is necessary to make a stand in these matters so that there should be no misunderstanding. Some of the speeches in the debate have shown a considerable misunderstanding of the position. For that reason, I am entitled to give my reasons why the House should reject the proposals of my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin).

I have already mentioned my first reason, which is that to accept the amendment would renege on repeated assurances that the Bill would exclude Sundays. The Government's consultative document stated that they would be excluded, as they were, and the Bill completed its Committee stage unaltered in that respect. No doubt there would have been more opposition to the Bill in Committee if Sundays had been included.

The second reason is that there is no evidence that the majority of the public want extended drinking hours on Sundays. Indeed, the evidence from opinion polls strongly suggests that a large majority of the population opposes such a change. In view of what my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside has said, it is necessary for me to say something. The MORI poll in November 1987 found that only 29 per cent. of the population agreed with longer pub opening hours on Sundays, while 59 per cent. were opposed. Thus, to accept the amendment would be not merely to renege on previous assurances but to do so knowing that we were flying in the face of public opinion.

The third reason for opposing the amendment has to do with the additional harm that would be created by extending drinking hours. In the first place, there is the matter of prolonged annoyance and aggravation to local residents. For many people, Sunday afternoon is the only time in the week when they can enjoy rest and relaxation with their families at home, free from the noise and disturbance that characterise the rest of the week.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Warwick and Leamington (Sir D. Smith) said, Sunday is regarded by many people as a special day. The amendment, if carried, would be likely to spoil that specialness for a great many people. I do not represent and have never represented the views of Sabbatarians but a vast number of our people who do not go to church or have religious views about Sunday want to keep one day in the week when they can enjoy peace and quiet. Those living in the immediate vicinity of a pub would be especially likely to experience additional annoyance, but the problem would by no means be restricted to them.

Many of us are anxious about the likely effects of the Bill in increasing outbreaks of public disorder during the week, which is why I have tabled an amendment to improve the safeguards. But the disorders are most likely to occur at weekends, the time of the week when most alcohol is consumed. We await with some trepidation what will happen in our streets and town centres on Saturdays once the Bill is in force. The prospect of the peak drinking period being extended to include Sundays would certainly cause considerable alarm to the staff of the accident and emergency departments of hospitals and to the police, who will have to cope with the consequences.

I quote a brief extract from the *Yorkshire Post* on 21 September last year. It shows what I have in mind. The heading is:

"A wet Friday night out"

It states:

"A scream of obscenities was followed by a thud as a drunken youth pushed another up against a hot-dog stall, raining blows on his face . . . as we passed McDonalds restaurant to see (another) youth, face covered in blood, being comforted by his friends . . . Across the road, a line of young drunks urinated in a shop doorway in full view of a crowd of young girls . . . It was a wet Friday night in Leeds as the city centre pubs disgorged their customers, many of them below the legal drinking age."

Mr. Couchman: My right hon. Friend has read a graphic account of trouble outside a public house on a wet Friday night. I understand that the amendments concern Sunday hours, not wet Friday nights.

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Licensing Bill and the Welsh Development Agency Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

Licensing Bill

Bill, as amended, (in the Standing Committee), again considered.

Question again proposed, That the amendment be made.

Sir Bernard Braine: My hon. Friend's intervention was a waste of time. He should have listened a little longer. He is prolonging what I have to say. The problem in Leeds is to be found in many towns and cities.

Mr. Couchman: Not on Sunday afternoons.

Sir Bernard Braine: Not yet, but certainly on other days. I have given evidence of that over and over again. My hon. Friend's ears are closed to the subject.

The report stated:

"It was a wet Friday night in Leeds as the city centre pubs had disgorged their customers, many of them below the legal drinking age."

The House will be well advised to note what happens on Saturday afternoons and bank holidays after the Bill is put into operation before making any further extension of hours to those proposed by the Government and undermining traditional family quiet days such as Christmas day and Good Friday. Moreover, the amendments are likely to have a particularly marked effect on problems caused by alcohol abuse.

In Committee, the Minister conceded that a relaxation of the Sunday law would probably lead to an increase in consumption. That is a frank admission from the Government. It has been stated over and over again, the world over, that increases in consumption are accompanied by increases in social and physical harm. The Minister also argued against allowing airports to have extended licensing hours on Sundays, on the ground that to do so would be likely to give rise to an increase in drunken driving. There is good evidence to show that the Minister was right on both counts.

Dr. D. Smith of the Western Australia Alcohol and Drug Authority has shown that, following the introduction of Sunday alcohol sales in Perth, there was a 63·8 per cent. increase in the number of persons killed on Sundays in comparison to the other six days of the week. Similarly, in Brisbane, following the introduction of two two-hour drinking sessions on Sundays, road casualties increased by 130 per cent. If my hon. Friend would like me to tell him what is happening in other countries, I am ready to do so.

[Sir Bernard Braine]

The introduction of a 10-hour Sunday hotel session in New South Wales was followed by a 22 per cent. increase in fatal road traffic accidents. The House already knows that the peak time for alcohol-related road accidents occurs when pubs are turning out, and especially on Friday and Saturday nights.

In introducing the Bill, the Government have taken no counter-measures to prevent such harm from increasing. It would be utter folly for the House to pass my hon. Friend's amendment without also strengthening the law against drinking and driving.

If libertarians want a person to be free to drink when and where he likes, and if the drink industry wants the opportunity to sell alcohol at any time during the day, they would make a better case if, at the same time, they were prepared to see the Department of Transport's "Don't drink and drive" policy better enforced by introducing random breath testing, increasing the penalties for such offences, and lowering the legal limit. Until such action is taken, removing the existing safeguards on alcohol consumption without replacing them with other measures is tantamount to aiding and abetting the killing and maiming of more people on our roads.

The amendment is trade-inspired. It promotes a drinking day rather than a family day. It is more likely to promote "one for the road" than "none for the road." By maintaining the present Sunday licensing law, there is a greater likelihood that pubs will open and sell tea and coffee—as was recommended by many hon. Members—and attractive alcohol-free drinks which all the family can enjoy, including the driver.

Mr. Colvin: How can a licensee start selling tea at 7 pm on a Sunday afternoon? If the Government accepted my amendment, the publican would have the flexibility to close at 2 pm and open at 5 pm. That is a far more practical proposition, and the publican could do what he wanted.

Sir Bernard Braine: How naive can my hon. Friend get? The whole object of the amendment—never mind where it comes from—is to increase the sale of alcohol. The House is not composed of fools. We know the purpose of the amendment,. Perhaps some people believe there is no great danger in the amendment, but many of us believe there is.

By maintaining the present Sunday licensing laws there is a better chance of getting public houses to open and sell tea, coffee and attractive alcohol-free drinks which all the family can enjoy. We should encourage rather than obstruct such a change in our drinking habits. I hope that the House will reject the amendment decisively.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I will be brief, but I want to say a few words because these are important matters. The cost of alcohol-induced accidents and alcohol-induced disease is a major problem. If we did not have to look after people suffering from an excess of alcohol, our National Health Service would not be in crisis. There would be a surplus of beds because so many of them at present are occupied by people with alcohol-induced difficulties and diseases.

I want to speak out clearly against the amendment. The right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) said earlier that these amendments were trade-inspired. I am beginning to wonder whether Agnes Maude Royden's aphorism, that

"The Church should no longer be satisfied to represent the Conservative party at prayer"

is any longer true. It looks as if the Tory party is more concerned about praying to the brewers than being part of the Church of England.

Although I would not argue that Sunday should be closed or isolated from many human activities, some of which employ people, we must decide whether we are trying to preserve Sunday as a reasonably quiet day with some people having to work to provide services, such as the supply of electricity, staffing hospitals and running the railways and other public services. We accept that that is part of Sunday. We must also make a judgment not to extend the law to erode Sunday so that the precious nature of Sunday is removed for many people. That precious nature may stem from a religious preference, and, although I do not particularly share that, I honour and respect those people who wish to make a decision in that direction.

People may want to maintain Sunday as an emphatically family day. We must be careful not to allow Sunday to be eroded gradually by watering down legislative safeguards that have not been properly examined. As the right hon. Member for Castle Point said, a committee is examining the procedure. I regret the fact that the committee did not report to the House before the legislation was introduced.

We must consider another aspect of this matter—the workers. Wherever Sunday working is introduced, there should be safeguards for workers. There should be a conscience clause that people can exercise so that employers cannot force them to work on Sundays against their will. People may argue that that does not apply in some industries at the moment, and that is probably true. I regard that with considerable regret because employers can pressure people into working when they want to keep Sunday free.

Even when there is a conscience clause, it is often honoured more in its breach than its observance. It is difficult for people who are faced with the possibility of dismissal — not because they would not work on Sundays, but because an employer would choose another reason to dismiss someone who was not prepared to co-operate and work on Sundays.

That was the argument against the extension of Sunday trading. I do not think that that argument was properly made. The amendments contain no protection for workers. There is no protection in the parent legislation. I should have thought that if hon. Members were really concerned about the rights of those who differ from the movers of the amendments, they would include in their proposals safeguards so that people are not coerced into working on a Sunday if they do not wish to do so.

Lastly, representations have been made to me by members of the St. John the Evangelist parish church at Great Horton. They sent me a petition, containing more than 400 signatures, expressing opposition to the Bill. I share that opposition. The vicar, Canon H. M. Wigley, asked me specifically to oppose the legislation. That is why I am taking the opportunity to speak out against proposals for the incursion of yet more pub opening hours on a Sunday.

I do not like the Bill, but I certainly dislike those aspects which, as the right hon. Member for Castle Point put it so aptly, are trade-inspired. I do not like trade-inspired amendments, because we are making a judgment. My

judgment is that the two amendments will not add to the sum of human happiness or pleasure. They will cause more pain than pleasure. They will cause more discomfort and more disagreeable intrusions into a day which, when we examine the circumstances, we should try to keep as free as possible from difficulties for people who wish to take pleasure in a simple family day.

Sir Raymond Gower (Vale of Glamorgan): For reasons similar to those expressed by my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine), I oppose the amendment. It is unfortunate that it was introduced at this late stage. It should have been considered on Second Reading, not on Report.

Nevertheless, I respectfully submit that, even today, the comparative peace of Sunday is invaluable to people, whether or not they are churchgoers. That peace can easily be eroded, and we would then regret its departure. It has become part of the life of this country; and it is difficult to envisage a seven-day working week, which is what we are in danger of achieving.

There have been many attempts to erode the difference of Sunday. Fortunately, the Shops Bill 1986 was defeated, but it would have been an invitation for the wholesale secularisation of Sunday, and the creation of a good deal of traffic, disorder and destruction of the environment, all of which would be undesirable.

In the eyes of its sponsors this is a modest change. Unfortunately, it is a move in the wrong direction. They are all incursions into the kind of Sunday that we have known, and in the long term they are cumulatively injurious to the environment. I agree with the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) that people who are under pressure to work on Sunday should have some protection. There was no such protection in the Shops Bill. There was not the complete protection that is desirable.

I know that my hon. Friend the Minister has given an assurance that the Government will not adopt the amendment. I hope that very few hon. Members will vote for it and that it will be defeated conclusively and comprehensively, as it is an undesirable move in the wrong direction.

10.15 pm

Mr. Anderson: This is not the time to rehearse all the arguments about the special nature of Sunday, but, like the right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine), I have the honour to be a patron of the Keep Sunday Special campaign. We look back with interest at the campaign which we waged in the House on the Shops Bill. We also look back to last Friday when the Government, after their experience on the Shops Bill, were much more wary on the Sunday Sports (No. 2) Bill, the key effect of which would be to open betting shops on Sunday.

The Government are treading warily because of their experience, in spite of the fact that the Home Secretary sees the need to make Sunday like any other day of the week. I do not believe that that is in tune with the wishes of the great majority of the people. I shall not rehearse the general arguments, but I am glad that the Government —at least for the moment—resist the amendment.

Mr. Couchman: The Government have been timid on the question of Sundays. A small adjustment, such as that suggested by my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) to allow a slightly longer lunchtime session on Sunday, would have satisfied many people who like to take their families out for lunch on Sunday. At present, opening hours are unequal on Sundays. As a result of the noble Lord Montgomery's Licensing (Restaurant Meals) Act 1987, restaurants and public houses with restaurants which are entirely separate may open throughout the entirety of Sunday afternoon to serve drinks with meals.

Public houses are constrained by the antiquated requirement whereby they can open only from 12 midday to 2 o'clock. If they wish to serve food during Sunday afternoon, they are still constrained by the 12 to 2 o'clock rule. As I said on Second Reading, the rule is honoured more in the breach than in the observance. There is more abuse of the opening and closing times at Sunday lunchtime, particularly in London, than in any other session during the week.

I take issue with the suggestion of my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) that a modest increase in the number of hours allowed at Sunday lunchtime would lead to an enormous rise in crime, motor accidents, and so on. Sunday is a day when people would very much like to go out with their families for a meal and to have a slightly longer time in which to buy a drink with a meal in a public house which offers such good value in the food that it serves.

My right hon. Friend suggested that the amendment was inspired by the trade. If the trade, in its desire to serve its customers with what customers want on a Sunday, has inspired the amendment, that is nothing to be ashamed of. I accept what was said about this being a prodding rather than a probing amendment, on which I suspect that we will not get a result this evening, but I hope that the Government will bear in mind that the question of opening hours on Sunday is still alive, whereas, had they taken a modest step to increase the Sunday lunchtime session, the whole question of the permitted licensing hours on Sunday would have died not for the next five or 10 years but probably for 25 years. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State must expect the question to be raised again, even if the amendment does not get the approval of the House tonight.

Mr. Cormack: My hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) has spoken modestly and persuasively. Had my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) spoken in similar terms when he moved the amendment, he might have won more friends, although he was gracious enough to apologise and to withdraw his remarks which impugned the motives of some of his colleagues. None of us should ever do that. It set the debate off on a sour note.

Many of us believe that Sunday is special and different and that it should not become a duplicate Saturday. That is why I have resisted attempts to encourage Sunday trading. It is not that I do not believe that the law needs tidying up—it does—but that I do not want Sunday to become a second Saturday. We should be doing a great disservice to the British people if we took such a course.

My hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside prayed tourism in aid. Tourism is extremely important. It brings great revenue to the country. Tourists are welcome, but, although we welcome and must look after them, we do not have to change all the laws of the land to accommodate them. That is a slightly threadbare argument, and it should not be pushed too far.

[Mr. Cormack]

I was glad that my hon. Friend the Minister said that the amendment would be resisted. I hope that it will not be put to a vote. I hope that there can be a long and—I choose my words advisedly—sober look at the law governing Sundays in all respects to meet the legitimate designs and aspirations of everyone. I declare an interest as a non-executive director of a small group of hotels.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham said, we should take into account the fact that people who can afford a fairly expensive meal can buy drinks, but those who cannot do not. We must nevertheless be extremely careful. The hours of trading must be restricted. Sunday must not become a second Saturday. We should therefore follow the lead offered by my hon. Friend the Minister and, if the House divides, we should support the Government against the amendment which I believe my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside is proposing unadvisedly.

Mr. Chris Butler (Warrington, South): Although I represent an English constituency, I come from Wales. I must say that there is something reminiscent, in the arguments against the extension of flexibility on Sunday, of the arguments in the Principality against drinking on Sunday. Under the force of public opinion and democratic voting, flexibility has gradually been extended. I believe that even the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells) will admit that Wales has not turned into a terrible Sodom and Gomorrah. Indeed, it has benefited.

The Government have implicitly accepted the arguments in favour of liberalising the licensing laws on the grounds of the extra amenity and employment that would be created. I should have thought that those arguments applied just as much—if not more so—to Sunday as to any other day of the week.

I am in favour of extending choice, provided that that does not overbear on the choice available to others to keep Sunday as they wish. I want the Government to be more radical on this matter.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I do not commend the amendment to the House for two reasons—one broad and one narrow. I shall deal with the latter first.

The proposals amount to flexible hours, but make no provision for enforcement, without which the amendment cannot sensibly be proposed. The amendment therefore falls on that narrow ground.

There is another point, which is of greater substance. The Government have made it wholly plain that we do not intend at the moment to change the law on Sundays. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary made an unequivocal statement to that effect, and I echoed it. Other people, including hon. Members, altered their stance on the basis of those assurances. It would be wrong to depart in any way from those assurances. I hope that I can persuade my right hon. and hon. Friends to take up the same position.

Mr. Colvin: I am pleased that I tabled these two amendments, and that the more modest of the two has been debated. I think that you will agree, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that it has been an extremely good debate and I for one could not have been accused of closed ears. When my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) was on his feet, who could have closed his ears to such eloquence and power?

There have been strong arguments for and against some relaxation of the law on Sunday. The Government must now consider how they will honour the manifesto pledge to bring sense into the law on Sunday trading generally. I was proposing a modest step in that direction with licensing law reform. Having made my point, and having listened to the arguments, I can only hope that, when the other place comes to debate this matter, with the will of the House, it will pick up the banner and carry it forward, and that an amendment along the lines of mine will be tabled.

The anxiety expressed by Ministers about opposition to changing the law on Sundays arises mainly from their fear of what might happen in the other place. As hon. Members know, in this place we can be dragooned in the right direction to a certain extent, as we are being tonight. That is regrettable, when Opposition Members have the opportunity of a free vote, such as that which we enjoyed in the debate on the Shops Bill in 1986. With those thoughts in mind, and in the hope that an amendment like this may appear in the other place, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): I beg to move amendment No. 3, in page 1, line 11, at end insert—

'(2) In section 60(1)(b) the words "The licensing magistrates may modify the permitted hours for *bona fide* English vineyards so that they begin no earlier than 12.00 noon for a total of no more than five and a half hours" shall be added.'.

This is an interesting and unusual issue which I feel that the House, even at this late hour, would like to hear a little about. There are 200 commercial vineyards in this country, 100 of which are open to the public. Increasingly, they are a tourist attraction, but they are also a sort of small business enterprise, and many of them are on farms, where farmers have heeded the Government's exhortations to diversify and have gone into the vineyard business. They are creating successful wines which are the envy of many parts of Europe and the world.

The problem, which is endemic, is the law relating to wine tasting or sampling, and the amendment specifically deals with that. I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary, when he has heard the argument, will be able to say something helpful about the general point of tasting and sampling, beyond the scope of the amendment.

Let me deal first with the issues. At present, a tourist visiting an English vineyard can taste wines if that vineyard has an on-licence during the hours that a public house is open. One can go to an English vineyard—as one can go to one in Germany, France or Italy—but one can taste the wines and enjoy the quality that the vineyard has produced only during the hours of 11 am to 3 pm in the day and from 5.30 pm to 11 pm at night. It will be appreciated that vineyards will be open not at night, but only during the day. If the charabanc arrives before 11 am or after 3 pm, the people in it will be shown the wonderful vineyard but told that they cannot taste what it produces.

10.30 pm

Sir Dudley Smith: I have been following my hon. Friend's remarks with interest. Surely, if one goes into any

wine merchant's shop in a town or city with the possible intention to buy, the wine merchant will give one a tasting to enable one to make up one's mind. Is that against the law?

Mr. Steen: As always, my hon. Friend has made a telling point. He must have foreseen what I was about to say. If the charabanc travellers arrive at the vineyard outside on-licensing hours, they may find that the owner of the vineyard has had the forethought to apply for an off-licence.

In that case, in addition to the vinery, with tastings during on-licensing hours, he will have a separate building —which he will have had to build—containing an off-licence. The charabanc travellers will go into the off-licence and say, "I would like a bottle of wine." But they will not be allowed to taste it unless the tasting is free. The House will appreciate that if 1,000 visitors to the vineyard are all tasting the wine free in the off-licence, the modest farmer who is trying to diversify will be out of pocket very quickly; all his bottles of wine will be consumed at the off-licence outside on-licence hours.

There is a much more serious problem. If the visitors buy a bottle at the off-licence in the hours when the on-licence does not apply, they are not allowed to consume it on the premises. Therefore, arrangements have to be made to take the bottle off the premises — [An hon. Member: "To the charabanc."] Yes, but they cannot drink it in the charabanc if it is parked on the premises of the vineyard. The vineyard owner will have to make arrangements with the next-door farmer to construct a third building to which the travellers have to go to open their bottle of wine. If there are a corkscrew and glasses in that third building, the travellers can then taste the wine.

I am sure that hon. Members on both sides of the House—even at this late hour—will appreciate that the 1964 Act could never have envisaged this ridiculous state of affairs. In 1964 we did not have 200 commercial vineyards and the Government were not exhorting farmers to diversify because of our problems with food surpluses.

Mr. Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): My hon. Friend is making an important point. I am sure that the Government will listen to his argument about the problem and attempt to put it right to encourage this growing sector of business.

Just outside Dorking in Surrey — not in my constituency, but not far from it—a new vineyard was planted two years ago. It is not producing yet, but its area is 120 acres, so it will be the biggest vineyard in Great Britain. It will be an important enterprise. It is a new business which has drawn on expertise from Germany and the rest of the continent. That is an example of how new firms can grow, which is exactly what the Government want.

Any impediment such as the licensing impediment to which my hon. Friend draws attention should be removed if we wish such businesses to expand. Wine growing is very suitable for small, new businesses—just as it is on the continent. I do not say that 120 acres is small; indeed, it is very large. However, there will be many opportunities for small vineyards to start up, creating new jobs and new enterprises. I wish my hon. Friend well and I hope that the Govemnent will pay attention to the point that he makes.

Mr. Steen: That was a helpful intervention. Although the vineyard to which my hon. Friend referred is not in his constituency, I know that he is interested in vineyards—particularly in the new vineyard at Dorking, in the constituency of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science. Other vineyards not quite as large as that are well known to my hon. Friend. The largest one — Lamberhurst — is already 55 acres and is doing very well and many other vineyards, in constituencies from Berkshire to Gloucestershire and right across the country, are springing up fast and doing well.

I do not want to detain the House. I have set the scene of the problem and now want to explain briefly what will happen when the Bill becomes law, as I hope it will. The new law will help the vineyards — there is no doubt about that—because they can get an on-licence, not just for the pub opening hours as at present, but for the new pub opening hours of 11 o'clock in the morning to 11 o'clock at night — not that many people will want to taste wine at 5 o'clock in the evening until 11 o'clock at night.

Therefore, although this is not directly connected with the amendment, I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will perhaps encourage the other place to consider whether the 12 hours — 11 am to 11 pm — could be slightly flexible so that the magistrates could not, heaven forbid, increase the number of drinking hours, but allow the hours to be from, say, 10 am to 10 pm or even from 9 am to 9 pm. There could still be 12 hours, but perhaps they could be moved a little. That discretion and flexibility would allow our English vineyards the scope that the rigidity of allowing them to open only from 11 am to 11 pm prevents. Therefore, I hope that the Minister will say something which, although not immediately relevant to the amendment, will assist us when the Bill goes through another place.

I turn to the sharp end of the amendment. I know that my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) will be attentive to this point because the 1964 Act, which will not be changed by the Bill, states that the number of hours on a Sunday will follow the identical hours of the pub openings. That means that on a Sunday, when the vineyards have their big tourist attractions, they are caught by the limitations of the pub openings as at present. That means that they cannot have any wine tasting on their on-licence before 12 o'clock midday and must stop their wine tasting immediately at 2 pm. My right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point will realise that, from 7 pm to 10.30 at night on a Sunday, there is no point in having wine tasting, unless it is by candlelight or in the vaults.

The purpose of my amendment is to allow the magistrates some discretion to distribute exactly the same hours on Sunday, but to make those hours not from 12 o'clock to 2 o'clock and 7.30 pm to 10 pm, but to allow the English vineyards to provide a sample of wine between 12 o'clock and 5.30 pm. That would cover just the type of family outing that so many of my right hon. and hon. Friends talked about a moment ago. What nicer way is there of spending a Sunday afternoon than for a family to go out in their private car to look at some of the wonderful and enterprising vineyards and to enjoy a sample at the same time?

Mr. Robert Key (Salisbury): My hon. Friend has done us a great service by drawing this matter to the Government's attention and I hope that they will listen carefully. I endorse his point about family outings on

[Mr. Robert Key]

Sundays. My hon. Friend the Minister for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) mentioned earlier the problem of not having to change all our laws in this country just to suit tourists. When the three commercial vineyards in my constituency have opened on Sundays, they have attracted a completely different clientele—local families who want to see the process of wine making and the parents who, of course, want to enjoy the prospect of buying and drinking the product.

Mr. Steen: I am delighted that so many hon. Friends, who have vineyards in their constituencies, have made such points, because my hon. Friend the Minister will obviously be impressed by the strength of feeling among Conservative Members. I am most grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) for making that important and telling point.

The amendment will give the magistrates in each locality a discretion to manoeuvre the hours on Sunday —but not to increase them—so that families can enjoy wine tasting on an on-licence. It does not alter the fact that English vineyards will still need to have an on-licence and an off-licence.

If the Minister rejects the amendment it will mean that at 2 o'clock sharp on a Sunday the vineyards—all 100—will have to have an off-licence. People will have to move from the on-licence, where they are sampling wines, to the off-licence. Unless those wines are provided free, people will have to buy a bottle and traipse over to the next-door farmer, with the corkscrew and the glasses, to sample the wines on their own in a little hut.

The Minister may believe that such problems are modest and trivial, but tens of thousands of people visit vineyards. The present ridiculous anachronism could be altered at a stroke by the Minister.

We are faced with the problems of on-licences, off-licences and flexi-hours on Sundays. I do not know whether my right hon. and hon. Friends who have spoken with such fervour would feel the same way if magistrates were given the discretion to switch and distribute the Sunday hours. The on-licence, instead of being confined from noon until 2 o'clock and from 7 pm until 10.30 pm, could be distributed differently.

I should declare an interest. I have been involved with the English Vineyards Association for many years and indeed, I have four vineyards in my constituency. Many hon. Members believe that the amendment is important. I hope that the Minister will use this opportunity to say something constructive that will enable us to believe that, if he cannot act immediately, he will do his best to get rid of the present anachronism. Many European visitors to our vineyards consider that anachronism to be out of place and out of character with the British habit of getting things done in an appropriate way.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The amendment deals exclusively with Sunday and the points that I made in the previous debate apply to this one. Therefore, I cannot offer my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) any hope.

My hon. Friend has clearly described the wider problems faced by British vineyard owners on days other than Sundays, Good Friday and Christmas day. My hon. Friend has described those problems so graphically that I feel that I would like to reconsider the problem relating to those days to see whether there is anything that we can do to assist in resolving the problem that he has described.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg (Hampstead and Highgate): I am grateful to the Minister for his remarks.

I support my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) I am a non-executive director of the Bluebell railway and at Sheffield Park, at the end of that line, there is an English vineyard.

One of the problems that we face is that English wine has been cursed for years by ignorant people calling it "British" wine. In the past few months I have been able to introduce a major French wine grower to English wine. To his astonishment he found it drinkable. We all know that it is.

Is the Minister saying that he will look at the general issues with a view to telling his draftsmen, if he is convinced, that something must be done when the Bill reaches another place?

Mr. Keith Speed (Ashford): I support my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen). In my constituency we have Biddenden vineyard, which won a prize for its Ortega 1986 vintage. Indeed, hon. Members on both sides of the House chose it in the wine-tasting before Christmas.

My hon. Friend was right to underline the problems that over the years have been piled on English vineyards, but, despite those problems, they have thrived. At one time we had many Dutch, French, Belgian and German tourists passing through my constituency, and for them English wines were a joke until they tasted them. Now they enjoy them and like to taste them without all the nonsense that my hon. Friend described.

I hope that the Minister and his team at the Home Office will take a long hard look at this, so that we can make life easier for enterprising English vineyards which produce some of the best wine in the world.

10.45 pm

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): I thank my hon. Friend the Minister for meeting us halfway, and support entirely the arguments of my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen).

England was excellent wine, but it is new wine on the world circuit, so is relatively unknown. Therefore, wine tasting is particularly important in order to sell it within the EEC and throughout the world. In the debate on the previous amendment, my hon. Friend the Minister clearly explained the problem with Sunday, and I accept what he said. But I urge him to persuade his hon. Friends to be flexible, because Sunday is a big day for bringing clients to vineyards. In Hampshire we have four big vineyards: Lymington, Swanmore, Ringwood and Beaulieu. Putting major investment into these alternative crops also fits the Government's policy of alternative use of farmland.

I thank my hon. Friend the Minister for agreeing to consider days other than Sunday, but I urge him to press his colleagues to think again about Sunday.

Mr. Conal Gregory (York): I support my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) and his moderate new clause. My hon. Friend the Minister certainly made a brief response which caused some disappointment.

Has the Minister held any discussions with his hon. Friends in the Department of Employment? He did not mention the employment aspects, which are great, or tourism in connection with English vineyards.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I have not held such discussions. This matter has not been raised with me previously; it was first brought to my attention when the amendment was tabled. I am against nonsense and there seems to be a certain amount of nonsense involved. If we can resolve it, we shall do so. But I cannot help my hon. Friends about Sundays.

Mr. Gregory: I am grateful for that further comment from my hon. Friend. Nevertheless, I hope that in another place he will consider getting out the old files; over many years there was enormous correspondence with his predecessors about this.

Britain has enjoyed English vineyard wines since the Roman era. Those who look at Christies' catalogues and others will know that vineyards now extend even into Wales. The new interest since 1945 is attractive, but there is nothing special in our having vineyards, although we now have many hundreds of acres under the vine.

Tonight we are faced with classic red tape. I do not believe that the Government wish to support red tape, but my hon. Friend the Minister is certainly putting up a good case for keeping the scissors in the cupboard. I wish he would take them out, cut the red tape, and consider the employment aspects of English vineyards and the English vineyard trail. What is so immoral about someone tasting a glass of wine on an afternoon in the south of England and even as far north as Yorkshire with a view to purchase? That should be considered in another place.

For all those reasons, I hope that the scissors will be used and that my hon. Friend's officials will consider the matter in another place.

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): I support my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) and I am pleased to hear that the Minister wants to get rid of much of the nonsense.

I am chairman of the Conservative party's Back-Bench food and drink sub-committee. We recently held a wine-tasting, attended by many hon. Members. We tasted 10 wines, five English and five continental wines, in a blind tasting. The five English wines did very well, winning the first three prizes. That reflects the excellence of English wines and the desire of many people in this country to taste them.

I am grateful for what the Minister has said tonight about getting rid of some of the nonsense, and for dealing with the problems explained to the House by my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams about days other than Sundays. I hope that the Minister will be able to bring forward proposals in the not too distant future.

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): I do not wish to detain the House, except to say that I support the proposal of my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen).

I first became aware of English wines recently at a reception organised by an extraordinarily paradoxical body, the Milk Marketing Board. I support the proposal and hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will carefully consider it. Perhaps he will reflect that we might not have found ourselves in the present inflexible position in respect of Sunday if the Home Office, in the last Session, had not got us in such a mess over Sunday trading.

Mr. Paul Marland (Gloucestershire, West): I apologise for not having been present throughout the debate. I have been detained elsewhere on important constituency business.

I wish to add my voice in support of my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen), because there is a vineyard in my constituency and I respect the way in which it has sought to bring employment into a rural area. It appears to be inhibited by these petty restrictions.

Mr. Steen: I should like to rise quickly to prevent any more of my hon. Friends from rising, as I know that quite a number of them planned to intervene. I want to curtail that by saying that this has been an interesting debate. It has shown the strength of feeling on the Conservative Back Benches about English vineyards and the anachronisms and antiquated laws which affect them.

I was tempted to press the amendment to a Division, but that would be quite inappropriate after the Minister's generous and flexible response in recognising the strength of feeling on this matter. It caught him by surprise, so he wants time to consider the issue. In view of his flexibility and intelligence and the fact that my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) supported most of my speech, the Sunday trading lobby may not be opposed to a little flexible discretion by the licensing magistrates.

Sir Bernard Braine: My hon. Friend has made a most interesting speech, which has already evoked a little promise from the Minister. I advise him not to spoil it.

Mr. Steen: Whenever my right hon. Friend gives advice, one is wise to take it. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 3

Restriction Orders

Sir Bernard Braine: I beg to move amendment No. 5, in page 2, line 18, after 'premises', insert
'or a number of licensed premises'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this, it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 8, in page 3, line 19, after 'premises', where it first occurs insert
'or a number of licensed premises'.
No. 9, in page 3, line 20, leave out 'vicinity', and insert 'surrounding district'.

Sir Bernard Braine: One of the illusions fostered about the Bill is that we must choose between individual liberty on the one side and health and well-being on the other. The issue of public order makes it plain that the choice is between the liberty of one person, or group of people, to drink in public houses and the liberty of others not to suffer unacceptable disturbance in consequence of their drinking.

I tabled this amendment because I do not believe that the Bill achieves a proper balance between these two objectives and it is, therefore, likely to fail and to facilitate the increased occurrence of disorder on our streets, while giving the licensing justices inadequate powers to deal with such events.

The Government claim that the Bill already contains adequate safeguards in the form of restriction orders. The Bill allows the licensing justices to impose an afternoon break when disturbance, annoyance, noise and disorderly conduct occur within or in the immediate vicinity of an individual licensed premises. That is most certainly a safeguard and I welcome it, but it is not nearly enough.

In Committee the Minister implicitly conceded the Bill's inadequacy every time he reminded hon. Members of the narrowness of the concept of restriction orders. He said that a restriction order was narrow in character and designed to achieve an entirely local result. For that reason the right to make application for a restriction order was limited to those people whose life was likely to be disrupted. By that he meant the disruption by noise or disturbance of the lives of those living in the immediate vicinity of a particular licensed premises.

The difficulty with the Bill is that, while disorder is often confined to within the public house itself, or to its immediate vicinity, there are also many occasions on which disorder spreads much further afield. The Bill gives the licensing justices no powers to deal with that kind of problem. Fights, or other kinds of disorderly conduct, may spill out not just on to the pavement immediately outside the pub; they may occur en route from one pub to another, or may arise as a result of drinking in a number of pubs and occur some distance away—on the way home, in the local park, or elsewhere. It is a very serious problem.

We all know of instances of drunken youths—I say "youths" because in the majority of cases those involved appear to be below the age of 25, if not considerably younger—going around in gangs and causing havoc in city centres and elsewhere. While the drinking may be done in a public house, or in a number of public houses, the disorder occurs somewhere else—not necessarily in the immediate vicinity of the pub where the alcohol was consumed.

In Committee the hon. Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie) referred to the kind of incidents that I have in mind when he quoted from a report in the *Yorkshire Evening Post*. It is worth while repeating the words:

"'Gangs of drunken youths roaming the streets of the county's towns and cities cause apprehension and fear' said the chief constable. 'Street nuisances, disorderly behaviour, vandalism and crime are often caused by individuals who have consumed too much alcohol . . . Young males . . . in an intoxicated state roam about or congregate in the streets . . . and behave in ways that they would not even contemplate sober'."

The point to which I want to draw attention is that there is no suggestion in that report of the disorder occurring within or in the immediate vicinity of any individual pub or club. Perhaps I might rub in the point by referring to a cutting from another local newspaper on 7 December 1987. It quoted the chief constable as blaming the late-night opening policy for the growing problem of public disorder on the streets. He said:

"between 2 am and 4 am, particularly at weekends, around 2,000 18 to 25-year-olds are congregating in the city centre. Disorder is now escalating and, to control the situation further, adjustment to the system of policing has become necessary and overtime is being incurred . . . one year's overtime costs are being projected at £115,000. This is unacceptable."

It is highly significant in the context of this debate that the city in question is Aberdeen. There is little suggestion there of the great improvement in public order that licensing relaxation in Scotland is supposed to have brought about. A hint of why the official drunkenness statistics for Scotland have declined so steeply is the comment of a superintendent of the Grampian police: that police resources are so stretched at weekends that they had to let many people off with a warning because they could not afford officers to leave the street to take offenders into custody. The city is Aberdeen. The hon. Member for Kirkcaldy will know whether or not that statement is exaggerated.

Many arrests for offences other than drunkenness are, however, made. Speaking to the Aberdeen licensing board in September 1987, the chief constable, Mr. Alistair Lynn, said:

"The threat of a lot of public disorder in Aberdeen city centre remains very much a reality."

He informed the Aberdeen licensing board that, in the previous month, 140 arrests had been made in the Union street area alone; 67 of them were for breaches of the peace, 37 for assault and 13 for vandalism, but apparently none for drunkenness.

If we are honest with ourselves, this is taking place in every city. It is taking place not far from my constituency, in Southend on one side and Basildon on the other. Therefore, the same consideration applies to England and Wales.

We should be extremely sceptical about the claim that drunkenness offences are declining. Any magistrate will confirm that the majority of criminal damage and breach of the peace cases are committed by people under the influence of alcohol. It may be that officially recorded offences are declining because charges other than drunkenness are being brought.

Earlier, my hon. Friend the Minister rejected my suggestion that these matters should be properly

monitored. This is one of the best examples of where information is needed if policy and legislation are to match the reality of the matter.

11 pm

I cited the example of Aberdeen for two reasons. First, the picture of Scotland that is so assiduously painted by proponents of extended drinking hours may be seriously misleading. There is every reason to be extremely wary of the effects of extended drinking hours on public order. Secondly, the disorder described in press reports is precisely the kind that the Bill in its present form does not take into account because it does not necessarily occur within the immediate vicinity of licensed premises.

The Aberdeen report describes disorder occurring during the night. There is a clear danger that the Bill will increase the chances of similar outbreaks occurring during the afternoon, when there is likely to be even more disruption to the local population. Licensing justices will need extra powers to deal with such eventualities. To do so, they will need the power to impose restriction orders, not merely on individual public houses but throughout an area.

The existing provisions of the Bill to deal with the sort of problems that I have described will be extremely cumbersome to operate. It would be necessary for the licensing justices to deal with each licensed premises separately.

Significantly, the Erroll committee, whose recommendations provide much of the rationale for the Bill, recommended exactly the safeguard contained in my amendment. Its report stated:

"Licensing justices . . . should be empowered on application, to make an order, if satisfied that it is in the interests of public order . . . requiring any one or a number of licensed premises to close for a period of up to two consecutive hours at a time before 7 pm."

This is a far more useful proposal than the unduly narrow concept of restriction orders enshrined in the Bill. Not only would it give the licensing justices more effective powers; it would save court time and, thus, costs to the taxpayer.

It may be argued that the police already have powers to prosecute individuals behaving in an unruly manner and that restricting pub opening hours is not, therefore, a necessary or an appropriate means of dealing with these problems. My answer to that is that of course the police have the power to prosecute individuals, but after the disorder has occurred, assuming they have the manpower and resources available. The case of Aberdeen suggests that they may not.

We are considering the need to prevent disorder occurring in the first place. That is what legislation should be about; not tinkering with the problem as the Bill does in so many different aspects.

The police have powers to prosecute individuals behaving in an unruly manner at football matches, but that is not regarded as an argument against restriction. Alcohol is banned on the way to and from football matches. The principle is the same. Why should law-abiding citizens, who want nothing more than to go about their business in peace, have to tolerate large areas of their towns and cities becoming no-go areas of the antics of groups of people who have spent too much time and money in the pub? If serious disorder associated with and arising from drinking in public houses and clubs occurs on one occasion — perhaps a Saturday afternoon — it is likely to occur on others in the future, and the licensing justices should have the power to order the afternoon closure of pubs in the particular area of the town concerned.

I do not suggest for one moment that the exercise of the power given by my amendment will be a daily occurrence, but there are particular times of the year, such as the Christmas holidays or the summer season at seaside resorts, when the licensing justices of the population whom they serve will need this power, and they will not thank us if they do not have it. I commend the amendment to the House.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Despite the passionate speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine), I am afraid that I cannot commend the amendment to the House. The restriction order deals with particular problems that emanate from particular pubs, but the amendment enables the court to make a restriction order in respect of any licensed premises, including those that are not directly concerned with the public problems that give rise to the application in the first place. I cannot believe that that is just.

There is another consideration which makes it even more unjust. Under the power proposed by my right hon. Friend, the court could make a restriction order in respect of a licensed premises, the licensee not knowing of the application and having no knowledge of the peril in which he stood. I do not believe that that is right either, nor I think does my right hon. Friend.

Amendment negatived.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: I beg to move amendment No. 6, in page 3, line 8, leave out 'or'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to take amendment No. 7, in line 10, at end insert

'; or (d) any head teacher of a school in the neighbourhood.'.

Mrs. Taylor: This is a straightforward amendment but it concerns a significant point which we tried to explore in Committee and which I should have thought would have been resolved by this stage. The amendment deals with the role of a head teacher in applying for a restriction order in the area of the school. At the beginning of our proceedings, the National Association of Head Teachers expressed concern about the impact that the Bill might have on children's drinking habits. We can understand the dangers. When pubs are open in the afternoon, there is a great temptation for children to absent themselves from school or to go out and drink at lunchtime. A large number of teachers are increasingly concerned about the number of their pupils drinking and see the legislation as providing new temptations.

One measure which we suggested in Committee was that head teachers should be able to apply for a restriction order, thus limiting the availability of alcohol by restricting the hours during which pubs in the vicinity may be open. It is relevant that head teachers should be able to apply for a restriction order because teachers and schools are often aware of which public houses are responsible for selling alcohol to their young people. Therefore, they should have a role in applying for restriction orders. It is impossible to understand why the Minister has not conceded this point.

In Committee, the Minister said that he hoped that the word "occupier" would cover this point. He said that he

[Mrs. Taylor]

could give no guarantee that that was the case, and promised that he would return in Committee or on Report with amendments if he found that the existing wording was not satisfactory. Since our discussions, I have checked with several justices clerks, whose experience is well recognised and well respected. Some have said that they would interpret "occupier" as covering a head teacher of a school, but others have said that they would not. So there is a clear need for clarification, which can come only from the legislation. I therefore hope that the Minister will accept the amendment.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I entirely agree that head teachers should have a right to make the application. I said so in Committee and I say so again today. I am afraid that the amendment is probably not the best way of going about that, because there is a danger that if we singled out headteachers we would exclude from the ranks of those able to make an application some people who are not strictly occupiers, but who are managing a business in the neighbourhood.

It could be said that we should have put our tackle in order and tabled a proper amendment; I agree with that criticism, and I apologise. In the other place we shall table an amendment that makes it plain that head teachers and, when appropriate, other people who are running businesses who are not occupiers are in a position to make an application—and I am sorry that our tackle is not in order.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: We accept the Minister's apology and are glad to hear that he intends to table an amendment in due course. I am not sure whether someone who manages a business in a neighbourhood should have the same rights as a head teacher, who has a more specific and meaningful role to play in terms of restriction orders. On the basis that the Minister will deliver the promise that he has made this time, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 4

ABOLITION OF RENEWALS OF EXTENDED HOURS ORDERS

Amendment made: No. 10, in page 5, line 9, leave out '"order", where first occurring,' and insert '"shall"'.—*[Mr. Douglas Hogg.]*

Clause 8

REVOCATION OF JUSTICES' LICENCES AND CANTEEN LICENCES

Amendments made: No. 11, in page 8, line 15, leave out from 'sessions' to 'other' in line 16.

No. 12, in page 8, line 18, at end insert

', either of their own motion or on the application of any person.'.

No. 13, in page 8, line 23, leave out subsection (3) and insert—

'(3) Licensing justices may only exercise the power conferred by this section if, at least twenty-one days before the commencement of the licensing sessions in question, notice in writing of the proposal to exercise the power or, as the case may be, to make the application has been given to the holder of the licence and, in the case of a proposed application, to the clerk to the licensing justices, specifying in general terms the grounds on which it is proposed the licence should be revoked.'.

No. 14, in page 8, line 43, leave out from 'sessions' to 'other' in line 44.

No. 15, in page 8, line 46, at end insert

', either of their own motion or on the application of any person.'.

No. 16, in page 9, line 4, leave out subsection (3) and insert—

'(3) Licensing justices may only exercise the power conferred by this section if, at least twenty-one days before the commencement of the licensing sessions in question, notice in writing of the proposal to exercise the power or, as the case may be, to make the application has been given to the holder of the licence and, in the case of a proposed application, to the clerk to the licensing justices, specifying in general terms the grounds on which it is proposed the licence should be revoked.'.—*[Mr. Douglas Hogg.]*

Schedule 3

MINOR AMENDMENTS OF THE PRINCIPAL ACT

Amendments made: No. 17, in page 15, line 8, leave out first 'the' and insert 'any'.

No. 18, in page 16, line 29, at end insert—

'. In section 169(1) (selling to persons under 18), for the words "subsections (4) and (10)" there shall be substituted the words "subsection (4)".'.

No. 19, in page 16, line 29, at end insert—

'. In section 168(3)*(a)* (due diligence defence), for the word "used" there shall be substituted the words "exercised all".'.

No. 20, in page 16, line 31, leave out from beginning to end of line 42 and insert—

'"*Extension to certain proceedings under this Act of section 97 of the Magistrates' Courts Act 1980.*

196A. — (1) For the purposes of section 97 of the Magistrates' Courts Act 1980 (procuring the attendance of witnesses etc. at the hearing of a complaint) the following proceedings shall be treated as the hearing of a complaint—

(a) proceedings on an application—

(i) for the grant of a justices' licence;

(ii) for the revocation of a justices' licence or canteen licence; or

(iii) for the making, variation or revocation of a restriction order; and

(b) proceedings in connection with the exercise by licensing justices of the power to revoke a justices' licence or canteen licence of their own motion.

(2) Licensing justices before whom any such proceedings as are mentioned in subsection (1) above take place shall be treated for the purposes of section 97 of the Magistrates' Courts Act 1980 as a magistrates' court for the petty sessions area constituting the licensing district.".'.—*[Mr. Douglas Hogg.]*

Schedule 4

REPEALS

Amendments made: No. 21, in page 17, line 39, at end insert—

	'In section 169 — in subsection (1), the word "knowingly", in the first place where it occurs; and subsection (10).'

No. 22, in page 17, line 41, at end insert—

'1977 c. 45.	The Criminal Law Act 1977.	In Schedule 6, the entries relating to section 169 of the Licensing Act 1964. In Schedule 12, in the entry relating to the Licensing Act 1964, paragraph 2.'.—*[Mr. Douglas Hogg.]*

Motion made, and Question put, That the Bill be now read the Third time:—

The House divided: Ayes 256, Noes 33.

Division No. 157] **[11.13 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowis, John
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Foulkes, George
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Timothy
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*

Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon C.
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parry, Robert
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Turner, Dennis
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Stephen Dorrell.

NOES

Anderson, Donald
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Beith, A. J.
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Dixon, Don
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Hardy, Peter
Haynes, Frank
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Illsley, Eric
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McNamara, Kevin
Michael, Alun
Morgan, Rhodri
Mullin, Chris
Pike, Peter
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Skinner, Dennis
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Williams, Rt Hon A. J.
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mrs. Llin Golding and
Dr. Lewis Moonie.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Bill read the Third time, and passed.

Welsh Development Agency Bill

Considered in Committee.

[SIR PAUL DEAN *in the Chair.*]

Clause 1

INCREASE OF FINANCIAL LIMIT

Question proposed, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

11.26 pm

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): We are grateful for the opportunity to explore further the finances of the Welsh Development Agency and the work which we hope those moneys will provide in our communities. The Bill lays down new financial limits for the WDA. It is right for hon. Members to take the opportunity to explore what the agency can achieve within those limits in the development and regeneration of our communities.

We had a useful and constructive debate on Second Reading. It was made clear that the Opposition support the Bill and the work of the agency. But we want to elicit information about what the agency will do within its new financial limits and investigate further its budget. The Secretary of State told hon. Members on Second Reading that the budget would be £113 million and he gave the amounts to be spent on various aspects of the agency's work. We can now take the opportunity of the Committee stage to prise from the Minister more details of the budget.

The Secretary of State told us that the financial provision for the industrial estates role of the agency would be encompassed in the broader financial limits of the Bill. He explained that the budget for the industrial estates function of the agency for the next financial year would be £44 million and said:

"Together with the increased factory rents and sales that are taking place, it means that the total potential expenditure for the agency for this coming year will increase to £113 million—31 per cent. more than the budget for the current financial year."

This is not a Second Reading debate, so we can probe what he meant. The first question for the Minister is what is meant by the words:

"Together with the increased factory rents and sales that are taking place".

What proportion of the industrial estates budget for the next financial year will be financed by sales of factories and rent increases? Both are significant to our communities, especially rents. For several years, hon. Members on both sides of the House, but particularly Labour Members, have made representations to the agency about its rental policy as we fear that, as a result of rent increases, some of the marginal companies in agency property could be threatened with bankruptcy.

11.30 pm

Sales are important for another reason. Everyone knows that a balance of available property is vital in any commercial portfolio. How much pressure is there—I suspect that there is considerable pressure from the Treasury—to sell a considerable amount of the agency's estates? What assumption of sales has been made to finance the increased budget for the industrial estates?

The Secretary of State also said:

"I have also agreed new mechanisms in which the agency can use its finances to attract a considerable volume

of private investment into new factory and commercial building."—[*Official Report*, 28 January 1988; Vol. 126, c. 559.]

New mechanisms should not go through the House on the nod without our knowing what they are and what method of financing will be used to make them effective. If it is a new departure, we need much more explanation of what it is about. It was not us, but the Secretary of State, who drew attention to it.

The remainder of the Secretary of State's speech on Second Reading did not describe the new mechanisms, so I examined the agency's announcements. I looked at a glossy brochure called, "Property Development Programme", which refers to this matter but does not spell out the new mechanisms and the financial arrangements to make them work.

Sir Raymond Gower (Vale of Glamorgan): I assume that the hon. Gentleman accepts the desirability of attracting private investment.

Mr. Rowlands: We are justified in probing the Government. The Secretary of State has talked about new mechanisms, but I doubt whether the hon. Gentleman knows what they are. I am trying to find out. All I could find was not in an official document but in a WDA press release which accompanied the glossy brochure I mentioned. It gives us some insight into what the mechanisms will be. To my knowledge, it is the only source of information on these new mechanisms. We did not get any information on Second Reading, and we are hoping for some when the Minister replies.

Under the title "Private Partnership", the press release refers to an "important new ingredient" in the new property development initiative

"a new grant facility recently agreed by the Secretary of State for Wales."

The agency and the Secretary of State might agree, but the Committee does not know what the terms of those agreements are, and we were not told about them. I am not complaining or objecting, but if a new grant facility is to be made, and used to develop private estates, the Committee should know about it.

The press release continues:

"The Initiative is designed to encourage private development to complement the Agency's own property programme, and more generally to encourage the participation of private developers in industrial development in Wales."

Again, I am not complaining about the objectives. However, the press release also says, and this is what I question:

"The WDA will promote specific schemes where it might be prepared to offer a grant to private developers to help make some of these projects a viable proposition. Initial priority will be given to projects at Deeside, the Delyn Enterprise Zone, Cardiff, Bridgend, and Swansea."

Is this grant facility to be confined in this fashion? What is the grant facility? What proportion of any private development scheme is to be financed by grant? Under what head of the WDA's budget is this grant to be made to private property development? I am not objecting to it, but we should know how it is to be operated, in what form, what sort of money we are talking about and in what proportion. More important, what about its geographic location and spread?

The press release goes on:

"A range of other measures also aimed at assisting private sector investment will be available throughout North and South Wales, including risk sharing partnerships, and help with feasibility studies and marketing of new developments."

Again, I am not objecting, but these are new mechanisms, new ideas and new grant facilities. I may be less than diligent, but the only information about this that I have read comes in a press release from the WDA. Therefore, I want a much more detailed explanation from the Minister and I want to know why this private property development grant facility is initially confined to that particular area.

I asked the Minister to explain my next point on Second Reading, but, understandably, he did not get round to answering. I asked him, in the context of my constituency, how private initiatives of the kind that has been described would work. In the section on the industrial estates property called, "Heads of the Valleys region" I read, as I mentioned on Second Reading, that the regional office

"identified the following opportunities locally for possible private sector development — Goatmill Road, Merthyr — small factories".

I did not realise that what is behind these mechanisms for attracting private investment in property development is a grant facility by the WDA. Is this area to be the subject of possible grant facility arrangements under the new mechanisms to promote private commercial industrial development?

An opportunity is identified in the property development programme; a new mechanism is announced by the Secretary of State; a press release tells us that it is a grant facility, although implying that it will be confined to certain geographical areas and enterprise zones. I want to know what is in it for Merthyr and Rhymney. I want a straightforward answer because it is extremely important to us. There is a general issue of principle, too. If the Government intend to introduce a new grant facility and new arrangements, the Committee needs to know their exact character and nature.

When the Secretary of State opened the Second Reading debate he told us in part about the size and character of the WDA's budget. He gave us figures for derelict land and for property — for commercial and industrial development. He did not give us figures for the WDA's budget for 1988-89—on WINvest, for example — or for the WDA's venture capital role. When I pressed the Minister during his wind-up speech he confirmed that the venture capital figure for 1987-88 was £10 million. I am glad to say that he also confirmed that he saw the venture capital role of the agency as vital, because we are worried that it might be pared and clipped. Will the Minister tell us the budgets for WINvest and the venture capital side in 1988-89? He gave us some of the figures, but not all of them.

My main point concerns the role and finances of the WDA in relation to the needs of our valley communities. The Secretary of State was very sensitive when my right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) dared to query whether the much-heralded valleys initiative was included in or excluded from the WDA budget and the known public expenditure figures. My right hon. Friend will remember that question, which got the Secretary of State to his feet on Second Reading. The Secretary of State was rather testy about my right hon. Friend's prompting. That exchange appears in column 562 of *Hansard* on 28 January 1988. My right hon. Friend made a fair point. It is not Opposition Members who have

[Mr. Rowlands]

been advertising and trailering a great new valleys initiative; it is the Secretary of State himself. He gave an exclusive interview to the *Merthyr Express* and another exclusive interview to the *Western Mail*—two exclusive interviews—trailering a major new valleys initiative.

We were enthused and encouraged and we have been waiting with great interest for the announcement. It would not have been unfair of us to draw the conclusion from those exclusive interviews that there would be a major new special budget for the valleys initiative. It was perfectly reasonable for us to conclude that there would be a major new budgetary announcement; indeed, I assume that that is still in the pipeline.

Curiously, in the exchange with my right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West on Second Reading, the Secretary of State appeared to imply that at least the industrial estates side of the great valleys initiative had already been announced and that it was incorporated in the new programme of factory development that the WDA had announced that day.

I should like the Minister to clear up this point. Has the factory side, the industrial estates corporation side, of the Secretary of State's major new valley initiative, for which we are all waiting with great interest and enthusiasm, already been announced or is there more to come? Is it part and parcel of what was announced on 28 January, or is there a new package of industrial estates development?

11.45 pm

It is not our fault that we are confused about what the valley initiative is, and about what is involved in it. Are Blaenau Gwent, Merthyr and Cynon Valley the announced parts of the industrial estates corporation side of the so-called valley initiative?

Even more interesting is an answer that I received yesterday to a written question that I tabled to the Secretary of State asking him whether the valleys initiative budget was included in or additional to the public expenditure totals that were published in the Command Paper on public expenditure a week or two ago. The reply that I received yesterday stated that they were inclusive and that the valley initiative is buried in the public expenditure totals in the Command Paper.

There is a lot to be done and some questions need to be asked. If the valleys initiative is buried in those totals —*[Interruption.]* Indeed there should be some answers. My hon. Friends should not be too sceptical. I am sure that the Minister will give clear answers to all of this— [HON. MEMBERS: "Since when?"] I have greater faith in human nature than some of my hon. Friends. Anyway, as a result of yesterday's answer to the question that I had tabled, plus the exchanges that we had, it is at least clear that a largish proportion of the great new valleys initiative is already available in one form or another somewhere in the House, but we cannot find it. We want to know where the totals are. [HON. MEMBERS: "And the initiative."] Again, I am sorry that my hon. Friends are showing scepticism. I am willing to suspend judgment. Let us find out. I hope that there is a valleys initiative.

I am somewhat disappointed that the valleys initiative will be inclusive in the existing totals because that means that we are competing for existing resources within the Principality, whereas I thought that it would be additional money. We all thought—it was the whole notion of the two exclusive interviews that we have read—that there would be additional money in an additional budget, over and above the sums within the known totals.

I should like the Minister to answer two questions. First, has the valley initiative — the industrial estates commercial side—already been announced by the WDA on 28 January, or is there more to come? Secondly, will he give us some idea of when the initiative will be announced and in what form? I ask that because I am concerned that the valleys initiative should be a visionary, positive and forward-looking concept. Since the Secretary of State's interviews one other major piece of new information has become available to us. The Institute of Welsh Affairs has published an interesting and constructive report, entitled "The South Wales Valleys—An Agenda for Action". I think that the Secretary of State gave it a positive and constructive welcome, although I am not quite sure what he thought about it.

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Mr. Wyn Roberts): If the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) looks at the record, he will discover that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State had announced his own valleys initiative and his intention to make a further statement upon it before "The South Wales Valleys: An Agenda for Action" report appeared.

Mr. Rowlands: I am sure that the Minister is correct, I am not suggesting otherwise.

I want to know how many of the interesting ideas contained in that document will be incorporated in the new valleys initiative and how they are to be financed.

The clause will raise the financial limits available to the WDA. The report "The South Wales Valleys: An Agenda for Action" contained 57 recommendations and proposals and more than 40 of them require WDA action, participation and funding. That demonstrates the relationship between the report and clause 1.

I agree that the Secretary of State announced his valleys initiative before the report was published, but how many of the report's recommendations will be incorporated in any valley initiative? I am sure that my hon. Friends will not be surprised to discover that I am anxious to know how many of the recommendations relating to my constituency will be incorporated in the Secretary of State's valleys initiative.

Under the title "A pilot area project" on pages 13-14, paragraphs 220-221, the report recommends that Merthyr Tydfil should be a pilot area project. It recommends seven or eight major action measures for the Merthyr project. All of them would involve WDA financing. The report mentions the preparation of a town development appraisal, key site properties and development opportunities. Indeed, it is pertinent to my constituency that the report discusses the relocation of the WDA's regional office from Hirwaun to Merthyr. I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) is not here, because that is a sensitive issue.

The report also recommends the development of a key strategic industrial site at Pentrebach by the WDA with forward investment in advance factory provision. The list of specific recommendations by the authors of the report deserves a serious and genuine response from the Secretary of State. They are part and parcel of the WDA's budget and needs for 1988-89.

How many of the ideas in the report will be incorporated in the valleys initiative and, therefore, be the subject of financial requirements from the WDA in the coming year?

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): Has my hon. Friend also considered derelict land? The chief executive of the WDA made it clear to the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs that all the derelict land in Wales would be removed by the end of the century. Is my hon. Friend confident that that goal will be met by the proposals in the Bill?

Mr. Rowlands: I have not dwelt on derelict land reclamation sites tonight because I discussed them on Second Reading, when I pointed out that one of the most interesting recent reports by the Welsh Coalfield Communities suggested that we were scarcely even-stevens with the pace of land reclamation; that as much reclamation was being created as we were clearing, despite tremendous efforts; and that a budget of £25 million a year was required to make inroads. The budget will be about £20 million so it will fall short of a known need. I pressed that point on Second Reading and do not want to weary the Committee by going over the same argument.

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): Will my hon. Friend consider the problem that will be posed by the pit closures announced today? In mid Glamorgan the programme of reclamation must inevitably fall behind. As additional closures are announced, the programme that has already been approved will not keep pace with, let alone match, the additional problems caused by new closures.

Mr. Rowlands: My hon. Friend poignantly describes the position. On Second Reading several of us said that a problem of the pace of derelict land reclamation was its tight connection with pit closures. I did not draw attention to the disastrous news today about pit closures because I hope that the two pits are not yet lost and that we can dissuade the board from proceeding with two disastrous additional pit closures.

My hon. Friend is right that if British Coal goes ahead with the proposals and attains the closures—I do not know the Abernant site but I certainly drive past the Lady Windsor site every week—there will be an enormous extra burden of land clearance. I hope to goodness that we do not reach that stage and that the pits may be saved. If they are not, a major additional problem of land reclamation and dereliction will be added to an already heavy historic burden.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: In addition, it is important for the Minister to bear in mind that the implications for the WDA budget and expenditure are important in terms of knock-on effects. British Rail, for example, relocated its freight depot at Pantyffynnon close to the Wernos washery. If the closures go ahead, with the consequent knock-on effect to that rail freight depot, we shall have an additional need for additional funding for the WDA. My hon. Friend is absolutely right that the closure of the pits is important and must be prevented.

Mr. Rowlands: I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Neath (Mr. Coleman), who knows the details of these matters, will catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker. He will develop the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell).

I was drawing the Committee's attention to the major recommendations in "The South Wales Valleys: An Agenda for Action", especially the preparation of a town development appraisal. On Second Reading I asked the Minister about the matter, but he did not answer. I do not complain because he could not answer all the points. But now is his chance. One of the new functions of the WDA is the creation of an urban renewal unit which will play an important role in the commercial, non-industrial development in some of our communities. I am not clear what its function will be and how its function, expenditure and budget will relate to the urban development grants which will remain with the Welsh Office.

I understand that the urban renewal unit of the agency will not be a grant-giving body. It will be a lending agency. How will it relate to what remains of the urban development grant system in the Welsh Office? We hope that it will help to develop and diversify the economy of local communities such as mine. We watched with modest envy the developments in Cardiff and Swansea and we want to see such developments extend into our valley communities. We are interested to know what role the urban renewal unit of the Welsh Development Agency will play in that.

Vital questions remained unanswered on Second Reading. This is our chance to get some answers. The agency is one of the most important and powerful instruments for the regeneration and renewal of our communities. Some people in the agency have dubbed me Oliver Rowlands, the man who always asks for more. I do ask for more because the communities that I represent have given so much historically and have every right to demand more. By supporting the Bill, we hope that we shall get the extra resources to develop the communities that we represent.

12 midnight

Sir Raymond Gower: The hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) has made a far-reaching speech. It is the Opposition's job to probe, examine and question. I do not wish to be offensive, but he would have made his job easier if he had tabled precise amendments. It would also have made it easier for the Minister to produce precise answers. It is impossible, in these circumstances, for the Minister to have any foreknowledge of the subjects likely to be raised.

Mr. Rowlands: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's point. Opposition Members considered means of amending the Bill, but, when the money resolution on a one-clause Bill has been passed, there are only limited ways in which we can amend the Bill. We cannot amend the figures because they were approved in the money resolution, so we must try to amend the Bill through a clause stand part debate.

Sir Raymond Gower: I accept the hon. Gentleman's point, but he might have considered the matter further.

We now see the agency in a different light than we did some years ago. It had a precise role in those days when its chief function was to erect advance factories and to arrange for the clearance of disfigured parts of the landscape after the closure of coal pits. It was possible to forecast expenditure very precisely, but it is now difficult to be so precise. For example, the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney referred to the agency's function of attracting private investment. We cannot say how much private investment might be attracted, but we hope that the agency will be successful.

[Sir Raymond Gower]

The hon. Gentleman rightly expressed concern about the mention of Deeside, Cardiff, Swansea and Bridgend to the exclusion of the valleys. He was right to stress the importance of the valleys, with their very great problems. Nevertheless, he should not go so far as to try to block development in Cardiff, Swansea and Deeside. That would be fatal. The hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) is right to do everything he can for his constituency, but it is short sighted of him to try to block the Cardiff bay development.

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): One of the precise questions that was asked in last week's debate but that the Minister failed completely to answer was why there was no precision about what the WDA would be doing for Cardiff. Firms wish to develop there and factory and workshop space is required, but that need is not being met. Does the hon. Gentleman join with me in hoping that the Minister will answer that question at the end of the debate?

Sir Raymond Gower: I do not dissent from that, but my point is that it is impossible to promote great expansion in Merthyr and in Cynon valley if the natural development of Cardiff, Newport and Swansea, which lie near to the motorway, is slowed down. Some companies might be persuaded to go there, whereas even very large inducements would not persuade them to go further. Nevertheless, the very real needs of the valley communities must be attended to.

I am impressed by the number of factories that are to be built in some of those areas. That is the dispute to which the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney referred—the dispute between his right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales. Our impression was that the right hon. Gentleman was treating factory building in those areas as chickenfeed, but that is not so.

I foresee that the agency will have both its old functions of clearing dereliction and building factories — in particular, advance factories and those that are ordered by industrialists who intend to come to Wales—and also new functions. It will act as a finance house, as a merchant bank. That part of the agency's work will be vital. However, it is difficult to foresee the extent of its success or failure. I hope that its success will be tremendous. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has done a wonderful job in publicising the work of the agency. He has a splendid sense of public relations. It is a great asset.

Mr. Donald Coleman (Neath): I welcome this opportunity to make a brief intervention in this short debate. It should never be forgotten that if some Conservative Members had had their way when they were in opposition—including perhaps the Secretary of State for Wales, who in those days did not take quite such an interest in Wales as he does now—we should not be having this debate, because there would have been no Welsh Development Agency.

I welcome the increase in the financial limit of the agency, but there must not be untrammelled euphoria about it. There should be a larger increase in the ceiling than that proposed and there should be an acceleration in the rate at which we spend the WDA's money, because in the projected planned expenditure for Wales over the next three years — 1988-89, 1989-90 and 1990-91 — we can expect a fall compared with the level for 1987-88.

Another reason why I want a higher ceiling for the WDA—it has already been alluded to in the debate—is rather more important, particularly with regard to my constituency. This morning we heard the terrible announcement by the management of British Coal in south Wales that it intends to close the Abernant colliery and the washery at Lairgwaith, which is also in my constituency. It is a devastating blow for the area. Employment opportunities in the Amman valley will be reduced by about 800 jobs. That is a bleak prospect for the Amman valley. It will affect a number of constituencies located in the area.

When I hear the Secretary of State talk about the valleys initiative, and when I look at the Amman valley, I wonder what he means. Does he mean that we will be included in it? At present, there is precious little activity by the WDA in the valleys when it comes to providing employment.

It is all very well making advances in prestigious industrial parks. Given the magnitude of today's announced redundancies, the WDA needs to give much more attention to the valleys than it has done in the past.

I want more money to be spent, and spent more speedily. I want jobs for those men whose jobs will disappear once these closures take place. That will be the test of the Secretary of State. Let him or the Minister say how they propose to respond to that test, which is very much on his doorstep as a result of today's announcement.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): I want to ask four questions about the WDA: how much; how; when; and why?

The "how much" question relates to the WDA's response to the 1,500 jobs that will be lost in the closures announced today by British Coal.

I had a Kafkaesque experience this morning in the Energy Select Committee. We were examining Sir Robert Haslam on British Coal's accounts. I put the rumour to him that the Lady Windsor colliery and one other were to be closed. He did not respond. A telephone call led me to be able to put the fact, in a much firmer fashion, that the announcement had been made 25 minutes before. He said that it was a decision to be made by the area management of British Coal and that it was not a matter for him. One found the discussion moving into the realms of complete unreality. The chairman of British Coal did not appear to think that it was worth briefing himself on the loss of 1,500 jobs in an area of high unemployment like south Wales before he met the Committee to discuss the industrial relations and social aspects of British Coal's operations.

The task of providing alternative jobs cannot be left to British Coal. This morning, when we put to Sir Robert what the British Coal Enterprise initiative could do about the 1,500 jobs that would be lost in one fell swoop, he mentioned a new workshop complex at Tondu, at which one man was showing great initiative in breeding pythons. I have heard of pit ponies but not of pit pythons. I wonder how many vacancies will be provided for the pythons that formerly worked for British Coal. It cannot possibly meet the requirements that will be laid on the Welsh Office, the Welsh Development Agency and British Coal Enterprise

in facing up to job losses of such magnitude, coming on top of all the other problems, including the underlying lack of diversity in south Wales.

12.15 am

The "when" question concerns our demand to know when the factories which are specified in the glossy brochure, which was published last week by the WDA and to which my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) referred, will be completed. The advance factory programme appears to be for 1·5 million sq ft. Will it be completed over the next two financial years, or sooner? If it will be carried out over the 1988-89 and 1989-90 financial years, the programme may be just below the average of the last decade. Will there be a further programme next year which will cause the figure to be above or below average? As I pointed out in last week's debate, the average was 746,000 sq ft per annum. It looks as though it will be just below that, at 740,000 sq ft, if the work is completed within the next two years. I should be glad to hear the Minister's views.

As to the "why" question, why is the WDA advance factory programme 22 per cent. behind schedule this year? To give us complete confidence that the WDA is doing its job properly and is not being hog tied by the Welsh Office and the Treasury, we need an explanation.

Mr. Keith Raffan (Delyn): The hon. Gentleman is harping on the point that he raised last week. Does he accept that, in talking about the factory-building programme in Wales, one talks about not only the advance factory programme but the bespoke tailor-made factory units, in which the WDA has had singular success? The hon. Gentleman is selecting the advance factory programme out of the total factory programme.

Mr. Morgan: The hon. Gentleman seems to think that he has picked on a fault of mine. The problem with bespoke factories is that they need to be bespoken. Advance factories represent a commitment by the Government to build. Bespoke factories, in so far as they appear in a budget figure at all, are either a guess or a maximum. Advance factories are a minimum — a commitment by the Government. When a figure on bespoke factories is announced, that cannot be the same as a commitment. If the factories are not bespoke, they are not built, and there is no budgetary figure. Last week, the Minister did not explain whether the figure he gave on bespoke factories was a guess or whether the Treasury was imposing on the WDA a maximum beyond which it was not allowed to go.

The Government, the WDA or the Treasury and its controls have allowed the WDA to fall 22 per cent. behind the programme announced last year. We need to know why the WDA is 22 per cent. behind in completions under this year's capital programme. As the WDA accepts, this year the demand is high. If the WDA is 22 per cent. behind, it will miss 22 per cent. of its opportunities.

On the "how" question, how does the WDA intend to achieve some of its objectives when the local authorities, on which the WDA is dependent to prepare the land, are hog tied? The WDA has announced in its glossy brochure that it intends to develop a major new complex at Miskin in the M4 corridor. Although Miskin is not part of my constituency, what happens there affects my county. That is a prestige site. It will be done in partnership — according to the WDA's glossy brochure—with South Glamorgan county council. Unfortunately, the capital programme that the Welsh Office has given the council will not enable it to prepare the land in the first place. If the Welsh Office does not allow the county council the capital programme to develop the land in the first place, the European regional development fund cannot give a 50 per cent. grant towards the costs of the infrastructure. One hand of the Welsh Office does not appear to know what the other is doing. If it hog-ties the capital programme of the county council that is meant to supply the infrastructure, the WDA will never get to the stage at which it can build the factory economically. That is a major problem. I hope that the Minister will deal with it and the other points that I have raised.

Mr. Gwilym Jones (Cardiff, North): The House is conscious that the hour is late, but it is necessary to refer again to two closely inter-related matters that I raised on Second Reading. Those matters were also touched on by my constituent, the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael), whose constituency contains almost the whole south Cardiff redevelopment area.

The points to which I alluded were the WDA's land holdings in the area of the south Cardiff redevelopment, and the apprehension abroad in Cardiff—among some people—about the use of compulsory purchase orders to pursue the redevelopment of south Cardiff. My hon. Friend the Minister replied by advising me and the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth to take up specific Cardiff problems with the WDA, as he would advise any other hon. Members who were raising constituency problems.

I want gently to chide my hon. Friend the Minister about that. The south Cardiff redevelopment is no minor constituency matter. It is a most important development. It was the inspiration of my noble Friend Lord Crickhowell. It represents a tremendous prospect for the future — *[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) wants to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am sure that he will. I would give way to him, but I fancy that the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth and I have a far better knowledge of this matter, which fact the hon. Member for Newport, East is giving away by his sedentary interruptions.

The redevelopment represents a tremendous potential for the future, not only for Cardiff, but—more widely—for the valleys of south Wales and the whole of south Wales. The last thing any of us want to do in Cardiff is to undersell ourselves on the south Cardiff redevelopment or Cardiff's potential.

I do not necessarily expect my hon. Friend to reply tonight. I shall be content if he will reflect on this matter after the debate and further consider the points that I and the hon. Member for Cardiff South, and Penarth tried to make on Second Reading. Perhaps he will go into them on his later visits to the WDA and the Cardiff Bay development corporation. The last thing I want is for the Government or the Welsh Office to regard the matter as a local constituency problem.

Mr. Michael: In view of the gentle and polite remarks made by the hon. Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones) about south Cardiff, the Minister should take his point on board and respond to it. The point has been made in a reasonable way on both sides of the House, and the Minister should therefore listen to it.

[Mr. Michael]

It makes no sense to take up specific problems with the WDA because it is clear that influence has been brought to bear upon it to be involved in the area. That is why a transfer of land is going on at the present time. As I stressed on Second Reading, the whole strategy of the development of south Cardiff needs to be got right and done in partnership.

The Ministers who are involved in decision making must understand the delicate nature of the partnership and the need for them to be involved in it. They must make sure that it works so that jobs are retained and encouraged rather than lost through the process. It is important that the WDA's expertise and knowledge is fully utilised in the process. The problem with last week's announcement, the points that were raised in last week's debate, and the lack of ministerial response is that no reassurance has been given on that point.

I record a note of disagreement with the hon. Member for Cardiff, North. Whereas we welcomed the support and personal commitment that Lord Crickhowell gave the Cardiff bay development, the starting point for the scheme was the initiative of the South Glamorgan county council, a Labour authority, against Conservative councillors' opposition when it committed public investment to building the new county headquarters.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, North may be aware that the gentleman who represented his party in the last election was photographed in front of a development that he had opposed within the county council.

It is a minor matter. I raise it only because it has been referred to by hon. Members. It is only right that it be put into the right context.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The hon. Gentleman and I have similar thoughts on the subject. I should not want to provoke a great quarrel with him, but I invite him to study the St. David's day debate in the Chamber in 1983, when my noble Friend Lord Crickhowell launched what has now become the work of the Cardiff Bay development corporation. His initiative came forward at that time. It had previously gelled from a visit to the docks by my predecessor, the late Michael Roberts, in company with the hon. Gentleman's predecessor, Lord Callaghan. It was brought out before the Welsh Select Committee visited Cardiff. The chief executive of South Glamorgan county council laid the credit at the door of my predecessor the late Michael Roberts, Lord Callaghan and Lord Crickhowell. It was then enthusiastically taken up by all political parties in the two authorities in Cardiff.

Mr. Michael: Perhaps I may intervene in the hon. Gentleman's speech. That approach can be counter-productive. With great respect, the hon. Gentleman provoked a response. What I said is true. In the first instance, South Glamorgan county council put its money where its mouth was. Despite Conservative councillors' opposition, it went ahead with its development of the new county headquarters and the partnership with private enterprise, to try to get things moving in the docklands. That takes nothing away from the fact that there was then a positive intervention by Lord Crickhowell, as he now is.

In the past, because of the nature of the political make-up of the area, we in Cardiff have managed to maintain cross-party continuity of local authority control from one period to another, as the hon. Gentleman will know. From time to time, the hon. Gentleman and I have bantered across another chamber. It is important to say where the real start of initiatives began and where the real opposition has lain. I do not wish to be taken any further down that avenue. I intended to explore it only briefly in response to what was said earlier.

There have been no answers regarding the intentions of the Welsh Office and the Ministers concerned. In Cardiff, there is a serious lack of industrial development opportunities because of a lack of land and factories. That was not spelt out in the WDA's announcement last week. There is an inevitable freeze while decisions are made about planning in south Cardiff. Nevertheless, that means that the area is losing opportunities and jobs. I hope that the Minister will reassure us that there will be a speedy response to these points and support for the local authorities as they try to tackle those elements in the area.

12.30 am

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) should not be quite so surprised that the Conservative party is trying to lay claim to the credit for the Cardiff bay scheme, because in this debate Conservative Members are trying to claim credit for the existence and success of the Welsh Development Agency. This is a standard tactic. They oppose an idea when it comes forward, and then claim the credit once it gets off the ground.

I am delighted to see the Minister of State. It gives me great pleasure that he is to reply to the debate. We all like and have a great affection for him. We particularly like his well-known characteristic that he would not dream of leaving the Chamber until he has answered every point that has been put to him tonight. We know that that is the standard that he has set himself, and that is the standard by which we will judge him this evening. To that end, my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) has started a checklist of the various questions to the Minister. Indeed, it might facilitate matters if we organised a photocopy of the list for the Dispatch Box so that the Minister could have the list.

We welcome the Minister of State to the Chamber in the unexplained absence of the Secretary of State. Where is he? He should be here. After all, his Welsh valleys initiative is buried somewhere in the Bill and we would expect the Secretary of State, of all people, to be here to tell us about it.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has been to Brussels today and was returning this evening. While in Brussels, he was working very much in the interests of Wales.

Mr. Williams: In that case, as the Secretary of State knew that he was going to Brussels, and if he was so enthusiastic to be here, I am surprised that the man who we are told has such massive influence in Cabinet was unable to persuade the business managers to hold the debate tomorrow evening or yesterday evening instead of this evening. It is an astonishing discourtesy to Wales that on one of the few occasions when we have an opportunity to deal in Committee with specifically Welsh legislation the Secretary of State feels that he is too grand to be here. Perhaps he is out preparing yet another press release on the valleys initiative. He will not tell us about that, but no doubt there will be a press release.

My hon. Friend the Member for—*[Interruption.]* Sir Paul, you are fortunate this evening to be sharing an experience that we thought was normally unique to Welsh Members. I invite you to watch the hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) carefully during the debate. You will see that he has a rather unusual characteristic. His jaw is well worth watching. It is the nearest thing to political perpetual motion that you will ever come across. I invite you to observe his conduct during the debate.

Mr. Raffan: Perhaps I should hold up a sign reading "Laughter".

Mr. Williams: There you are, Sir Paul. It is fascinating. We should record the hon. Gentleman's peculiar antics. Perhaps he will say something as well as emitting noises.

My hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney hit on a very important point. He said that there is an initiative that may be of some importance. We do not know. However, if it is important and valuable, we welcome it. At least we are entitled to know about it.

The initiative relates to the use of private funds for property projects backed up as necessary where it may facilitate viability, as the press release says, with funds from the private sector.

There are important principles here as well as important points of detail and we are entitled to know about them. For example, if the WDA is to determine that its commitment of funds is appropriate to achieve viability, will it, as it is attaining that viability, get a share of whatever profits are made? Because viability is involved, will it be expected to go before the Welsh Industrial Development Advisory Board for approval?

In this context I agree with my hon. Friend's puzzlement about priority areas. I would not exclude any of them, particularly as one is in my constituency, so my hon. Friend will recognise that I speak not entirely impartially. If the valleys initiative is buried somewhere among the proposals for the Welsh Development Agency, why are the valleys excluded from the bold new initiative? One would have thought that they would be the very areas to be included.

We would also like further information on the new consultancy scheme which the WDA and the Welsh Office will be pushing in Wales. This is put forward by the Secretary of State as an important addition to his regional weaponry or his arsenal of inducements for the regions. Yet no doubt he will have seen that the regional director of the Department of Trade and Industry for the south of England, the most prosperous area of Britain, has said that that area, with 30 per cent. of the population, expects to get 40 per cent. of the money available under the new scheme.

So, far from being a regional policy, it seems to be a counter-regional policy. The area of greatest innovation will apparently get the greatest benefit. Therefore, with a relatively low level of innovation, we may lose out. We want clarification on that. It is difficult to quantify in advance projects which are dependent on demand. However, the director for the south of England put figures on it, so no doubt the Minister of State will feel able to do the same.

Derelict land clearance has been raised. The moment one points out something that is even slightly critical of the performance of the Government the Secretary of State bounces up and down in a paddy and starts muttering; occasionally he bounces to the Dispatch Box with irrelevancies. I asked specifically about this on Second Reading. The Minister of State did not answer when he replied to the debate, no doubt because he did not have time. Knowing what a courteous man he is, I am sure he intends to give me the answer tonight.

I made the point that, whereas England has two and a half times the area of derelict land that we have in Wales, about five times as much is being spent on clearing the dereliction. When does the Minister think that the programme of dereliction clearance will end? It has been pointed out that the WDA hopes to achieve the clearance of all derelict land by the turn of the century. I said on Second Reading that the programme for this year is good. Even on that performance, the agency will not achieve clearance until the year 2020. If the WDA's claim that the clearance will be complete by the end of the century is to be fulfilled, this year's programme will have to be more than doubled. Is that end of the century target an official Government target or something that the chairman of the WDA produced off the top of his head?

Does the Minister recognise that this much boosted extra money for the WDA, which the press has blazoned, is coming from other parts of the Welsh budget and the Welsh regional assistance budget? All that is happening is that the same money is being moved around.

The inadequacy of it all was shown up by my hon. Friend the Member for Neath (Mr. Coleman) when he commented on the 1,600 jobs that we have lost today. We are told how wonderfully Wales is doing, but in one day we have had three announcements—the proposed loss of the Lady Windsor pit, the proposed loss of the Abernant pit, and the proposed loss of a Wernos washery. That means that 1,600 jobs will go.

The astonishing thing about the announcement concerns Abernant, which produces anthracite. The Welsh director of British Coal went on Welsh television just before Christmas to boast of the turnaround there which had reached the point at which it was making a profit on every tonne of coal produced in November. Today, however, he announces its closure.

As for Lady Windsor, believe it or not, as a result of some investment, which is due to be completed in five week's time, and which could double output, it has the second highest productivity of any Welsh pit on one of its faces because of the changes that are in hand. As it is working ahead, as required by the rescue programme decided by British Coal with the NUM in November, British Coal rats on the agreement.

As for Wernos, the announcement has come as a surprise to everyone. I understand that Abernant is to be used instead.

These announcements delay the activities of the WDA. What is now to happen? Is the matter to go through the review procedure? The NUM is in great difficulty because, under the existing scheme, there is a £5,000 premium on redundancy payments until 31 March. If the union initiates the review procedure, it will go on beyond 31 March and therefore its members stand to lose the extra £5,000. If it does not initiate the review procedure, however, the Government will accuse it of agreeing to the closures.

Either way, we want to know what the WDA intends to do and what programme the Secretary of State will bring forward to help those three areas. We do not expect the extra demand to be met out of the extra budget for the

[Mr. Williams]

WDA or the Welsh Office. We want there to be new money to meet these requirements. We have lost 11 pits and 11,000 jobs in the coal industry during the past four years.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The Secretary of State has been in Brussels all day working for the interest of Wales.

Mr. Williams: The hon. Member must be careful. It was his Secretary of State who, as Secretary of State for Energy, drove the knife into the heart of the Welsh mining communities and now, as Secretary of State for Wales, he is taking away regional development grants, thus turning off the life support scheme which was intended to help them recover from the blows that he delivered. It strikes us as somewhat paradoxical that we have lost all these jobs in the mining areas, over the past four years, and they should be the supreme example of where regional aid should work, but in the same four years their special development area status has been taken away. Now the regional development grants are being taken away.

12.45 am

We welcomed the announcement on the WDA factory programme last week, as I am sure the Minister will recollect. It has said that it is taking an extra 1·5 million sq ft of factory space next year. The WDA talks about the creation of 4,500 jobs over the next few years. That means that, for every 1,000 sq ft of factory space, we get three jobs. To put the announcement of the next year's programme into perspective, we should remember that the three closures today would require more than 500,000 sq ft of new factory space to provide alternative jobs. So, while 1·5 million sq ft sounds a lot, when one sees it against the problems with which we are trying to deal, one begins to realise how small and inadequate it is.

Table 2·2 of the public expenditure White Paper lists the spending programmes Department by Department. We have all seen in the Welsh press, particularly the *Western Mail*, editorials about the miracle man from Worcester who is producing all this extra money for Wales. Unfortunately, he has not told the Treasury about this, and it does not know that it is giving extra, so it has done him a disservice and written it up wrongly in the White Paper. He has got it right and it has got it wrong.

Table 2.2 shows that, far from there being an increase next year, expenditure for Wales goes down by £6 million. I gave that figure in a press release some weeks ago, but was castigated by the Secretary of State for doing so. The following year, the great achievement of the wonder worker from Worcester is that we shall lose £24 million. To show that it was not a mistake the first time round, according to the White Paper, in the third year of the projected period, we shall lose another £24 million. The Secretary of State and the *Western Mail* are telling us that we are getting this extra money, but no one has told the Treasury, and it thinks that we shall lose £54 million in the next few years. Much as I like the right hon. Member for Worcester, I am inclined to take more notice of what is said in the White Paper than of what is said in his press releases.

Let us follow the logic of this. If next year we shall lose £6 million from our budget, but this extra funding will go to the WDA and we will get the Welsh valleys initiative somewhere in this slimmed-down budget, where is the money to come from? Which Welsh pocket is being picked to provide the funding that the Secretary of State is talking about?

I am delighted that we have an answer from the Welsh Office confirming that the valleys initiative is within these published figures. The valleys need many things. They need improvements in housing, but the housing programme is cut in the second volume of the White Paper. They need improved transport links, but spending on those, too, is massively cut.

Wales needs more spending on education. A Welsh Office press notice talks about a wonderful expansion in the education budget for Wales over the next three years —0·5 per cent. a year. Where is the initiative? We want to know, as my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney said. It does not seem to be in housing, transport, or education. So how many of these factories — how much square footage, how many jobs and at what cost—are part of the new valleys initiative, so coyly introduced by the Secretary of State?

Mr. Morgan: Sounds like a python.

Mr. Williams: I shall leave my hon. Friend to grapple with his python.

The Secretary of State is not a man to hide his initiatives under bushels, yet we have had to winkle out from him the fact that the initiative has already taken place. He has devised a new parliamentary game, hunt the initiative, and my hon. Friends are trying to do just that. Will he tell us where it is, how much it is and where the money has come from? Which part of Wales is having to pay for the so-called initiative?

Let me remind the Minister of the background to the debate, in case he gets carried away with the hyperbole used by the Secretary of State on Second Reading. In December last year, unemployment was still double what it was in December 1979. The WDA budget, which the Government are boasting about, has been £40 million, or 60 per cent., more in the past. That is how good it is now. The factory building programme that the Government are telling us about has been 1 million sq ft larger in the past, yet we are told, "You are lucky. Look at these marvellous achievements under this brand new Secretary of State for Wales." Just to make sure that we do not feel that there is anything to which the Government's malevolent attentions have not been turned, regional grants have been 50 per cent. higher in the past.

That is the background: less money, less factory space, less WDA funding and double the unemployment. Will the Minister please convince us now, detail by detail, and tell us what the initiative is, where the extra money is and, above all, where that money is coming from?

Mr. Wyn Roberts: It is high time that we reminded ourselves that the clause simply authorises an increase in the limit to the amount of money that can be made available to the WDA by Parliament out of the National Loans Fund or the Consolidated Fund and that we are increasing the limit from £450 million to £700 million because of the enormous success of the WDA. We covered most of the activities of the agency in the three-hour Second Reading debate last Thursday. We referred to the record factory letting this year—2·3 million sq ft—and to the WDA's intention of completing 1·5 milion sq ft next year. We also stressed that the WDA's potential spending is up to £113 million next year—31 per cent. more than

the budget for this year. We expect the WDA's success to continue. We expect it to continue to succeed in attracting new industry, in building and letting factories and therby bringing much-needed employment to Wales.

Expenditure by the agency depends on several factors, some of which are outside its control, such as the needs of Welsh industry for investment finance; the availability of land for environmental projects; the speed with which the agency can devise plans and implement schemes; and the ability of the agency and Wales as a whole to continue to attract inward investment.—*[Interruption.]* Several hon. Members have referred to the serious situation with regard to pit closures, so I should have thought that they would be prepared to listen with some attention to what I have to say.

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): What about the 1,500 jobs?

Mr. Roberts: I expect the hon. Gentleman, who I am sure takes this matter seriously, as I do, to listen to what I have to say.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I—indeed, all Conservative Members—were naturally sorry to hear of the pit closures that were announced earlier today. However, maintaining uneconomic operations is simply not the answer to the long-term future of the south Wales coalfield, as, indeed, the Opposition discovered when they were in government and had to close pits.

British Coal has acknowledged its responsibility to mining communities by the setting up of British Coal Enterprise, which has — to date — offered £10 million assistance to small business projects in Wales. That is a valuable offer. The schemes involved are expected to create or safeguard about 6,500 jobs.

Of course, the WDA will also have an important part to play in encouraging the economic redevelopment of the communities involved. The programme of factory building announced last Thursday will provide many job opportunities throughout the south Wales coalfield.

I have been looking at the specific programmes of the WDA in the heads of valley regions, in the Treforest region and in Swansea, all of which will at least be helpful in the present situation.

The WDA is also discussing with British Coal the prospects of developing managed workshops in the valleys. Account will clearly now be taken of the latest closure announcements when deciding on particular sites.

Colliery land is often a major asset and provides an opportunity for future development. The agency will, therefore, have urgent discussions with the local authorities involved to explore whether the sites can be brought within the scope of the new land reclamation programme that the WDA plans to launch in March or early April.

Sir Raymond Gower: In connection with the valleys problem, if it is possible to have another enterprise zone in Wales in the future, could the claims of the valleys area be considered? Would it not be a great advantage if an enterprise zone were to be set up at some crucial central point in the valleys area?

Mr. Roberts: I note what my hon. Friend says. I am coming to the main theme to which he referred.

Mr. Coleman *rose*——

Mr. Roberts: Perhaps I could continue by giving the House our immediate responses on the day of the announcement of the closures.

The long-term prosperity of the valleys can be secured only through a complete restructuring of its economy and a major enhancement of the environment.

Mr. Coleman: Will the Minister tell me and the House when he first knew that Abernant would be closed? I have listened carefully to what he has said. Last week he talked about announcements of factories. Did he know then?

Mr. Roberts: I was referring to what the WDA announced last week—[HON. MEMBERS: "Did the hon. Gentleman know?"] The information sheets that I have in my hand were part of the package given to hon. Members by the WDA. Of course, I did not know in advance about the closures; neither did the WDA. Such knowledge could not be inferred from the references that I have made to the activities of the WDA in the various parts of the south Wales region.

1 am

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is addressing the precise issues to which I have just referred in the coming weeks before he makes his announcement on his strategy for the transformation of the valleys. Labour Members have already pressed me hard this evening to give further details on the so-called valleys initiative, but, however hard they press me, they know that it would be totally inappropriate for me to make an announcement at this stage.

Mr. Alan Williams: Why?

Mr. Roberts: Because we are still awaiting the valleys initiative. Indeed, Opposition Members have been contributing ideas — the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) knows that—and we are bringing that information together. My right hon. Friend will make an announcement in due course. We want that initiative to be as good as it possibly can be.

We must remember that my right hon. Friend's predecessor, Lord Crickhowell, began a valleys initiative in 1986. I am sure that Opposition Members would want us to pursue that initiative and take further action. However, it is not for me to make an announcement tonight.

Mr. Rowlands: I still have my checklist and I have not ticked anything off yet. Will the Minister confirm whether the valleys initiative includes the possibility of additional factory space over and above that announced by the WDA on 28 January? The Minister should say yea or nay.

Mr. Roberts: The hon. Gentleman must await my right hon. Friend's announcement, which I promise will be made in due course. As the hon. Gentleman has been in government, he must appreciate that.

The hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney asked me a great many questions. He asked me to put figures on various items, but I am extremely hesitant about doing so. I will look carefully at the questions as he put them to me and give him such figures as I can. However, he knows as well as I do that answers to some of his questions involve rather more than simple arithmetic, and I certainly do not intend to indulge in even simple arithmetic at this early hour of the morning.

Mr. Alan Williams: Not just one figure?

Mr. Roberts: No. I will give some figures later, but they will not have involved any calculations on my part.

The hon. Gentleman's theme was the interaction between the WDA and the private sector. There is no conflict between the two. The agency is there further to develop a prosperous self-sustaining market economy, and all its policies are geared to that end. The emphasis is increasingly on the agency as a facilitator or encourager of private-sector action, but there is much more emphasis now on partnership with the private sector and with local government.

Direct agency provision is focused on the market gaps, and naturally it will withdraw from areas when private-sector interest has been demonstrated. The property development grant is an example of the effort to stimulate private-sector solutions. It is a new grant to encourage private-sector developers to become more heavily involved in promoting industrial property in Wales. Similarly, the enterprise initiative consists of new business development grants which are administered in Wales by the WDA. The aim is to increase the flow and access to a wide range of top quality, private-sector consultancy advice. Obviously, the WDA is alert to other opportunities to stimulate greater private-sector involvement in the development of the Welsh economy.

One can say a great deal about the investment department and its workings within the WDA, but I do not think that I would be pleasing the House if I pursued the detail of that policy.

Mr. Rowlands: The Minister is moving on to deal, or not deal, with another point, as may be, but he has not said anything about the new property development grant. Will it be a certain percentage of a total project? What are the criteria? Who will make the assessments and judgments? Will it be the subject of an industrial development agency-type arrangement? It is an important initiative and we should like to know much more about the nature and character of this new grant facility. What about geographical limitation?

Mr. Roberts: I can certainly clear up the point about geographical location. There is no such thing as a geographical limitation within Wales for this grant. It is extremely difficult to do anything other than estimate, or probably guesstimate, the expenditure at this stage.

Mr. Rowlands: Give the figures.

Mr. Roberts: No. I refuse to give the figures because this is a new development and must be tested. We must see exactly what the demand for this particular service will be.

The investment policy department in the WDA seeks to ensure that viable companies have access to adequate financial backing, so as to promote economic growth and create jobs. That department complements the agency's main developmental objectives. Its policy is that it invests only when private-sector sources of venture capital cannot be attracted. It invests on a commercial basis in the expectation of a return, albeit a lower return than most private investors would be prepared to accept.

The agency's main market is seed capital and start-ups. Start-ups alone now account for over half of all new investments. In the current financial year, all agency investment in excess of £250,000 will be syndicated with private-sector partners. That is part of the new mechanism. The hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney will know that a policy review was conducted with the Welsh Development Agency and the agency is now investigating whether more can be done to lessen the obstacles to private funding, particularly at the smaller end of the market.

The right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) referred briefly to the scale of land reclamation in England. The Department of the Environment has provided grants worth about £440 million to clear almost 11,000 hectares of damaged land. We are also proud of our record in Wales. Successive Governments have taken pride in their achievements.

The agency's contribution to the regeneration of the Welsh economy and the transformation of the environment has been enormous. That is recognised on both sides of the House. Opposition Members claim credit for the agency, but I must remind them that we changed the character of the agency, through the Industry Act 1979, when we came into office.

Mr. Rowlands: The Minister has so far answered half of one point. Let me try him on another which should be easier. Will he cover the point about the relationship between the urban renewal unit and the WDA as a lending agency?

Mr. Roberts: I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman is not aware of the close co-operation between the Welsh Development Agency and the Welsh Office and between local authorities and other agencies. Urban development grant is very much within the control of the Welsh Office, but that does not prevent us from using it to further developments in which the WDA has an interest. I am sure that will continue. We deal with each and every project as it arises.

It is worth emphasising that since 1979 the Government have enabled the agency to invest about £850 million, at today's prices, in the redevelopment process. The output in terms of new jobs, capital projects and reclaimed land was described in detail in last week's debate. Opposition Members will not want to hear all that good work and all those great achievements described again.

We are the first to accept that the task is nowhere near complete. The Government plan to allow the agency to invest a further £345 million over the next three years—over £100 per head for every person in Wales. That is the measure of the Government's commitment to seeing the task through and of their commitment to Wales.

In order to pursue its very wide range of activities and to complement the Government's economic and regional policies, it is necessary to provide a statutory basis for the continued funding of the agency. That is the purpose of the clause and the Bill. Once again, I commend the clause to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 1 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 2

SHORT TITLE AND EXTENT

Question proposed, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

1.15 am

Mr. Coleman: Clause 2 says:

"This Act does not extend to Northern Ireland."

Why is Northern Ireland being specifically excluded? What about Scotland and England — perhaps even Worcester? Will the Minister explain why Northern Ireland is being discriminated against in this fashion? It is important that the people of Northern Ireland should know that the people of Wales are not prepared to allow them to be discriminated against.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I do not want to have to remind Opposition Members that the report of the Committee stage will be read in Wales. If it is thought that attempts are being made to block or hinder the passage of the Bill, the people of Wales are entitled to take note of that fact.

Mr. Coleman: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I ask for the protection of the Chair against the Minister. I am asking a perfectly valid question. I am asking for information. I am not being facetious. Therefore, I call on the Minister to withdraw.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I think that it would be better if the Minister were to be allowed to reply.

Mr. Roberts: I made that comment because a clause excluding Northern Ireland from a Bill's provisions is—as the hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Coleman) must surely know, because he has been a Member of this House for much longer than I—frequently to be found in Bills that refer to England and Wales.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 2 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Bill to be reported, without amendment.

Motion made, and Question, That the Bill be now read the Third time, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 75 (Third Reading), and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

International Development Association

1.17 am

The Minister for Overseas Development (Mr. Chris Patten): I beg to move,

That the draft International Development Association (Eighth Replenishment) Order 1987, which was laid before this House on 7th December, be approved.

The purpose of the order is to authorise a contribution of £524,160,000 to the eighth replenishment of the International Development Association. This is a major element of our aid programme — our second biggest single commitment, after our contribution to the European Development Fund.

As the House will know, the association is the soft loan affiliate of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development — more popularly known as the World Bank. It was set up in 1960, when it became clear that many countries were too poor to take on conventional World Bank loans on quasi-commercial terms. Because its terms are highly concessional, the IDA is mainly funded by donors' contributions and not, as with the World Bank, by borrowing on the financial markets.

IDA approved credits of $3·5 billion in the year to June 1987. In the same period, the World Bank approved loans totalling $14·2 billion.

The IDA aims to promote economic progress in the poorer developing countries by providing financial and technical assistance, mainly for specific projects. Just as the Bank's goal is to bring its borrowers to a point where they are fully able to turn to the world's financial markets to meet their needs, so IDA aims to bring its borrowers to the point where, one day, their needs can be met by the Bank.

Many countries have benefited in this way over the years. The most notable case is, perhaps, Korea, which graduated out of IDA in 1973, and whose economy has gone from strength to strength. But most of the poorest countries of Africa and Asia, which are IDA's customers, will continue to need substantial and highly concessional aid flows for many years to come. IDA, therefore, has a key role to play in their development.

Our efforts, through IDA and other international development agencies, complement our aid programmes, to which we attach particular importance. We maintain a substantial and effective bilateral aid programme, the quality of which was recognised by the OECD at its last review of British aid. It is focused primarily on the poorest, IDA-eligible, countries; more so than OECD bilateral aid generally.

Although IDA credits are mostly for projects, in recent years there has been an increasing emphasis on non-project lending, mainly structural and sectoral adjustment loans. Lending of this kind provides vital foreign exchange to help finance essential imports for those countries that are making an effort to get their economic house in order. Structural adjustment programmes usually follow a period of economic decline, which inevitably brings increasing hardship. There is understandable concern, which I share, about the plight of the poorest and most vulnerable groups in those circumstances.

In the long run, everyone should gain from the resumed economic growth made possible by successful adjustment. In the short run, there are some gainers too. For example, policy reforms such as higher agricultural prices will

[Mr. Chris Patten]

benefit many poor farmers. But there are other groups who will lose, particularly townspeople who have previously received Government subsidies in one form or another.

The World Bank and other donors, including Britain, have become increasingly aware of the human cost of economic decline in poor countries, and are trying to find ways to give a human face to the adjustment process by targeting aid on the needs of the poor.

The ODA took part last year in an initiative launched by the Government of Ghana, with assistance from the World Bank and the United Nations agencies, to consider what may be done to help poor and vulnerable groups in that country during the period of adjustment. The Government of Ghana have produced a programme which will be discussed later this month at a donors' conference, at which Britain will be represented.

The bank, the UN development programme and the African Development bank are together paying for a five-year project which aims to assess the impact of structural adjustment and to design poverty-alleviation programmes, which will increase the access of the poor to employment and to income generation. This project, which many of the United Nations agencies will supervise, is to be executed by the World Bank. But developing country governments must face up to some difficult political changes, so that their own resources are deployed where the benefits to poor people will be greatest.

It may help if I give the House some of the background to this new obligation to IDA, which we have accepted, and which I now ask the House to endorse. Negotiations for the eight replenishment were tough and lengthy, but there was a sense of urgency and even generosity about them, by contrast with those of the seventh replenishment, which began a year late and yielded a negotiated total of only $9 billion—25 per cent. down, in cash terms, on the sixth replenishment. As it was soon recognised as inadequate, especially to meet the needs of the poorer countries in Africa, the seventh replenishment was supplemented by a special facility for Africa. That brought the total up to $10·6 billion. Britain played its part in providing a contribution of £75 million to the special facility.

For the eighth replenishment, donors have agreed a negotiated total of $11·5 billion. We shall contribute our 6·7 per cent. share to that—the same percentage as last time. In addition, however, some donor countries are making voluntary extra contributions. These total $900 million, including a special pledge of $15 million from the United Kingdom. The overall amount raised by donors is $12·4 billion.

When account is also taken of repayments of earlier loans, IDA should be able to sustain a lending programme of more than $13 billion over the three years of the replenishment. Some 70 per cent. of contributions are payable in non-dollar currencies, in amounts fixed at 1986 rates of exchange. Thus, IDA is substantially protected from the effects of the depreciation of the dollar since 1986. At today's rates of exchange, the replenishment is worth considerably more than $12·4 billion. Early in the negotiations a target range of $10·5 billion to $12·5 billion was established, and the result is at the top of the range.

Many contributors to IDA are above all concerned that the amounts that they provide should help to deal with the special problems of the poorest countries, particularly in Africa. It has been agreed that at least 45 per cent. of eighth replenishment lending should go to Africa, and that an additional 5 per cent. would be available if necessary to meet the needs of countries making structural adjustment efforts. That compares with only 44 per cent. of the combined seventh replenishment and special facility. Up to $3·5 billion will be allotted to fast-spending adjustment aid. The bulk of IDA's lending will still be for longer-term development projects, however, and we are particularly satisfied that, in addition to Africa, the needs of the large developing countries in Asia have been recognised.

Countries south of the Sahara are facing exceptional difficulties. I am glad to say that there is widespread recognition by African Governments of the need for determined measures to lay the foundations for economic recovery. The World Bank has taken the lead in providing balance of payments assistance for countries prepared to adopt the necessary policy reforms. We strongly support these structural adjustment programmes and we have provided funds from our bilateral aid programme to supplement IDA resources in such cases.

Like the bank, Britain is at the forefront of efforts to increase resources available to support economic reform in the low-income, debt-distressed countries in sub-Saharan Africa. At a very successful meeting in Paris in December, bilateral donors pledged a total of $6·3 billion of aid as part of the bank-led effort to ensure well co-ordinated support for these reform programmes. For our part, we have said that we would expect to make available up to £250 million of British bilateral programme aid over the next three years.

Agreement has been reached in the IMF for a substantial increase in the fund's structural adjustment facility, which will increase it almost threefold. Through additions to the aid programme, Britain is contributing sufficient to subsidise interest on £750 million worth of new structural adjustment facility lending, at current interest rates. This offer was warmly welcomed by M. Camdessus, the IMF managing director.

Additionally, as the House will know, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has made far-reaching proposals to ease the burden of debt on poorer countries in Africa undertaking economic adjustment, the cost of which would be additional to the existing planned aid budget. There is also general agreement on the need for an early and substantial increase in the World Bank's capital, to enable its lending programme to expand, as we all would wish, over the next five or six years. Discussions are proceeding on these matters, and I am sure the House joins me in hoping that they will be concluded successfully.

The order will give the Secretary of State authority to make a United Kingdom contribution of £524·16 million. We shall pay this to IDA by depositing three promissory notes, for equal amounts, over three years from 1988. These will then be encashed over a longer period, to match spending incurred by IDA as a result of its commitments during the replenishment period. The costs of encashment will be met as they occur, from sums voted for overseas aid. The detailed arrangements of the workings of this replenishment are clearly set out in the reports of the bank's executive directors which, together with the IDA resolutions dated 24 February 1987, have been published as a White Paper with which I am sure the House is familiar—Cmnd. 251.

There is, perhaps, one point which I should draw to the attention of the House, on which I am bound to say that we did not achieve quite the result that we should have liked. The terms of IDA-8 credits will be slightly less concessional than those under the previous replenishment. With a grant element of 77 per cent. for the poorest countries and 74 per cent. for others, however, they will nevertheless be more generous than the 72 per cent. grant element which was provided for the first IDA credits in 1961.

We argued that the softer IDA-7 terms should be retained, but eventually conceded some shortening of maturities to secure agreement on the highest possible replenishment total. When maturities are shortened and credits are repaid more quickly, that does of course have the incidental benefit of making more money available for new commitments in the short run. It is also true that for the poorest countries the new IDA lending terms parallel those already in use in the Asian Development Fund.

We are glad to support IDA's central aim of alleviating poverty, and its concentration of resources in key areas, especially in agriculture, rural development and energy. We welcome its action to tackle the problems of the poorest, and particularly the poorer indebted countries in Africa. We support its attempts to help those countries improve the co-ordination of aid from all sources. We play a vigorous part in such co-ordination.

The IBRD and IDA are the world's leading development institutions. They constitute the cutting edge for change and for improvement in the social and economic conditions in developing countries. Successive British Governments have supported them, and our commitment now is as firm as ever. I commend the order to the House.

1.30 am

Miss Joan Lestor (Eccles): We welcome the order for the eighth replenishment of the World Bank's International Development Association. As the Minister has said, the IDA is the most important multilateral aid agency that provides funds to the poorest countries. It plays a crucial role in development, providing concessional funds to countries that are almost wholly dependent on public, rather than private, flows of finance.

Today's *Financial Times* carries a report on the latest aid survey conducted by the OECD. It provides ample evidence to illustrate the crucial importance of the IDA, and paints a gloomy picture of the outlook for aid from the industrialised countries. The volume of overseas aid is growing at a mere 1·5 per cent. in real terms. That is even less than the OECD's projected trend of 2 per cent. a year. The aid performance of industrialised countries is clearly inadequate, and more funds, bilateral and multilateral, are urgently needed.

More official aid is needed because the private sector is no longer funding development on the scale achieved in the 1970s. The OECD report, published yesterday, shows that since 1980 the share of private flows to the Third world has dropped from 51 per cent. to 32 per cent., whereas the share of total official development assistance has almost doubled from 36 per cent. to 65 per cent. What an extraordinary verdict that is on the monetarist 1980s. All that spirit of enterprise unlocked, all those unfettered free markets and the end result is that the Third world is more dependent today on public-sector finance than ever before.

For these reasons, the IDA is becoming more, not less, important; and that is why we welcome the replenishment order. The sum agreed over the next three years is $12·5 billion. We welcome that amount, but believe it is far too little, given the needs of the poorest countries. The last but one replenishment of IDA — the so-called IDA-6 — in 1979 amounted to $12 billion in cash terms, so, in real terms, today's replenishment is drastically reduced.

So, too, regrettably, is the British Government's contribution. In 1979, the United Kingdom contribution to IDA-6, agreed by the Labour Government, amounted to 10·1 per cent. of the total replenishment. The Tory Government subsequently slashed the size of our contribution to only 6·7 per cent. That dramatic cut in United Kingdom support for the IDA should be reversed as quickly as possible. At the time, Tory Ministers gave the excuse of a weak economy to justify the reduction in Britain's role within the IDA. The Chancellor seems to have billions available today for tax cuts. Is it not time, therefore, to restore United Kingdom status within multilateral agencies, such as the World Bank, by increasing the size of our contributions?

I hope that the Minister can substantially improve on the recent small increase in the aid programme. Increased spending would be welcome in both bilateral and multilateral aid. Our record against the United Nations target is deplorable and likely to get worse as the United Kingdom economy grows faster than the small increase in the aid budget. The Minister should re-commit the Government to the UN aid target of 0·7 per cent. of GNP and establish a timetable of spending increases.

That is why I again refer, as I did on Monday, to the fact that my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) has introduced a Bill to require a timetable and to concentrate our aid on the poorest countries and the people within them. I hope that the Minister will look carefully at the Bill. Given the time constraints, it is unlikely to be given a Second Reading on 12 February, but perhaps the Minister, as I asked him the other day, can persuade the Leader of the House to provide some time in the near future to discuss the matter.

Of course, as the Minister has said, the International Development Association is similarly concerned with the poorest countries. It is mandated to lend to low-income nations, but it is not primarily concerned with the poorest groups within such countries. Opposition Members would like to see a greater emphasis on poverty alleviation in IDA programmes. Projects that are specifically targeted to benefit the poor are often the most challenging. Nevertheless, the World Bank should ensure that it becomes a pioneer agency in project work among the poorest groups.

Many hon. Members will remember that, in 1973, Robert McNamara's famous speech in Nairobi gave the major impetus to the bank's work on poverty alleviation. The rural poor became the focus of much activity and programme funding. The study, "Redistribution with Growth", provided intellectual force to the new policy trend. At the same time, the bank markedly increased its lending for agriculture and rural development.

In the 1980s, however, the bank moved away from that agenda. Under the leadership of the commercial banker, Tom Clausen, the explicit poverty focus was weakened and lending programmes—for example, in rural development —have declined. I believe that that change of direction, no doubt provoked by the monetarist ideologues of the

[Miss Joan Lestor]

early 1980s, was a big mistake. Under the new leadership of Mr. Barber Conable, it seems that the bank is rediscovering the wisdom of the McNamara years.

There is ample evidence that the bank's work on poverty alleviation was successful. A recent study by the Washington-based Overseas Development Council shows that poverty-focused projects have

"turned out to be what the bank does best".

ODC research proved that the rural poor are amongst the most reliable borrowers; they are more likely to invest wisely and repay promptly than the better-off. The bank's poverty projects also enjoy a better overall performance, with fewer project failures and high rates of return. Such investment in so-called human capital makes humanitarian and economic sense. The ODC concludes that

"empirical research sustains the thesis that satisfying basic human needs yields high rates of economic return".

We hope that the next round of IDA spending will see a return of poverty alleviation as the major mandate of the bank and the IDA. We also expect IDA funds to be used creatively to offset the worst impact of the debt crisis on the world's poorest countries. As a key source of credit, IDA has a major role in the process of economic adjustment forced on so many low-income nations, especially, as the Minister has said, in sub-Saharan Africa.

Recently, both the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have spoken approvingly of the arguments put forward by the United Nations Children's Fund for adjustment with a human face. UNICEF argues that the inevitable economic changes required, as a result of mounting debt and the impact of world recession, should not cause a deterioration in the living standards of the poorest groups. Human-faced adjustment would guarantee basic needs and ensure that vulnerable groups, especially women and children, are targeted to prevent undue hardship. There can be no disagreement with that.

Since UNICEF's arguments have been accepted, at least at the level of rhetoric, the challenge now is to implement this policy approach. Donors, both bilateral and multilateral, should now ensure that their grants and loans are tailored to the social and economic needs of the poor. IDA funds are being used to support structural adjustment lending, but the bank's existing record in protecting the poor during adjustment is mixed. The bank's own report, published a few years ago, called "Focus on Poverty", admitted that, although the bank

"has argued forcefully for the removal of subsidies, it has been less effective in finding positive ways of targeting subsidies to low-income consumers".

The report added that the bank has rarely considered

"who will carry the heaviest burden of adjustment."

The bank must now take the lead in promoting adjustment with a human face. That will mean careful analysis in each debtor country of the social side of the economy. Too often, only financial criteria are applied.

Tragically, as we all know, the International Monetary Fund demands stringent adherence to financial targets for public sector budgets. The inflation rate is part of that. Why do we not pay attention to key social indicators of economic well-being, such as infant mortality rates or nutrition levels? They are just as valid measures of economic viability, but they are usually ignored.

Sadly, the adjustment process is more discussed these days than development. The debt crisis has simply arrested the economic and social progress of the Third world. Hopefully, adjustment with a human face can restore real development. As time passes, IDA will inevitably be at the centre of this debate, but the United Kingdom aid programme also has a role to play. I should be interested to know in what way the Minister is reshaping our country's programmes to ensure that adjustment with a human face will really happen.

An important step to ease the burden of adjustment is the easing of the debt burden itself. In this respect, I think that IDA could take direct action. Unlike the main lending arm of the World Bank, IDA does not borrow on the capital markets or depend on a highly favourable credit rating. The IDA raises all its funds from donor Governments. It could therefore take the initiative to cancel outstanding debts without in any way damaging its ability to make further loans.

IDA now has outstanding credits of about $20 billion. This sum, although small in terms of total debt, will become a significant burden for low-income debtors in th late 1990s. Why not convert these loans into grants and, in the future, offer all IDA funds on grant terms rather than loans?

In 1978, the Labour Government accepted the wisdom of turning former aid loans into grants for United Kingdom bilateral aid to the poorest countries. This policy has featured recently as the true substance of the so-called "Lawson" debt plan. A more imaginative and original idea for the Chancellor to propose would be the effective cancellation of IDA debts. I should be interested to hear the Minister's views on tackling the problem of debt owed to the multilateral agencies.

Finally, most of us would agree that it was very interesting to hear the new president of the World Bank when he addressed the all-party group on overseas development the other week. His speech was refreshing because he addressed many of the points that have been raised today. He recognised the problem of poverty alleviation and of adjustment. In particular, he addressed in a powerful way the eagerness that he has to ensure that the bank adapts its programmes to take account of environmental issues and the role of women in development.

I believe that he is sincere in these ambitions and means to force real change within the bank. We wish him well and hope that the policy initiatives that he is planning in both areas bear fruit. Over the long term, the bank's credibility rests on its ability to tackle poverty and to promote development that embraces all the community — men, women and children. Public support, so crucial for an institution like the World Bank, will depend on the president's ability to translate his words into practice.

1.43 am

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): I begin by congratulating my hon. Friend the Minister on the generous way in which he has treated the International Development Agency replenishment and on the way in which he and my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer have joined together to ensure that the IDA, the World Bank and the international community approach the problems of the most indebted countries in Africa and in sub-Saharan Africa in particular.

I also congratulate my hon. Friend on the way in which he has made certain that we in Britain contribute more than our fair share to the IDA replenishment. We have

contributed an additional $15 million over and above our share related to our gross national product. However, the amount is insufficient, as the hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) has said. The need for the original IDA-7 was estimated by the World Bank at $18 billion. The replenishment was originally as low as $9 billion. But for the special facility for sub-Saharan Africa, our contribution to IDA-7 would have been very low. Fortunately we were able to increase it to approximately $11 billion because the Minister agreed to contribute to the special facility for sub-Saharan Africa.

The replenishment at $12 billion is a great achievement and is to be welcomed, but it is lower than the $18 billion which was originally thought to be necessary for IDA-7. I estimate that the real need approaches $25 billion, which is almost double the replenishment. However, we must not forget the additional amounts put into IDA directly by the profits made out of the World Bank's operations worldwide. That is a considerable increase in the amount available for investment on IDA terms in the poorest countries.

Distribution is always a thorny subject within the World Bank and we must argue it out in years to come. Traditionally, India and the sub-continent of India together have taken well over 40 per cent. of the IDA distribution. That figure is falling. India has voluntarily given up that large percentage and the figure is falling in favour of sub-Saharan Africa, but it is increased by the necessity to give to China—another low-GNP-per-capita but large country. That poses a major problem for IDA in its distribution profile.

I believe that the GNP per capita criterion is misleading. It discriminates against the most impoverished parts of Africa and also against islands and small territorial states which are not in the same league as China or India, both of which are nuclear powers with enormous armies and navies, and which are very powerful in their own right. The smaller countries and island states can lay claim to a higher per capita income but are much less powerful and have many poor people. So the GNP per capita criterion has to be re-examined closely by the bank. It is doing so, but on an ad hoc basis as it tries to give more to sub-Saharan Africa by common consent.

The IDA replenishment is essential for the poverty-stricken countries of sub-Saharan Africa to enable them to handle their debts. There is no way in which those countries could get out of debt without concessional lending. If people object and say that this is the wrong way to help countries out of their indebtedness, let them cast their minds back to the Marshall plan through which the United States helped Europe and Japan to recover from the second world war. It was on even more concessional terms than are given by IDA. What an enormous help that was to enable Europe and Japan to trade again in the world's trading systems, to provide an increasing standard of living and to rebuild their capital equipment.

The same story is repeated in India, for example. The IDA has many proud graduates from the original score of countries which it helped. India is not yet among them, but, through IDA help, she has begun to be able to be self-sufficient in food.

The IDA is able to lead such enormous successes. They must now be reproduced in the poorest countries in Africa. The IDA must try to ensure that the policies that are adopted, conditional on IDA loans, produce the wealth creation necessary to increase the standard of living so that those countries can absorb our products. We can help them to build up their national resource.

It is only through IDA and similar lending, and the initiatives such as my hon. Friend the Minister has taken by cancelling loans and making them grants, that we can help countries out of their severe indebtedness.

Many Carribbean countries have recently been graduated out of IDA. I remind the House of what I said about small island states. They are graduated on a gross national product per capita basis when they should be IDA recipients for much longer than the criteria presently permit them to be.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister, through the alternate directorships of the World Bank, will help the Bank readjust its distribution policies and reconsider how IDA money is distributed and smaller states are treated.

This is a first-class use of part of our aid budget. It is expensive, but it is one of the most effective ways in which we can assist Third world countries to recover from their serious poverty and indebtedness.

1.51 am

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): I do not know why we have our overseas aid debates at 2 am.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): It is not 2 am everywhere in the world.

Mr. Beith: I was about to say that I do not know whether it is a desire to demonstrate that, while it is dark here, it is light in Dhaka. I think that we must be trying to echo the haunting words of the hymn that runs:

> "The sun that bids us rest is waking
> Our brethren 'neath the Western skies."

I can think of no other reason for choosing such perverse times to discuss these matters, which are of major importance.

We strongly welcome the order and the decision by donor countries to step up support for IDA. It is worth drawing attention to the positive role played by Japan, which agreed to a significant increase in its contribution relative to other countries. I hope that it is a sign of an increasing Japanese recognition of the contribution that they, with their tremendous economic power, can make to the good of the world, especially parts of the world closest to them.

We are happy to support IDA as an institution, particularly as the help that it provides is targeted to the poorest countries, especially, as the Minister said, in sub-Saharan Africa. It is worth remembering that the region includes many of the poorest countries and those with the greatest problems of debt relative to gross domestic product. The IDA, as a multilateral agency, provides a means of helping poor countries directly, and encouraging a large number of developed countries to play a full part.

During Monday's debate on the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency Bill, my hon. Friend the Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston), who I think is on the way to Lochaber tonight, referred to the immense scale of the Third world debt crisis and the fact that interest payments are now so high that they outweigh all cash flows into the developing world, leaving a net outflow of cash from developing to developed countries of about $26 billion a year. In response, the Minister referred to this order as evidence of the fact that

[Mr. Beith]

the Government are taking action. That is so, but I am sure that the Minister would be the first to admit that the order does not measure up to the scale of the crisis.

Third world countries are, with increasing regularity, defaulting on loans in the face of desperate circumstances. Zambia is a recent example. There is a growing awareness that the debt crisis is holding back economic growth world-wide by limiting demand for Western produced goods in the developing world. It is not merely a question of compassion: it is about the development of our own economy as well. While I welcome the replenishment, I hope that the Government will press for a much broader and more ambitious initiative from the Group of Seven, aimed at dealing with the debt crisis.

The hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) spoke about debt cancellation, but it is unrealistic to talk about that in relation to the relatively small burden of IDA public sector debt incurred in the Third world. The main debt cancellation problem arises in relation to the private bank debts in which so many countries are involved. The cancellation of many of these IDA loans would not have a material impact on the problem, and might undermine a useful system.

I was concerned that the speech made this week by the Governor of the Bank of England might be taken as a signal of the wrong kind. I do not think that he intended it as such, and if his speech is read in full, it does not have that impact. His argument was that the provision for bad debts of Third world countries in the accounts of British banks was becoming too large, and was perhaps becoming an invitation to default. He went on to argue in favour of imaginative schemes and initiatives to deal with those debt problems and to make it clear that he was not intending to discourage those. I hope that the signal is clearly understood as that, and his speech is not taken to mean that the Governor of the Bank is in the closest possible collusion with the Chancellor of the Exchequer and is trying to make more difficult the problems of Third world countries in meeting that debt burden.

One has to remember that the United Kingdom IDA contribution comes out of the limited aid budget, which is still at around only half of the target level set by the United Nations. All the commendation that one delivers for the increased commitment set out in the order has to be tempered by the realisation that we are still far below that level, which many of us believe could be achieved. Against that background, the order looks less exciting and impressive than it might otherwise.

1.56 am

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): This debate should be set in the context of the Government's overseas aid record, which, as my hon. Friend the Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) said earlier, is not just disappointing but awful. In real terms, in 1978-79, net overseas aid amounted to £1·395 billion, but in 1987-88 it amounted to only £1·198 billion. Even on the Government's plans, by 1991, it will still not have reached, in real terms, what it was in 1978, the last full year of the Labour Government, through what was then the aid to the poorest programme. While one welcomes any money put into the IBRD, it has to be set against that disappointing background.

Paragraph 2.1 of the report about the size of the eighth replenishment says:

"Throughout the negotiations, donors emphasized the pivotal role played by IDA as a multilateral institution providing resources to finance basic investment and support economic policy reforms and structural changes in the world's poorest countries. Moreover, donors also underlined the fact that IDA was a highly effective channel for aid and a key instrument of international cooperation and development."

It goes on to talk about the need for anti-poverty programmes in rural areas and the problem that low-income countries have

"had to rely on inflows of concessional resources that have been scarce in the mid-1980s."

One can agree with, and understand, all that. However, the difficulty of many of us in dealing with this problem and the way that it is presented is that that report was written not by the recipient countries but by the donor countries. Effectively, they are patting themselves on the back for the work they have done. One has to question the economic models forced on the poorest countries by the policies of the World Bank, and influenced through the IBRD.

The Minister quoted Ghana at some length, and one could quote other countries. I would be the first to say that those countries need the largest possible aid programmes at the lowest possible interest rates. Indeed, I would agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Eccles and say that the loans should be written off and made into straight grants, because that is the only way that many of those countries will get out of the poverty trap in which they find themselves. I am worried that, instead of doing that, the World Bank is forcing on those countries an economic model that is doing more than anything else to destroy their economies and environment and the political gain of independence 30 years ago. That is a serious problem.

Mr. Chris Patten: Has the hon. Gentleman ever talked to a Finance Minister from a sub-Saharan African country? That is not what they say.

Mr. Corbyn: I have spoken to Finance Ministers—not in sub-Saharan African countries but in other countries. I have also spoken to economists in many of those countries, and they express similar views about the loss of independence as a result of economic models forced upon them by the World Bank. If the Minister wishes to refute that, it is up to him, but I suggest that he examines the views expressed by a number of development agencies and the voluntary aid agencies and tries to understand some of their concerns.

I am not attempting to be a scaremonger; I am merely making the point that, if the World Bank adopts an arrogant attitude towards the economic problems of Third world countries while doing nothing to solve the problems of commodity prices or private sector loans—merely saying that it is offering a panacea—it is not doing much to help anyone.

There is much evidence of the greater indebtedness that many of the poorer countries are incurring. I shall cite only a couple of examples dealt with in the January issue of *South* magazine. Presumably the Minister is well read and reads *South*, in which case I hope that he reads it carefully. Page 10 of the January issue deals with the slump in commodity prices over the past decade and the export earnings of many of the poorest countries, particularly those in sub-Saharan Africa. The Minister well knows what that problem is and where it has come from.

Page 84 of the same issue gives a very interesting set of statistics, which the magazine produces month by month,

to show what commodities can buy. It gives the number of barrels of oil that 1 tonne of a given commodity will purchase. In 1975, it required 147 tonnes of coffee, and the figure has increased to 152. The figure for cotton has gone down from 119 to 90; for rubber, from 53 up to 65; and for tea from 129 down to 114. Taken overall, the poorest countries in the poorest parts of the world are getting progressively lower prices for their goods. They are paying higher and higher interest rates on the private sector loan market and are getting deeper and deeper into debt.

I support the IDA in giving soft loans to help rural development, but that does not solve the problem of the private sector loans and the countries' indebtedness. The only way that they can get out of that indebtedness is by selling assets through the encouragement of foreign investment, which creates serious political problems.

Mr. Wells: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the countries that qualify for IDA loans are not those that have incurred, or can afford to incur, debts from private banks?

Mr. Corbyn: Many of them have incurred private sector loans in the past, although there is some merit in the hon. Gentleman's assertion, as it is not the very poorest that have incurred the biggest loans. That is true enough. However, I think that the hon. Gentleman will agree that there is still the problem that the countries cannot borrow that money because they are already too much in debt or because they are given such a low credit rating.

I want to deal with the question of the indebtedness of some of the poorer — although not necessarily the poorest—countries and the problems of the investment strategies adopted by multinational companies. I refer to an interesting and recently published book, "World Debt —Who Is To Pay?" by Jacob Schatan, which analyses the problems of indebtedness especially in Latin American countries. It is interesting to note from it that in 1969 the balance of trade taken as a whole between Latin America and the rest of the world was a plus of $16 million. That figure has progressively worsened to the extent that by 1984 the overall trade deficit was $34 billion.

As a comparison besides that figure, the book produces the figures for payments of profits, interest and other remittances — that is to say, the net outflow of funds from Latin America either through debt repayments, which get worse and worse, or through the repatriation of profits from multinational companies. The outflow of money in that sense is greater than the net balance of payments during that period.

In other words, much of the balance of payments problems that many of the Latin American countries have got themselves into are largely the result of foreign investment in those countries and the investment policies adopted, and pressed on them, by the private sector and the World Bank.

It is important that people in the West should begin to understand that the British, European and north American banks are incredibly overstretched, especially in Latin America, but also in other parts of the world. At the moment they are in the process of writing off large amounts of those debts and if countries in Latin America go on debt default in the way in which Brazil has, as Argentina has threatened to do or as Peru is doing to a limited extent, the consequences will be serious. Those countries are crying out for help, and it could be given by improving commodity prices and the loan relationship that goes with that. We need to know the Government's attitude to that.

An article in *The Times* of 26 August gave the figures for the outstanding international loans of the largest Third world borrowers at the end of 1986. The figure for Brazil was $110 billion, for Mexico $102 billion and for Argentina $50 billion. It also gave the figures for the lenders — for example, British banks that had made special provisions this year for outstanding loans. At that time Barclays bank had made a provision of £570 million on loans of £3·1 billion. In other words, it did not expect to get back one sixth of its provision. The figures are similar for the other banks, Lloyds being the most stretched at present, with one quarter of its debt provisionally written off by that decision.

I have raised the next point in the House before because of its seriousness. It relates to the World Bank's attitude to the projects that it funds in the Third world or that it allows to be funded. The president of the World Bank has gone on record as saying that he is concerned about the environmental and social impacts of some of the projects. The Minister showed some recognition of that when he referred to more money being invested and spent in rural areas among the poorest people rather than in urban development schemes.

There has been some—I think greatly insufficient— reporting of the problems of environmental damage in Brazil through World Bank policies. On 27 August 1987, *The Listener* stated:

"in Brazil the World Bank and the government have funded the notorious Polonoroeste project in the state of Rondônia, building a 1,000-mile road through the Amazon region".

It continues by quoting the problems that have occurred as a result of that. The president of the World Bank, Barber Conable, has admitted mistakes on that and met a delegation of Amerindian people late in 1986, who had previously been in this country to drum up support for their good and moving cause.

With support from Friends of the Earth and other people, Survival International last year produced an excellent book entitled "Bound in Misery and Iron", which is a summary of the problems that the Indian community in Brazil has suffered because of the partly World Bank funded iron ore project that has been developed there. I shall quote from it briefly because it summarises well the horrors that that project has meant for many people in Brazil.

It states:

"Many thousands of the region's 8 million people once lived and worked on the land that has now been appropriated by the Brazilian Government for the main components of the Programme".

We are talking about a massive programme covering an area the size of Britain and France, the Grande Carajás programme. It includes

"the 900 km railway . . . the so-called Mineral Province of Carajás."

That province has now been set up as a major iron ore, producer. The European iron and steel producers have for a long time been searching for a cheap source of iron ore and they have been prepared to invest in Brazil to get it. They have been pressurised to do so by the World Bank, which is anxious that Brazil should pay off its foreign debt by an export-led boom through the export of ore.

The problems that that development has caused to the people of the region have been horrendous. Many

[Mr. Corbyn]

thousands of people have been removed from their homes, land grabs have occurred all over the place — *[Interruption.]* I am sorry that the Minister finds this so funny—and serious environmental problems have arisen as a result of the project. The area can sustain only a low-density population, but the development has tried to put a high-density population into the area.

As deforestation takes place, serious erosion occurs and therefore desertification is taking place in the Amazon rain forest area, with appalling ecological results locally. The rivers have become polluted because of the industrial development and that has led to the destruction of the livelihood of many people in the region.

Mr. Michael Jack (Fylde): I share the hon. Gentleman's concern about the destruction of the tropical rain forests. In fairness, does he agree that the Minister, in answer to a parliamentary question earlier this week, referred to the efforts that have been made by the Government to support international efforts to try to minimise the destruction of those rain forests? I believe that a more generous reaction to the Minister's response to the problem is called for.

Mr. Corbyn: The hon. Gentleman has not heard the last of what I intend to say on the subject.

We, as a member of the EEC and the World Bank, are party to the destruction of people's livelihoods and the environmental damage and the inappropriateness of the development that is taking place. Enormous damage has already been done, and many people have already lost their lives. It is not too late to change the nature of the development, to slow it down, and, as a result, slow down the rate of environmental damage.

I know that the Minister has replied to questions by saying that he is concerned about the environmental impact of the development scheme, and I hope that he will take the opportunity tonight to say that the Government are prepared to use their influence in the World Bank to halt the scheme and to try to stop the continuing destruction of the rain forests in that part of Brazil.

My plea is set within a much wider economic context. It is not as though anyone wants to destroy the Amazonian rain forests, but the Brazilian economy has been forced into such a position because that Government believe that the only way out is to proceed with that destruction. The amount of money involved in the Carajás programme is stupendous. In fact, the World Bank investment in it is £304 million, the EEC investment is considerable and the rest of the investment is made up of private capital.

We seldom discuss such matters as these in the House and when we do it is mostly, and unfortunately, at 2 o'clock in the morning. I believe that the problems of the world economy warrant a higher profile in the House. There should be a much greater understanding of the causal relationship between high interest rates, low commodity prices and the continual extraction of wealth from extremely poor countries to aggrandise the economic system of western Europe and north America.

It is not good enough for us to ignore these matters, and it is not good enough for us to pretend that we can solve these problems merely through agencies such as the Inter-American Development Bank. We require a global approach to the problems of the world economy and the need to eliminate poverty in the poorest parts of the world.

2.14 am

Mr. Chris Patten: By leave of the House, I shall reply to the debate. The hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) said, as she did the other day, that at some stage we should have a rather longer debate on this issue, perhaps slightly earlier in the day.

Mr. Corbyn: Or later in the day.

Mr. Patten: Or later in the day. I would always be happy to exchange views with the hon. Lady and such of her hon. Friends as arrive for a debate on these matters. I hope that it will be high on the list of priorities when the Opposition choose their Supply day debates in the coming months.

The hon. Lady referred, properly, to poverty targeting in aid programmes. There is often an unreal argument about economic growth and so-called trickle-down, and investment in human resources. As can be seen from developments in south Asia, it is not sensible to polarise the argument about economic growth and investment in human resources. Investment in people, whether through better health or education, helps to promote economic growth, and economic growth helps to provide the resources for investing in health and education services. Sometimes people talk as though the two were entirely separate and could be considered in different compartments.

The hon. Lady referred to the UNICEF proposals—the so-called structural adjustment with a human face agenda. I shall not trouble her with an extremely moving speech I made on the subject to the annual general meeting of UNICEF in London a few months ago.

Miss Lestor: I have read it.

Mr. Patten: I am most grateful to the hon. Lady; I think she must be the only hon. Member who has. [HON. MEMBERS: "So have we".] It is becoming ever more popular, but bearing in mind Christian humility I shall move on.

We have attempted to demonstrate, both in Ghana with what I was saying earlier and by refocussing our health programme on primary health care, our concern about the social impact of structural adjustment programmes, and we shall continue to do so. We sometimes forget that not engaging in these programmes also has a severe social impact.

The hon. Lady suggested that our IDA share should be increased to 10·1 per cent., as in the sixth replenishment. I understand that, when the previous Government accepted the 10·1 per cent. share in the sixth replenishment, they argued that Britain's share should be lower, on the grounds of relative economic strength. Arrangements were therefore made at Britain's special request to draw down our sixth replenishment committed at a disproportionately low level for the first five or six years—in other words, to backload the payments and to reduce the real cost of our burden. Our present 6·7 per cent. share is above our share in terms of donors' relative GNP and closely parallels our share in the donors' part of the IBRD's capital. That is 6·77 per cent.

The hon. Lady asked why we did not apply a retrospective terms adjustment to IDA's loans. The House should recognise that that would not help countries in most need. The beneficiaries would include some of the wealthier countries, such as Korea, which have graduated

out of IDA and the losers would be current recipients who are, by definition, poor because repayments at present go back into the kitty to finance new credits. The immediate effect in any case would be small because repayments are only just beginning to build up.

The hon. Lady paid a wholly justified tribute to the president, Mr. Barber Conable, and his concern for environmental impact and for issues such as women in development. I am sure that when the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) gets to know more about this subject, he will share the view of most of the House about Mr. Conable's commitment to environmental issues.

In his interesting speech, my hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) referred to the position of smaller islands, particularly in respect of the normal GNP per capita criteria, which can be applied rather crudely. Perhaps I should remind him that it was agreed in 1985 that five small islands — Dominica, Grenada, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and Tonga — should continue to be eligible for IDA credits up to the end of IDA-8 in mid-1990 because of their lack of creditworthiness for commercial or IBRD lending. Their creditworthiness and the question of their continued access to IDA will be reviewed before mid-1990.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford also referred to India's share. He will probably recall that India and China together receive just over 30 per cent. of IDA-7 and the African facility combined. They will receive this same share, about 30 per cent. of IDA-8, subject to management flexibility. Both India and China receive large IBRD loans for their development. They receive loans from both IBRD and IDA.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford and the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) referred to the enormously difficult debt burden which a number of the poorest countries have to bear. In Africa and most of the countries which borrow money from IDA, we are talking principally about debts to Governments, Government agencies and export credit agencies, rather than to commercial banks.

It is important for us to continue to work for the implementation of the debt initiative launched by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer last year. We have made considerable progress on parts of that initiative. We have made progress on writing off aid loans. We have written off about £260 million in aid loans to 14 African countries, and others have followed us. In all, we have written off about £1 billion in aid loans. We have made progress with the rescheduling of debts. Seven African countries have now been rescheduled over more generous periods through the Paris club.

We have not yet made the progress that we should have liked on the key element — a reduction in the interest rates which countries pursuing sensible policies have to pay. Provided that those interest rates remain at present levels, debt burdens will grow year after year for many of those countries. That is why the issue of interest rates is so important and why my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has pressed it at the spring and autumn meetings of the international financial institutions. That is why Commonwealth Finance Ministers and Heads of Government were right to endorse his efforts at their meetings last autumn.

We shall continue to press for action on interest rates for the most debt-distressed countries which are pursuing sensible policies. I hope that we shall have as much success with this element of the initiative as we have had with others.

I wish to deal finally with the remarks of the hon. Member for Islington, North about environmental issues. I hope that he will not regard this as patronising, but to talk, as he did, in a way which confused IBRD and IDA, suggests that he is a little low on the learning curve, although I do not suggest that he is not passionately concerned about environmental issues.

Mr. Corbyn: I do not feel that I am being patronised by the Minister. I am well aware of the difference between the IDA and the other agencies that are associated with the World Bank. I was merely making the point about the environmental concerns emanating from the World Bank, because the Minister conceded that this debate had provided an opportunity to discuss the World Bank and its relationship with the poorest countries of the world.

Mr. Patten: I turn, then, to the environmental issues to which the hon. Gentleman referred. As a bilateral donor, we have done as much as anybody to build into our evaluation and assessment of projects an awareness of their impact on the environment. I am sure that he is also aware that in the European Community and in international financial institutions, we have led the way in making clear our concern about the impact on the environment. I am delighted that, with Mr. Conable, we are having not a dialogue with the deaf but a dialogue with somebody who is as concerned as we are, and rightly so, about the environment.

Mr. Wells: Is my hon. Friend aware that, during Mr. Barber Conable's recent visit to this country, he told the all-party committee on overseas development that Britain has led the way in influencing the World Bank to adopt the very much stronger environmental policies that are now in place?

Mr. Patten: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that point. It is easier for him to make it than for me. It is a fair assessment. However, we cannot be even remotely complacent about the progress that has been made. There are some horrific environmental problems that still have to be overcome. I returned recently from the Sudan, where I saw the desert marching forward at the rate of an inexorable 4 metres a year. That reminded me of how much still remains to be done.

We are aware of the importance of environmental issues. I hope that we are demonstrating both in Brussels and Washington and at home that we are conscious of the place that environmental items should have on the agenda.

The hon. Member for Islington, North referred in particular to Polonoroeste. Discussions are taking place between the World Bank and the Brazilian authorities, with a view to rectifying past mistakes and devoting more resources to environmental and Amerindian protection.

Mr. Corbyn: If the programme is not changed, great damage will be done in that part of Brazil. The original programme involves the displacement of large numbers of Amerindian people by the most brutal methods possible —an issue that was raised by the delegation that came here and that went to see Barber Conable about it. I know that he received the delegation with sympathy. What protection will there be for those unfortunate people and for the environment in which they live?

Mr. Patten: I should welcome the opportunity to deal with that question on another occasion, when we are discussing the environment and development. On this occasion, we are dealing with IDA, and I cannot think offhand of a Latin American country that is borrowiing money from IDA. The hon. Gentleman's question therefore ranges a little wide of the subject of this debate.

I repeat that discussions are taking place between the World Bank and the Brazilian authorities and that they relate to the objectives to which I referred earlier.

I hope that I have replied reasonably adequately to the points that have been made in this short, late but welcome debate. Once again I have pleasure in commending the order to the House and, on behalf of the British taxpayer, spending another £520 million on a very good cause.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft International Development Association (Eighth Replenishment) Order 1987, which was laid before this House on 7th December, be approved.

Dartmoor National Park

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Maclean.]*

1.29 am

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): I do not complain about the lateness of the hour, because at any time of the day or night I should be happy to raise the subject of the Dartmoor national park, for which I have a very great affection and which I have enjoyed walking and riding over for nearly a quarter of a century.

The Dartmoor national park was established in 1951 and is one of only 10 in Britain. It is designated, because of its exceptional beauty, to provide open-air recreation and relaxation, especially for town dwellers. Some 7·5 million people visited Dartmoor last year, which is almost as many as the population of London.

The Dartmoor national park measures 365 sq miles, about 200 sq miles of which is open moorland. Some 78 per cent. of that, which is the wildest country, the high moorland in the northern part of the moor, is out of bounds to the public when live firing by the Army takes place. Over three quarters of the wilderness area of northern Dartmoor is under military occupation for much of the year.

Okehampton range is used throughout the year day and night. There is remission at weekends, public holidays, Easter week and from 15 July to 15 September. At the Willsworthy range there is firing on one weekend a month, which means that there are not any clear weekends throughout the year and, 11 months of firing — only August is excepted — which prevents excursions by the public to the Tavy Cleave, one of the finest gorge valleys in the world. At Merrivale, there is no weekend firing and no firing in August. Willsworthy fires eastwards, Merrivale northwards and Okehampton in a southerly direction. The result is an impact zone in the heart of Dartmoor around Great Nesset and Great Nesset Head on the 17 to 1,800 contour.

The area from the Two Bridges crossroads northwards to Okehampton is a danger area for almost all the year, except in August. The three military live firing ranges are pointing inwards; the centre of the moor is the impact area and the danger zone.

The issues raised in the debate are national, not local. Although not all of Dartmoor is in my constituency, much of the open moor is. The issues transcend parish and parliamentary boundaries. This is a national park and it concerns the nation.

Besides live firing by the military, the Royal Air Force flies down to 200 ft, swooping over the moor, and that is increasing. That is not the case in August, but it is for the other 11 months of the year.

In the south of my constituency, the Royal Navy carries out dry training, blank firing pyrotechnics and uses helicopters. On Ringmoor, the Navy has admitted that, when it is hard at it, it is not a suitable place for a picnic. When the Army fires, not only is it noisy but large areas of the moor are out of bounds to the public. The scenery is spoilt by the flying of red flags and there are an increasing number of huts on the skyline, on the tors, as visible look-out posts. The moor is almost a training ground for the Army, the Air Force and the Navy. It cannot be consistent with the aims and purposes of the national parks.

There are those who suggest that I am anti the armed forces; they are mistaken. I have had close links with the Army, with which I worked undertaking courts martial when I was at the Bar, and I have a great admiration for the Navy. I have the Royal Naval college Dartmouth and HMS Cambridge in Wembury in my constituency, and my interests in aviation are well known, although limited to civil rather than military aviation. I wonder, however, how my hon. Friend the Minister equates the intention of the legislature, when setting up national parks, with the level of military activity in one of the 10 most beautiful and most protected areas of Britain.

Live firing is probably the principal culprit. It prevents the public from exercising their statutory right of access, decreed by Parliament through the Dartmoor Commons Act 1985, which I had the privilege to pilot through the House. That gave every person the statutory right of access. No other national park has given the public such a right. How does my hon. Friend the Minister reconcile that statutory right of access with the fact that every weekday, except in the autumn, the public may be prevented from having access to half the moor?

The military wishes to build a new training centre in the national park at Willsworthy. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister for arranging for me and other hon. Members to visit the Willsworthy camp in the most bitter of January weather, in dense fog and blinding rain. None the less, it gave us the opportunity to look at the problem of the Willsworthy camp. Fundamentally, I should like no live firing on the moor. If it is to continue, and bearing in mind that Willsworthy is owned by the Ministry of Defence, the proposed site of the new camp must be preferable to those dreadful Nissen huts, with the most appalling living conditions, currently on the skyline at Willsworthy.

Although that part of the moor is in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson), with whom I have discussed this matter, it seems to me that it would make better sense, if the military is to continue its activity on the moor, for the old camp to be demolished, the area regrassed and environmentally landscaped and the new camp built out of sight in the valley lower down from the high moor. That is not under discussion in this debate, but I felt that it was worth mentioning in passing.

Does my hon. Friend the Minister agree that, if the moor continues to be used extensively by our armed forces for training purposes, the aims of the National Parks and Access to Countryside Act 1949 and the Dartmoor Commons Act must be frustrated and, if so, the status of the park should be reviewed? I am not sure whether one can denationalise national parks and declare them national training areas for the military, but it seems to make better sense that another area should be selected which does not suffer from such bombardment of live ammunition and military training.

Alternatively, although I recognise the need for the military to train, perhaps the training should be restricted to dry training, with live firing being moved elsewhere. The Sharp inquiry looked at the military presence of the Army. Although some good things came of it, one regrets that some of the principal recommendations have not been vigorously pursued and some aims have not been achieved.

In 1991, the Duchy of Cornwall lease for the Okehampton and Merrivale ranges expires — the live firing range in the northern part of the moor and the range in the bottom half of the moor, just north of Princetown. Will this not be a wonderful opportunity for those two ranges to be transferred elsewhere? There are other moors in the south-west which are not national parks. Perhaps they should be looked at to determine whether some of the live firing and inconvenience can be moved outside the national park.

I hope also that the Duchy will enter practical and meaningful discussions with the Government on that score and that they can come to some sensible and acceptable conclusions. Even if live firing cannot be moved lock, stock and barrel, it should be restricted, possibly to one range—the Willsworthy range is already owned by the Ministry of Defence—or to winter periods only, so that throughout the summer months, the public can enjoy what was established in the first place for their enjoyment and recreation.

Although this debate is not as well attended as one would like, and the Strangers Gallery is not as crowded as it was earlier, the future use of our national parks is of great importance. I am grateful that the Minister, in discussions I have had with him, has taken a more liberal and understanding line on the case that the environmentalists put forward, and realises that to discuss this matter at 2.40 am or over tea in the Tea Room is not an attack upon him or the Government or the work of the armed forces. It is part of a continuing discussion about the future role of the military in peacetime in areas of special beauty that have been decreed by Parliament as being for the enjoyment of the nation.

I believe that I have done some service by raising this issue tonight, and I ask the Minister to help, as far as he can, to reconcile the military's problems of finding adequate places in which to practise its work in the way that it should to equip it to defend the realm, with the needs of people in a mobile society—particularly town dwellers — who need and want to visit areas of great beauty in which to seek solitude and beauty for reviving their lives.

I am anxious that Dartmoor, one of the most beautiful parts of Britain, should not become a live firing range for the military for ever and I hope that the Minister will reassure the nation that the Government intend to reduce the amount of noise, live firing and military activity in an area prescribed by Parliament as being of special sanctity and beauty for the nation.

2.43 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Roger Freeman): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) on securing this important Adjournment debate on the military use of Dartmoor national park. He has been a consistent and courteous champion of the national parks —especially of Dartmoor—and I hope that, at the end of this short debate, he will be convinced that his interests are compatible with those of the Ministry of Defence.

The services have been training on Dartmoor for more than 100 years. As my hon. Friend rightly said, the Dartmoor national park did not come into being until 1951. As the House will recall, in the mid-1970s, Baroness Sharp conducted an inquiry, at the Government's request, into the use of Dartmoor for military training. In her report, published in 1977, Lady Sharp said:

[Mr. Roger Freeman]

"I accept that military training and a national park are discordant, incongruous and inconsistent; but I cannot accept that they are incapable of living together."

Baroness Sharp had to recognise — as indeed successive Governments have done — that, important though the purposes of the national parks are, they are not paramount. They have to be balanced against other objectives of national policy. Defence is one such national requirement.

Why is Dartmoor in particular so important for military training? For historical and operational reasons, a large part of the Army is based in the south, and especially in the south-west, of England. That remains essential because of the requirement for forces to be near ports and airfields for their NATO role, and also as home defence. Nowadays, there are some 5,000 Royal Marines, 18,000 Regulars, 5,000 Territorial Army soldiers, and 12,000 cadets in that part of the south-western district who need facilities to train locally. The needs of the TA and cadets, whose training has to be done in the evenings, at weekends and at their annual camps, should not be overlooked. They must have a training area within easy reach, or their precious training time would be seriously eroded by the need to travel.

Apart from its location, Dartmoor offers ideal terrain for realistic and challenging training exercises, designed to make the soldier tough, fit and self-reliant, as we would all wish. It is isolated, has unpredictable weather, which can often be bad, and has few easily identifiable geographic features. They are essential features for good military training land.

Dartmoor is a large and sufficiently sparsely populated area to make live firing possible. The only other area in the south-west that offers comparable live firing facilities and is large enough to allow similar training is Salisbury plain. It is the Army's largest and most important area in the United Kingdom, but it is already used to full capacity.

As my hon. Friend said, we have three ranges on Dartmoor—Okehampton, Merrivale and Willsworthy—which together provide for live firing and "dry" training, that is, where no live ammunition is used. There is no use of tanks, tracked vehicles or heavy artillery on Dartmoor. Dry training is possible in at least one of the ranges on almost every day of the year. However, the amount of live firing conducted is kept within limits agreed between ourselves and the national park authority, but it tends to be affected by the vagaries of the weather.

Therefore, Dartmoor remains of the utmost importance as one of our principal training areas. That importance has, if anything, grown since the mid-1970s because of the larger numbers of Regular and TA forces now based in this country and because of the increased range requirements of modern weapons. Although it has been suggested over the years that training activities, particularly live firing, should be transferred elsewhere, I do not believe that there is any foreseeable prospect of this happening.

It is inconceivable that an area offering facilities comparable to Dartmoor would become available in south-west England, which is where such an area would be needed if the requirements for military training are to be met. A search was made before the decision was taken to modernise the Willsworthy ranges, but no suitable alternative could be found. Lady Sharp's report accepted that there was no alternative area capable of meeting military needs in the south-west.

This Government, like their predecessors, therefore believe that national parks and military training must continue to co-exist. However, a heavy responsibility is placed on my Department to ensure that any conflict of interest between military and other activities in the national park—inevitably, there will be some conflicts—are reconciled to the greatest possible extent.

Although my first concern must be to ensure that the services can train effectively, I am also much aware of the need to make every possible provision for public access and to support measures aimed at conservation of this important part of our national heritage.

Mr. Steen: The Minister mentioned public access. No doubt he will deal with the Dartmoor Commons Act, which gave the statutory right of access. I feel somewhat embarrassed, having piloted that Act through the House, to say to the public, "For five days a week throughout the year, other than in August, you do not have that right." Does the Minister have a view on that matter?

Mr. Freeman: I shall certainly deal with that.

It was with just such aims in mind that the Dartmoor steering group was set up in 1978, under independent chairmanship, with representatives from the bodies principally concerned—the national park committee, the Duchy of Cornwall, the Countryside Commission and the Nature Conservancy Council. The group meets regularly and provides a forum for discussion on all such important questions. I should like to take this opportunity, as I am sure my hon. Friend would, to commend the group for its most valuable work.

The issues that challenge us in seeking solutions to the many problems that my hon. Friend alluded to are well illustrated in the case of Willsworthy camp. The need to improve conditions at Willsworthy camp has been of concern for many years. The camp was last refurbished in 1985, to make it weatherproof for a few more years, but the timber and corrugated iron structure — all that remains of a much larger camp that was put up before the last war — is now in need of more substantial improvement. Rather than meet our long-term requirements there, however, we wished to see whether we could offer the national park an opportunity for the camp to be moved to a less environmentally sensitive position. We looked closely at a number of alternatives, but none proved suitable until the site at Higher Beardon farm, Lydford, became available.

I was disappointed that the Dartmoor national park authority objected to our proposals to replace the camp at the alternative site. I am grateful for my hon. Friend's preference for the Higher Beardon site, although I appreciate that that represents the more acceptable of two alternatives and my hon. Friend may not have wished to make a choice in other circumstances.

This is not the time or place to argue the rights or wrongs of the national park authority's decision, since the planning process is not yet complete. We shall, of course, be considering how to proceed in the light of that decision. There are, however, a few points that I need to make now to clear up some misconceptions that seem to have arisen about the effect of our proposals.

One of the objections to the proposed development is that it would be visually intrusive in the national park. Our

proposal is, however, for a one-storey building, in local materials in keeping with its surroundings, set in a hollow off the high moor, where it can scarcely be seen. This would be far less visually intrusive than the existing camp, which is without doubt an eyesore. It can be seen for miles and its ugly appearance is a blot on the landscape.

We have, moreover, already made it clear that as part of our proposals the existing buildings would be demolished and the site restored to moorland. No matter what view one might take of the military use of Dartmoor, there can surely be no doubt that the environmental arguments are heavily in favour of replacement at Higher Beardon.

Concern has also been expressed that the proposals would amount to an entrenchment of the military presence on Dartmoor. From what I have already said, it should be clear that military use of Dartmoor will have to continue for the foreseeable future. The decision on Higher Beardon does not affect this one way or another, and if the camp is not replaced it will stay at Willsworthy. We would then need to carry out work to ensure that the camp was able to meet our future military requirements.

Another misapprehension is that we should withhold our proposals pending the outcome of the forthcoming review of licences for the use of the Duchy of Cornwall land. The use of Duchy land, however, has no bearing on the need for a training camp in the Willsworthy area; the firing ranges and proposed camp sites are on freehold land.

As I said earlier, we of course attach considerable importance to ensuring public access to the training areas. I must, however, put all this into perspective. In the first place, the MOD owns just 1·5 per cent. of the area covered by Dartmoor, farmed and unfarmed. We have on lease or licence a further 13 per cent. The ranges are closed to the public only when live firing is actually due to take place. No live firing, as my hon. Friend said, takes place on Dartmoor during the whole of August, on public holidays or, as far as possible, at weekends when visitors will most want to have access.

We try to ensure that information about open days is easily available to the general public. Nevertheless, we would of course be ready to consider any further ideas to improve the arrangements for public access. We would, for example, be ready to consider requests from organisations wanting to plan special events on Dartmoor and, if possible, to permit access by making adjustments to the firing programme.

My hon. Friend raised the possibility of realigning the range danger areas. That was considered in 1969. The national park committee concluded that the advantages of such a scheme were outweighed by the disadvantages of subjecting a common impact area to very intensive use. I would be prepared to reconsider the idea if the national park committee so wished. I should also like to renew the offer to grant increased public access to Tavy Cleave if the committee thought that that might be helpful. I am sure that national park committee members will read my hon. Friend's remarks and my reply with great care.

Mr. Steen: My point about Tavy Cleave is that the Ministry has been very helpful in stating that the public can have access to the cleave. However, it has said that there should be a little sentry box at each end to ensure that they do not wander down it when they should not. If we have little sentry boxes as well as flags flying on the tor, it will ruin Dartmoor.

Mr. Freeman: I will deal with that issue in the next few moments, because I had anticipated that my hon. Friend might raise the question of sentry huts.

My hon. Friend raised the matter of the safety of ranges indirectly when he referred to flags. The Government and the services take the matter most seriously, not only from the point of view of public safety, but also with regard to all those training on the ranges. Every reasonable precaution is taken to guard against accidents to the public.

Byelaws are in force which control public access and actions. When live firing is taking place, red warning flags are flown. The danger areas are delineated by red and white posts, and warning notices are also displayed on the areas where live firing takes place. Under the byelaws, flags have to be raised first thing in the morning of the day firing is to take place. However, they are removed as soon as possible after it is resolved not to conduct firing. I assure my hon. Friend that I shall ask the Army authorities to continue to make every endeavour to ensure that the flags are not flying unnecessarily.

I believe that our safety arrangements are effective and as good as they can be, but our arrangements for public safety depend inevitably on the common sense of the public not to put themselves at risk. In the case of accidents involving civilians — I am glad to say that there has been only one on Dartmoor in the past 10 years and only three since the creation of the national park— these are regrettably often due to foolhardy actions in direct contravention of the byelaws. I intend to consider how best to apprise local schools and schoolchildren of the need to observe range byelaws.

My hon. Friend referred to huts. I think he meant what we describe as lookout posts required for the Willsworthy ranges and, by implication, for the other ranges. Both their siting and design were approved by the national park committee. I assure my hon. Friend that they are a necessary part of our range safety arrangements.

To sum up, I cannot stress sufficiently the importance of the Dartmoor training areas to the fighting efficiency and effectiveness of our armed forces. I am always ready to consider any suggestions for ways in which military use and other national park interests can best be reconciled. In particular, we shall continue to ensure that essential military training is conducted in a way that takes full account of the needs of the national park. But this can be approached only in partnership. I am sure that all concerned recognise the importance of continuing close consultation and the need for some give and take on both sides.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at four minutes to Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 4 February 1988

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

LONDON REGIONAL TRANSPORT BILL *(By Order)*

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on consideration [10 December]. That the Bill be now considered.

Debate further adjourned till Thursday 11 February.

TEIGNMOUTH QUAY COMPANY BILL *(By Order)*

YORK CITY COUNCIL BILL [*Lords*] *(By Order)*

HAMPSHIRE (LYNDHURST BYPASS) BILL [*Lords*] *(By Order)*

ASSOCIATED BRITISH PORTS (NO. 2) BILL *(By Order)*

BRITISH RAILWAYS (NO. 2) BILL *(By Order)*

CARDIFF BAY BARRAGE BILL *(By Order)*

CITY OF LONDON (SPITALFIELDS MARKET) BILL *(By Order)*

FALMOUTH CONTAINER TERMINAL BILL *(By Order)*

INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT CENTRE FROM BUCKINGHAM BILL *(By Order)*

NORTH KILLINGHOLME CARGO TERMINAL BILL *(By Order)*

ST. GEORGE'S HILL, WEYBRIDGE, ESTATE BILL *(By Order)*

SOUTHERN WATER AUTHORITY BILL *(By Order)*

Orders for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time upon Thursday 11 February.

Oral Answers to Questions

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Sheepmeat

1. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the current state of negotiations within the European Council of Ministers with regard to the sheepmeat regime.

2. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress has been made on European Community proposals for the reform of the sheepmeat regime; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John MacGregor): The current focus of discussions in the Council is on the need for budgetary stabilisers—in the sheep as well as in other sectors. Discussions on the Commission's proposals for longer-term reform of the regime have as yet barely started.

Mr. Shepherd: Will my right hon. Friend accept the congratulations of all of us in the House—and, indeed, on a far wider basis—on the successful outcome of his litigation in the European Court, which will be to the benefit of the British sheep farmer? Will he seek to ensure that those farmers who lost premium will be recompensed by the Commission? In the broader context of his negotiations, will he seek to achieve an outcome which will reflect the vital interests of the farmers in the upland areas of the west of England and Wales, who are entirely dependent on the sheepmeat industry and who have very little opportunity for alternative enterprise?

Mr. MacGregor: As my hon. Friend has said, the European Court found in our favour in three cases taken up by the British Government this week on the imposition of clawback on sheepmeat not eligible for variable premium. The Court found that that was illegal, and it will not now be imposed. The Court also found that calculations of ewe premium for British producers in 1984 and 1985 were unfair and must be redone.

My hon. Friend asked about repayments to sheep producers. We calculate that the amount is approximately £11 million, and we shall now have to engage in discussions on how to repay British farmers. I am sure that my hon. Friend will agree that this is yet another sign that British persistence can pay off, and that we fight for our legitimate interests.

In answer to my hon. Friend's second question, I have spent a good deal of time recently in the west country. I am well aware of the importance of sheep to west country farmers, and will bear that in mind in the review of the regime which we shall undertake later this year.

Mr. Speaker: Order. May I ask for brief questions, please?

Mr. Wigley: While welcoming the fact that one hurdle has been overcome, will the Minister do all that he can to speed up the payment of that money? Will he look ahead to circumstances in which there is longer-term negotiation? Can he ensure that areas which are totally dependent on sheepmeat and have no alternative products are safeguarded by an income guarantee; or, alternatively,

that sheep production is identified with that land and will not be sucked into the richer parts, to the detriment of the hill areas?

Mr. MacGregor: In answer to the hon. Gentleman's first point, we shall have to study the judgment and discuss the matter with the Commission. I can, however, assure him that I shall be anxious to sort the matter out as quickly as possible—*[Interruption.]*

The hon. Gentleman's second point goes rather wider than the review of the sheepmeat regime. However, although these matters are complex, I am aware of the importance of any changes in the agricultural sector for hill farmers who are dependent on sheep. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. If the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) remains patient, he may be called, but he will not be called from a sedentary position.

Sir Hector Monro: Let me add my congratulations on my right hon. Friend's undoubted success in Europe—and, of course, the congratulations of the National Farmers Union in Scotland.

Will my right hon. Friend maintain — indeed, redouble — his outstanding efforts on behalf of the uplands? There is no profitable alternative there to sheep and cattle farming. Will my right hon. Friend therefore do all that he can to keep the highlands profitable?

Mr. MacGregor: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. The review of the regime generally will involve complex, long and hard negotiations. Details on most aspects of the Commission's plans are still lacking, and the attitudes of other member states are not known. However, I can assure my hon. Friend that my general approach will be to resist changes which would discriminate against the United Kingdom's interest, to secure arrangements which will allow fair competition, and to enable the United Kingdom, which very much includes Scottish farmers, to capitalise on our natural production advantages.

Dr. David Clark: In his review of last week, did the Minister note that many upland sheep farmers are on perilously low incomes? Will he give the House a categorical guarantee that he will not bargain away any concessions in the sheepmeat regime in order to obtain advantages elsewhere? What proposals has he to improve the incomes of those farmers who rely on sheep?

Mr. MacGregor: On the whole, farmers in the livestock sector and in the uplands did not experience the same drop in their incomes as those in the cereal areas, who were heavily affected by weather last year. Obviously we are entering into complex negotiations here. Because of the rising costs of the sheepmeat sector we must accept stabilisers in sheepmeat, and I think the hon. Gentleman will agree with that. I cannot predict the outcome of the negotiations, but I can assure the hon. Gentleman that, as I have clearly said, I shall be fighting to enable all our sheep farmers to capitalise on their natural advantages.

Mr. Key: Is my right hon. Friend aware that, of all the breeds of sheep on this island, the only one that is particularly useful and has tremendous potential for export to hot developing countries, is the Wiltshire horned sheep? Will he do all that he can to promote it? Is he aware that, like so much else in Wiltshire, it is good to eat and is not woolly?

Mr. MacGregor: I note what my hon. Friend says. I cannot speak precisely on that breed of sheep, but this year we have managed to secure the renewal to January 1989 of clawback exemption for exports to non-EEC countries, and that will be helpful to our sheep exporters.

North Sea Cod and Saithe

3. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will indicate the approximate dates at which reviews may be undertaken of the total allowable catches for the current year of North sea cod and saithe.

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John Selwyn Gummer): Scientific advice on these stocks is given by the advisory committee on fisheries management of the International Council of the Exploration of the Sea, which next meets on 16 to 26 May. Should the report of this meeting provide a basis for reviewing the current year's TACs, the first step would be to have consultations between the European Community and Norway, as these are both joint stocks, as the hon. Gentleman knows.

Mr. Ross: The Minister must accept that in a very real sense inshore fishermen run small businesses and that, if they are to do so successfully, they must be given some stability. Therefore, can we have TACs based on two or three years?

Mr. Gummer: I wish that we could. The problem is that fish do not obey the natural rules that we would like them to do. Therefore, we have to watch, because we are concerned that the next generation should have fish to fish. I should like to give fishermen that stability, but I put conservation first and last, so I always fight for the conservation answer.

Mr. John Greenway: When my right hon. Friend looks at the review dates for North sea cod quota, will he take note of the problems affecting the fishermen of Filey? Will he bear in mind that those fishermen can only fish for cod from October onwards, and if our United Kingdom quota expires they will be in terrible financial peril?

Mr. Gummer: I see my hon. Friend's point, but we try to share out the quota fairly among fishermen in the United Kingdom. One problem is that sometimes individual fishermen's groups do not share out their quota to enable it to last a whole year. It would be unfair to take quota away from areas which have dealt with the matter properly in order to hand it to people who may not have been so sensible.

Dr. Godman: Total allowable catches and quotas are an important element in fisheries management. Has the Minister received representations proposing a mesh size increase to 125 mm for cod stock? As the northern North sea demersal fisheries are made up of cod, whiting and haddock — they are mixed fisheries — and such an increase would have a disastrous effect upon our fishermen, will he assure the House that he is not contemplating such a change vis-à-vis the North sea cod fisheries?

Mr. Gummer: When the hon. Gentleman began his question I did not know which of the various groups he was going to support. My problem is that I have received applications and been subject to pressures from all of them —those who want larger mesh to avoid the problems of strict control over TACs and quotas, and those who want

smaller mesh because they want to catch whiting. I try to find the best possible answer in all the circumstances and in response to the pressures, but, above all, I put conservation first.

Tree Planting

4. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what further steps he plans to take to encourage tree planting.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Donald Thompson): There are existing grants available for tree planting and we shall also be introducing a farm woodland scheme later this year following the passage of the Farm Land and Rural Development Bill. In addition, the Community set-aside scheme, on which discussions are continuing in the Council of Ministers, is expected to include provision for woodlands on arable land.

Mr. Bellingham: Does my hon. Friend agree that, at a time of very large surpluses, it is ironic and regrettable that such a large percentage of our timber requirements are still imported? I welcome the new schemes, but does my hon. Friend agree that it is imperative to examine ways of improving the management of the existing 270,000 hectares of farm woodland? What measures does he propose to increase farm woodland management schemes of existing woodlands?

Mr. Thompson: I agree with my hon. Friend that we should do all that we can to grow more trees, and the schemes that I outlined in my initial reply will largely cover that. Advice from ADAS is always available on all aspects of management, and I am sure that that will be taken up more and more as the importance of trees becomes known to farmers.

Ms. Quin: In view of the concern that has been expressed about tree planting in the wrong places—for example, the large numbers of conifer plantations in many of our beautiful upland areas—will the Minister consult his hon. Friend the Chancellor and urge that the tax concessions made available for this activity be reduced or eliminated?

Mr. Thompson: Taxation is strictly a matter for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and I do not intend to wander down that path. Forestry, such as that described by the hon. Lady, is the province of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Miss Emma Nicholson: In support of my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham), may I ask the Minister to look carefully at the scheme being put forward by Dartington Trust to help farmers manage existing small woodlands more effectively for commercial purposes?

Mr. Thompson: I will do as my hon. Friend asks.

Farming Methods

5. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what research his Department is conducting into the environmental consequences of less intensive farming methods.

Mr. Gummer: The Ministery is studying the environmental effects of various forms of less intensive farming in a wide range of research projects, and we shall be closely monitoring the effects of supporting traditional farming practices in the environmentally sensitive areas.

Mr. Haynes: Is the Minister aware that the de-intensification of farming practices will help this nation and the people by reducing the pollution of the air? It will mean a massive reduction in these wicked and terrible chemicals that are planted on our land, in our environment and in the air that we breathe. Is the Minister aware that I believe in the birds and the bees, the squirrels and the rabbits? It will help the environment of our nation if the Minister travels the right road. What sort of options are open? What is he going to encourage the farmers to do?

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman's vigour and enthusiasm come from the fact that he can enjoy the most varied diet that people have been able to enjoy for generations. That is because of the sensible use of modern farming techniques. I would not want to do anything to denigrate the important advances in farming techniques over the past 100 years, many of which have been made possible by benign chemicals. However, I hope the hon. Gentleman will agree that, for the first time, we have made major advances in encouraging organic farming and in research into various forms of de-intensification. I cannot say, however, that I have any specific research programme on either squirrels or rabbits.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: I thank my right hon. Friend for his answer to that rather robust question from the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes). Will he bear in mind that real advantages will be apparent in East Anglia, for example, not merely for the birds, bees and butterflies, but for cuckoo spit and the general enhancement of the countryside, if we do something about the hedgerows?

Mr. Gummer: I am sure that my hon. Friend would agree that it was sensible that three of the environmentally sensitive areas that were recently designated included the Suffolk river valleys, the Brecklands and the Broads. We are going to great trouble to ensure that the farming practices carried out in those areas will encourage all that my hon. Friend would want, including cuckoo spit.

Mr. Ron Davies: If the Minister seriously favours less-intensive farming, can he explain to the House why the Ministry is currently considering proposals to pay farmers more than £100 an acre to do nothing?

Mr. Gummer: Clearly the hon. Gentleman has not read our proposals. We are not going to pay farmers to do nothing. We are going to pay some farmers to look after the land in a way that is environmentally satisfactory, but will not produce extra crops which we cannot sell and which are an additional cost to the taxpayer. We believe that to be a sensible policy. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to oppose Government policy, he should first read that policy.

Green Pound

7. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations he has received regarding the level of the green pound.

Mr. MacGregor: I have received a number of representations.

Mr. Yeo: Is my right hon. Friend aware that unless there is a substantial devaluation of the green pound in the

near future, farmers in Suffolk and elsewhere in Britain face the prospect of trading at a substantial competitive disadvantage in relation to farmers in other EEC member states? That is a particularly grave prospect in the light of the difficult year that many experienced in 1987.

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend will be aware that the devaluations are normally best made as part of the price fixing, when a balance can be struck in the light of all considerations. I am sure my hon. Friend will agree that the devaluation in the 1987 price fixing, which reduced United Kingdom monetary compensatory amounts by seven points for beef and by 5·5 points in every other sector, improved our competitive position in relation to all our main EEC partners. We have not yet had the Commission's proposals for the coming year. Therefore, it would be premature to say what the position might be, but I note what my hon. Friend has said.

Mr. Livsey: I am sure the Minister will have noted that his Department's figures show that farm incomes in real terms are now 35 per cent. of what they were 10 years ago. Does he agree that a substantial devaluation now of the green pound, approximately 19 per cent. negative, would be of extreme advantage to British producers, who are suffering greatly because of low farm incomes?

Mr. MacGregor: I believe that the position varies between the different sectors. I have yet to see the Commission's proposals, and we shall make our judgment in the light of them. However, I note the hon. Gentleman's comments.

Mr. Ralph Howell: Following on from what my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo) has said, I believe that British farmers could compete very well in a common market, but they find it extremely difficult to compete in the uncommon market in which they find themselves. As well as doing away with the green currencies as soon as possible, have the Government any plans to join the European monetary system, which would also help?

Mr. MacGregor: I am sure that my hon. Friend is aware that the question of the European monetary system is a matter for Ministers other than myself. My hon. Friend asks about getting rid of the monetary compensatory amount system, but he will know that that is one of the most complex areas of the common agricultural policy. The Commission has set the objective of abolishing the monetary compensatory amount system by 1992, when the single European market comes into effect. I strongly support that policy and have already made that clear in the Community.

Mr. Morley: Is the Minister aware that MCAs are causing particular difficulty in the United Kingdom pig industry at the present time? What steps do the Government intend to take to stop many pig farmers going bankrupt before MCAs on pigmeat are withdrawn?

Mr. MacGregor: I have made it clear to our pig farmers that I accept the objective of removing MCAs from the pigmeat sector, and I shall be actively pursuing that in future negotiations. The House should be under no illusions. This is one of the most contested areas in any Council discussion, with varying points of view taken by different member states. I have made it clear that it is my intention to press hard in the price-fixing negotiations to secure further improvements for the pigmeat sector, because I understand the position that it faces.

Mr. Lord: May I underline the point that has just been made to my right hon. Friend? He will know that Suffolk has a tremendous number of pig farmers and producers, who are among the most efficient in the world and who do not normally expect help because they understand that the industry is cyclical. However, they are now in real danger, and, unless there is some real, urgent, direct and positive help, most of the pig farmers will go under. I beg my right hon. Friend to examine the issue with great urgency.

Mr. MacGregor: I assure my hon. Friend, who represents the constituency adjoining mine, in which there are large numbers of pig producers, that I have been well aware for some time of the situation in the industry. I have already made clear my position on MCAs. I am sure my hon. Friend will be pleased to note that last Friday, as a result of United Kingdom pressure, backed by some other member states, a scheme for the reintroduction of private storage aids has now been accepted and will come into place on 15 February. I believe that that will be of some help.

As my hon. Friend correctly pointed out, there is a pig cycle, and all around the world there is now surplus pig production.

Rating Reform

8. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received about the effects of the introduction of the community charge on farmers and farm workers.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I have received a number of representations about the effects on farmers and farm workers of the proposed introduction of the community charge.

Mr. Pike: Is it not true that many farm workers who are poorly paid have their rates paid for them with the provision of the property in which they live? Once they have to pay the new poll tax, will they not be heavily penalised? If the farmers pay it for them, will not the farm workers have to pay income tax on that payment?

Mr. Thompson: The National Farmers Union and the farm workers' unions are seeking clarification from the Inland Revenue on that precise point.

Mr. Barry Field: Does my hon. Friend share the surprise of many Conservative Members to hear Opposition Members criticising the community charge, when their policy is to rate agricultural property, which would put up food prices and devastate farm incomes?

Mr. Thompson: My hon. Friend is correct. Agriculture receives about £450 million by not being rated. That increases every year as some authorities, such as my own, put rates up by 40 per cent.

Mr. Wilson: Does the Minister accept that rural depopulation will be significantly increased if the poll tax is imposed on agricultural workers without full compensation being taken into account in agricultural wages board settlements? Does he also accept that it is an absurdity that the poorest farm labourer, on a wage

counted in tens rather than hundreds of pounds, will pay exactly the same poll tax as the richest landowner and the wealthiest farmer?

Mr. Thompson: I do not accept the last part of the hon. Gentleman's question. If the poll tax—the community charge — [HON. MEMBERS: "The poll tax."] If the community charge — *[Interruption.]* My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will be here in a minute, and Opposition Members can tell her that.

If and when the community charge is introduced, moving will make little difference, because the charge will be equal and level throughout the country.

Mr. Bill Walker: Is my hon. Friend aware that I represent a constituency of 2,000 square miles, most of them agricultural? Is he further aware that the chairman of my constituency party is a farmer and that he and other farmers have examined carefully the effect of the community charge on their workers? They have calculated that it will be a matter of swings and roundabouts. What workers are being paid now in the way of rates will be offset in their pay. Farmers will end up paying no more, and the workers will be no worse and no better off.

Mr. Thompson: I thank my hon. Friend for those words. Every aspect is considered when a farmer discusses wages with his men. The community charge will be part of that.

Agricultural Workers (Wages)

9. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has any plans to meet trade union representatives to discuss agricultural workers' wages; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: No, Sir. Such matters are for the independent Agricultural Wages Board.

Mr. Grocott: Given the chronic problem of low pay among agricultural workers, where the average wage is about 73 per cent. of comparable jobs in industry, and where excessively long hours are worked, does the Minister agree that in this year's pay round there should be a substantial pay increase for agricultural workers and, most important of all, they should establish a 35-hour week?

Mr. Thompson: The average wage for agricultural workers is about £146, including overtime. The matters of detail are for the Agricultural Wages Board and the unions to negotiate.

Mr. Boswell: Will my hon. Friend give us an assurance that it is not the Government's policy to introduce a prices and incomes policy for farm workers?

Mr. Thompson: Yes, Sir.

Dr. David Clark: Is the Minister aware that over 11,000 farm workers' families receive family income supplement, and that if the scheme were fully implemented the figure would double? Does this not prove that agricultural wages are far too low?

Mr. Thompson: It proves the effectiveness of family income supplement. The figures quoted by the hon. Gentleman include people who are self-employed and a large number of people in the fishing industry.

Conservation Headlands

10. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his policy on conservation headlands, as pioneered by the cereals and gamebirds research project.

Mr. Gummer: The work of the cereals and gamebirds research project is a useful development in the management of cereals land and has made a valuable contribution to our thinking on environmentally sensitive areas. I am delighted that we have been able to incorporate the project's techniques in the management prescription for the Brecklands environmentally sensitive area.

Mr. Hunter: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for that answer, not least because the chairman of the cereals and gamebirds research project is a constituent of mine. I am glad that his work is duly acknowledged. I ask my right hon. Friend to comment on the proposition that the most positive role should be found for conservation headlands within the extensification regulations, Community schemes and any other set-aside programme that may be envisaged.

Mr. Gummer: Yes, I am keen to support what has already been pioneered by Mr. Oliver-Bellasis. I hope that we can consider some of the proposals,, as we are considering those put forward by the Nature Conservancy Council in the Brecklands scheme. I hope that we can show how the headlands can make a real contribution to the improvement of the environment.

Sir Charles Morrison: My right hon. Friend's interest in conservation headlands is very much appreciated, but does he agree that, on the basis of existing knowledge, there is no other known system in respect of arable fields which has more beneficial results for wild flowers, insects, birds and other forms of wildlife? Will he therefore continue to encourage the introduction of conservation headlands?

Mr. Gummer: Yes, there is no doubt that the Game Conservancy Council does much more research into this than anyone else. We welcome its proposals and hope that the experiement in the Brecklands will be successful. If it is, we can consider its extension elsewhere. I hope that we shall also consider the other proposals, because they might provide an additional armoury and another way of implementing my hon. Friend's proposal to bring wildlife back to parts of the country which have long been denuded of it.

Set-aside Scheme

11. **Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the outcome of his discussions in the Agriculture Council on the European Community's proposed set-aside scheme.

Mr. MacGregor: The Council has recently considered proposals for an enlarged set-aside scheme for arable land. Certain issues remain to be settled, but the German presidency has now accepted, as we insisted, that a set-aside scheme should be complementary to stabilisers, and not a substitute for them.

Mr. Davies: What arguments will the Minister use to the Prime Minister to endorse the Commission's proposals to pay farmers to do nothing?

Mr. MacGregor: I must repeat what was said to the hon. Gentleman by my right hon. Friend earlier. The hon. Gentleman is doing the interest of the countryside no good by pursuing this line. It is not a question of paying farmers for doing nothing. In set-aside proposals there will be arrangements, through codes of practice with the Countryside Commission and others, particularly in the wider set-aside which we are discussing in the Community, for considering the conservation and environmental aspects of any set-aside proposal. It is important that everyone should recognise that there is a cost to a farmer for managing his land, even if it is not growing crops. The set-aside payments acknowledge that.

Mr. Curry: Will my right hon. Friend accept that it is important to resist the pressure to weaken the set-aside programme by allowing what is known as green fallowing, because if that happens on an extensive scale and without the strictest controls we shall simply be transferring the problem from one sector to another and building up even greater problems in the livestock sector?

Mr. MacGregor: There are mixed views about green fallowing. Obviously it has environmental benefits but equally, as my hon. Friend has pointed out, unless we get the system right there will be serious implications for, and effects on, livestock producers in other areas, and for over-production. I have pressed those points during our discussions on green fallowing in the European Community. If that is accepted as part of set-aside, it should be optional on member states, which must be able to make up their own minds. I know that the National Farmers Union is worried about green fallowing, for precisely the reasons that my hon. Friend has given.

Mr. Cryer: Is not the equivalent of the set-aside scheme paying workers to watch lathes, brush them down and oil them? When one puts aside all the jargon, is not the effect of the scheme that we are paying farmers £150 per acre to watch grass grow?

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Gentleman has completely misunderstood the point. As I think he accepts, we first need to deal with the surplus production in the Community. That means that more land must come out of agricultural production. That land is visited by millions of our fellow citizens who want to see an attractive countryside, and not one set down to scrub, bracken and defoliation. There is an important environmental aspect in the set-aside scheme. It is of interest to us all that the land should look attractive.

Fish Landings (Newlyn)

12. **Mr. Harris:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the value of fish landed by British vessels at Newlyn from January to October 1987.

Mr. Gummer: The answer is £11,926,831.

Mr. Harris: Will my right hon. Friend join me in congratulating all those who turned Newlyn into the top port in England and Wales as far as the value of fish landings are concerned, during that period? Does he agree that the figure that he has just quoted gives the lie to the myth that is constantly spread, that the fishing industry in Cornwall is declining? It is not. It is booming and flourishing.

Mr. Gummer: We are impressed by the way in which Newlyn has reacted to the problems of the shortage of fish. Fishermen in Newlyn have not only caught what is there, but have marketed it most efficiently. I hope that some of the other ports in the country will learn from Newlyn and from the other successful and go-ahead ports which have made that free enterprise part of the economy such a success.

Trade Concessions

13. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will provide details of any current trade concessions that exist between the EEC and Eastern European countries for food and drink products.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Romania and Yugoslavia, together with many non-Eastern European countries, benefit from reduced rates of duty on some food and drink products under the Community's generalised scheme of preferences. Yugoslavia, like many other Mediterranean countries, also benefits from a co-operation agreement with the EC.

Mr. Shaw: Will my hon. Friend give assurances that over the longer term those arrangements will be phased out and that our citizens and farmers will not be disadvantaged vis-a-vis those Eastern European countries?

Mr. Thompson: I cannot give an assurance that the arrangements will be phased out. The arrangements are complicated and voluminous. All sorts of countries, for all sorts of reasons, benefit.

Mr. Cryer *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Litherland. No. 14.

Mr. Cryer: My name is Cryer.

Mr. Speaker: I know. The hon. Gentleman has been called once before.

Food Prices

17. **Mr. Ralph Howell:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the rise in food prices since 1979; what has been the rise in prices generally; and if he will make a statement.

38. **Sir Hector Monro:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the average annual increase in food prices in the period October 1974 to May 1979; what were the comparable figures for the period May 1979 to December 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Between May 1979 and December 1987 the average annual rate of increase in food prices was 5·8 per cent., while the increase for the all-items retail prices index was 7·8 per cent. The current annual rates are 3·7 per cent. for both food prices and the all-items index.

Mr. Howell: In view of my hon. Friend's reply, and because consumer expenditure on food since 1979 has fallen from 21 to 15·6 per cent., farm incomes are at their second lowest level since the war and farm assets have fallen to 66 per cent. of what they were in 1979. In view of that, does my hon. Friend agree that there can be no justification in any call for lower producer prices?

Mr. Thompson: The consumers benefit from all that my hon. Friend has mentioned. We now have a very steady food price policy which benefits all of us and which in turn, because of its steadiness, must benefit the farmer.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Instead of jacking up land prices by subsidising unused land, why not let the market operate, let land prices fall and the cost of producing food fall in the long term?

Mr. Thompson: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman's constituents would be in favour of that, or in favour of turning his constituency into derelict areas of docks and thistles. However, they would be in favour of steady food prices.

Pig Industry

18. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the current state of the United Kingdom pig industry.

Mr. Donald Thompson: As a result of pressure from the United Kingdom and other member states, the pigmeat management committee has recently decided to reintroduce a scheme of aids for private storage and this should help to strengthen the market. Our pig producers are also concerned about the monetary compensatory amounts payable on imports of pigmeat. My commitment and that of my right hon. Friends is to see MCAs abolished in this sector. There are widely differing views within the EC on this issue and it will not be easy to achieve.

Mr. Jack: I thank my hon. Friend for his very full answer and his letters, which clearly show his understanding of the problems of Lancashire pig farmers. Will he look at two things? The first is the commutation of further payments to the Aujeszky's disease fund. Secondly, will he support the initiative taken by Back Benchers to write to supermarkets and butchery chains to encourage further consumption of home-produced pork?

Mr. Thompson: The Aujeszky's disease fund is committed on an annual and regular basis to the banks and it would be impossible to discontinue those payments until the overdraft has been paid off. I am very glad to hear of the initiative of my hon. Friend and his Back-Bench colleagues in writing to supermarkets and other places asking them to promote pork, and I shall do all I can to encourage that to happen.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: Is the Minister aware that in the Grampian region, where the bulk of Scottish pig production is centred, many pig producers are facing bankruptcy? What immediate hope can he hold out to them of eliminating unfair competition from Denmark and Holland? Will he look at subsidised feedstuffs for the pig industry?

Mr. Thompson: The hon. Lady will know that we reintroduced private storage aid, not without a struggle in the Community. We are looking at the use of imported cereal substitutes on the continent to see how they affect the market.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Will the Minister remember the plight of pig farmers in Northern Ireland when he is giving consideration to what steps he will take to help the pig industry across the United Kingdom, and will he keep in mind the representations that have been made to him from Northern Ireland?

Mr. Thompson: Northern Ireland and Scotland are, of course, very important in the pig industry, and I shall give special consideration to those areas. In fact, I have already been in conversation with the Ministers responsible.

Agricultural Wages

19. **Mr. McCartney:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the present average agricultural wage.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Most recently available figures show that for the year ending September 1987 average gross weekly earnings for whole-time adult men were £146.

Mr. McCartney: Is the Minister aware that some of the poorest paid workers in this country are facing deregulation of rents in the private sector and in rural areas? Because of that, about 40 per cent. of their disposable income will be spent on rent increases. Is it not a disgrace that the Government are preparing to do that to the rural poor? Will the Minister make a statement, saying that the Ministry supports this attempt to deregulate rents in rural areas?

Mr. Donald Thompson: The hon. Gentleman has got hold of the wrong end of the stick. For example, 40 per cent. of farm workers live in accommodation provided by their employer and pay little or no rent, which should be taken into account when considering the £146 average wage. There will be little difference under the new regulations.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Fraser:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 4 February 1988.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Fraser: Will the Prime Minister accept, from those of us who were with the nurses at their demonstration yesterday, that they had the vast, visible and vocal support of the public? As long as wards are closed and operations cancelled, in London and elsewhere, the Health Service is not serving the patient. What is at fault is not the right hon. Lady's familiar statistics, but her judgment of the country's need.

The Prime Minister: Conservative Members and patients are grateful to those nurses who did not go on strike, who stayed to carry out their duties, looking after their patients, and who are concerned that about 400 operations will have been postponed because of the activities of this week. I find it astonishing that some nurses should go on strike when a pay review body is considering their claim. The review body was granted to them because they, like some other professions, such as the

armed forces and the police, cannot go on strike. We felt that they should have this special review body to make its own recommendations on nurses' pay.

Mr. Ward: Given the Attorney-General's announcement yesterday about the inability to withdraw charitable status from the Unification Church, will my right hon. Friend give her support to an urgent review of the law on charitable status?

The Prime Minister: I read in great detail the statement made by my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General. I know that some people were disappointed, but it is difficult to get a precise definition of charities suitable to the circumstances. I shall pass on what my hon. Friend has said to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. My hon. Friend will be very much aware that it is easy to analyse problems in this sphere; it is very difficult to draft something that is precisely suitable for what is wanted. I shall consider the matter with my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary.

Mr. Kinnock: Following the statements by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury yesterday, and other statements and counter-statements by Members of the Government over recent weeks, there is considerable public confusion about the Government's policy on nurses' pay. — *[Interruption.]* In an effort to clear that confusion, will the Prime Minister ensure that the Government's submission to the pay body is published?

The Prime Minister: No. It is not customary for that submission to be published. It is customary for each side to give its submission to the other, and that is why the Government's submission was made available to the unions. It is very strange that when these papers are made available to the other side they somehow find their way into public perception. But that is not our practice. There is no confusion in Government policy over setting up a pay review body or about the way in which we have dealt with it. That is a matter of fact.

Mr. Kinnock: It is not commonplace for the presidents of the royal colleges, or for the British Medical Association, to have to take the kind of stand that they have taken to in recent months. Nor is it commonplace for nurses to be driven into the protest action that they have been taking. As the staff side submissions have been made public for many weeks, why will the Prime Minister not make it clear where the Government stand? Will she confirm the report yesterday in a reputable journal, *Nursing Times*, that the Government have submitted that "the total resources now provided for health authorities in 1988-1989 will be expected to cover all pay and price increases."
Is that true?

The Prime Minister: The pay review body will consider the proposals put to it from both sides. It will consider the new structure, which is vital, and which has been agreed. The review body will put figures to that. May I point out to the right hon. Gentleman that there was not a review body for nurses in his time. May I also point out that the way in which his Government dealt with the review body proposals—*[Interruption.]* This point is material. I want to point out to the right hon. Gentleman the way in which his Government dealt with the review body proposals for doctors' pay. May I remind him that in 1976 and 1977 the then Government did implement the doctors and dentists review body proposals in full, but when in 1976 inflation was 16·5 per cent., the review body recommendation was 2·2 per cent. It protested to the Government about the restraint measures—[HON. MEMBERS: "Boring."]—on the pay system and structures, which were not compatible with the duties that it had to carry out. There are no such restraints on the nurses pay review body.

Mr. Gerald Howarth: Is my right hon. Friend aware that any strike action by Ford workers following their rejection of the recent pay offer will imperil their jobs and many thousands of jobs throughout the country among people working in the motor components manufacturing business, including nearly 300 of my constituents? Does she agree that the current wave of strikes, if continued, will seriously damage Britain's new and hard-won reputation for having kicked the strike habit?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend that strikes put the jobs of the strikers in jeopardy. They also jeopardise the jobs of those who supply components and other materials to the factories. If the latters' jobs are in jeopardy, they should blame the Ford workers.

Q2. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 4 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hughes: Does the Prime Minister realise that the reason why nurses, doctors, other Health Service staff and patients were on the streets yesterday was that top salaries have risen 30 per cent. and manual workers' wages have gone down by 6 per cent. under this Government? Does she realise, further, that they were also protesting at the suggestion that nurses might only not get more money in the Budget, but the health authorities may be obliged to pay all the money that is awarded? Does the Prime Minister not think that, just once, the public tide might be right and that Queen Canute might be wrong?

The Prime Minister: I have indicated in reply to a previous question that under a previous Government, which the Liberal party supported, the doctors' and dentists' review body was put under substantial restraints over what it could recommend, as a result of which it recommended pay increases that were greatly below the increase in inflation. That is what the hon. Gentleman supported. Under this Government the increases for doctors and nurses have been substantially above the increases in inflation. Labour put down doctors' and nurses' pay by something like 20 per cent. in real terms and the Tories have put up nurses' and doctors' pay by about 30 per cent. and 20 per cent. respectively. That is an excellent record and that is what the hon. Gentleman cannot bear.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the depth of support for her insistence that reform of EEC funding should depend upon a fundamental reform of the common agricultural policy? Does she agree that allowing the EEC a fourth resource—a percentage on GDP rather than VAT—would make EEC spending less, rather than more, responsible, would increase the burdens on the British taxpayer and should be firmly resisted?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend that the key to the European Council meeting is whether all

member countries are really prepared to tackle the matter of surplus commodities, in particular wheat, barley and oil seeds. They are a great drain upon the financial budget. We must tackle those, and every country must do so.

With regard to how the budget is financed, a fourth resource, related to GNP, would alter the way in which the money was raised, and it is possible that some countries with a rising GNP are not paying enough. We shall insist that the Fontainebleau abatement continues. We do not wish either to gain or lose on that abatement.

Q.3 **Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 4 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Callaghan: Is the Prime Minister aware of inefficiency at the top of the DHSS? Is she aware that the chief executive officer of the Rochdale local authority wrote to ask for a public inquiry into the running of the Rochdale health authority, and seven months later he was told that his original letter was lost? Is she further aware that I asked for another, different type of equally involved inquiry, and that 17 weeks later, when I asked the Leader of the House to take up the matter, I was told that my letter, too, had been lost? Is she aware that the cynical name of the Department now is the "Department of Stealth and Total Obscurity"? Will she investigate the inefficiency of this Department at the top level?

The Prime Minister: I am very sorry that the hon. Gentleman did not get a reply to his letter. It does not seem to have prevented considerable increases in cash coming to Rochdale health authority—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman may wish to know that the cash allocation to the Rochdale health authority went up 10 per cent.—*[Interruption.]*—in cash terms and capital was up by £6·3 million. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Churchill: Will my right hon. Friend join the Royal College of Nursing in condemning strikes within the NHS, and remind the Leader of the Opposition that during the two most recent major stoppages in the Health Service, in 1979 and 1982, on both occasions the effect was to increase the waiting lists in hospitals by more than 100,000? Is this what the Labour party means by its concern for patient care?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I join my hon. Friend. The nurses were given a special review body because the Royal College of Nursing did not go on strike. It was noticeable yesterday that the RCN nurses stayed at their posts. Nurses who belonged to other unions—not very many—went on strike. Nevertheless, we think that the activities this week by a few of the nurses will have delayed about 400 operations. I should have thought that hon. Gentlemen, as well as Conservative Members, would be concerned about that, but hon. Gentlemen seem to be more interested in having strikes than in the welfare of the patients.

Q4. **Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 4 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. and learned Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Carlile: What is the right hon. Lady's view of the shocking fact that officers as senior as superintendent in the Royal Ulster Constabulary have been held to have attempted to pervert the course of justice? Does she agree that nothing less than the resignation of the Chief Constable will satisfy national and international concern about the Stalker-Sampson inquiry?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. and learned Gentleman is aware, my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General has already dealt fully in his statement of 25 January with the question of criminal proceedings. I have nothing to add to what he said. The hon. and learned Gentleman is also aware that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has told the House that the next step is for the findings of the Stalker-Sampson inquiry to be considered in the context of possible disciplinary proceedings, and he has promised a statement on matters within his responsibility concerning procedures and control within the RUC.

Q5. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 4 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. King: Is my right hon. Friend aware that in the city of Birmingham about 5,000 youngsters sat their entrance test for the King Edward foundation grammer school? Is this not ample evidence that parents have a high regard for academic achievements within the schooling system, in schools which the Labour party would have destroyed many years ago? Is not the great Education Reform Bill an attempt to develop those academic schools throughout the length and breadth of the land?

The Prime Minister: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Parents are always anxious to get their children into good schools which not only serve the pupils who go to them but help to raise standards in their own areas and all over the country. I congratulate my hon. Friend.

Business of the House

3.30 pm

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): May I ask the Leader of the House to state the business for next week?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): Yes, Sir. The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 8 FEBRUARY—Progress on remaining stages of the Employment Bill.

Motion on the Local Government Act (Police and Fire and Civil Defence Authorities) Precepts Limitation Order.

TUESDAY 9 FEBRUARY — Debate on a motion on televising the proceedings of the House of Commons.

Motions on the Precept Limitation (Prescribed Maximum) (West Yorkshire Passenger Transport Authority), (Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Authority) and (Merseyside Passenger Transport Authority) Orders.

WEDNESDAY 10 FEBRUARY—Completion of remaining stages of the Employment Bill.

Motion on the Precept Limitation (Prescribed Maximum) (Inner London Education Authority) Order.

THURSDAY 11 FEBRUARY—Debate on the Royal Air Force on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

FRIDAY 12 FEBRUARY—Private Members' Bills.

MONDAY 15 FEBRUARY—Until seven o'clock private Members' motions.

Debate on agriculture on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

Mr. Kinnock: In view of the completely inadequate performance of the Government in the wake of the cover-up over the Stalker-Sampson report, when will the House have an opportunity to debate the issues raised by the Government's behaviour?

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that Dr. John Marks, chairman of the British Medical Association, said yesterday:

"There is a crisis in the health service and it would be irresponsible not to debate it."?

Does the Leader of the House agree with Dr. Marks, and will he provide a debate in Government time in the near future?

Did the Leader of the House notice that on Monday the Minister for Overseas Development responded to criticisms of the Government's huge cuts in overseas development aid and the demands for a debate on the subject by saying that it could be raised on Thursday afternoon, and that he would be more than happy that there should be such a debate? Can the Leader of the House gratify his hon. Friend and the Opposition by making speedy arrangements to provide such a debate in Government time?

Can the Leader of the House give us a date for the long-awaited debate on the social fund?

We are to have a statement later today on the Government's policy towards the Inner London education authority. It will mean a fundamental change in the policy put forward at the general election by the Tory party and in the policy presented in the Education Reform Bill, which is currently going through the House. From the various press reports it appears that there is reason to suppose that the change is to be so great as to warrant a completely separate Bill. Will the Leader of the House tell us whether he proposes to continue with the current arrangement, which would show a completely disreputable attitude towards the proceedings of the House, or whether he will at the very least provide the House with a motion that will give hon. Members the opportunity to decide whether a separate ILEA Bill should be presented to the House?

Mr. Wakeham: The Leader of the Opposition asked me five questions. The first was about the Northern Ireland situation. As I told the right hon. Gentleman last week, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland will make a statement to the House on the matter. I think that is the best way to proceed initially. I recognise the concern, and of course we shall have to consider a debate. However, I would prefer to wait until after the statement has been made by my right hon. Friend.

With regard to the National Health Service, as the right hon. Gentleman well knows, a debate took place recently on an Opposition motion, which was, I think, helpful to the House. I recognise that we shall have to come back to that matter, and indeed we shall do so, but I cannot give a time for a debate in the immediate future.

As for overseas development, I was present when my hon. Friend answered questions on Monday and I heard what he said. I am looking at the matter but I cannot provide a date for a debate in the immediate future.

Dealing with the social fund debate, the right hon. Gentleman raised that question last week. I am looking at this and I hope to be able to announce a debate in the very near future.

With regard to ILEA, of course I cannot anticipate my right hon. Friend's statement, but I recognise the concern about this matter. I made it very clear during the debate on the timetable motion earlier this week that if a new matter of major importance arose we would have urgent discussions through the usual channels to see what would be the best way to proceed. I believe that in what the right hon. Gentleman said there may be the germ of an idea on how best the House could proceed in these matters.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): Will my right hon. Friend note that since the debate on the timetable motion on Thursday I have been approached by a number of hon. Members asking me why I have not arranged for a debate on the Procedure Committee reports that have been waiting to be debated for some years? I have had to tell them that it does not rest with me. I wonder whether my right hon. Friend could help me out and try to ensure that we have a debate this year, as otherwise we shall be getting much too far through this Session.

Mr. Wakeham: I can certainly give my hon. Friend the undertaking that he requires, but I hope to do rather better than that. I recognise that there are a number of outstanding matters which the House wishes to consider. I am hoping to arrange a debate in the relatively near future. Indeed, I am having discussions through the usual channels about this, because matters of procedure are best dealt with by as much agreement as possible throughout the House.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Has the Leader of the House read the *Official Report* for last Thursday, when you, Mr. Speaker, indicated that Scottish hon. Members whom you were unable to call to ask a question on the statement dealing with the Government's

attitude to school closures might well be called in a subsequent debate? Does the Leader of the House intend to have a debate on the prayer in the names of my right hon. and hon. Friends dealing with that order?

Secondly, has the Leader of the House had time to consider early-day motions 608 and 609 in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Southport (Mr. Fearn):

[That this House notes that benefit claimants entitled to flat-rate payments to correct the error in the calculation of the retail price index are entitled to an £8·00 payment for each order book they possess, and that therefore people with combined order books for several eligible benefits, including married pensioners, are entitled to only one payment; believes this to be grossly unfair and unnecessarily bureaucratic; recognises that it will cause understandable distress and anger for the thousands of people who possess combined order books for convenience, and considerable embarrassment for the Post Office staff who administer the payments; and calls upon Her Majesty's Government to review the payments procedure as a matter of urgency.]

[That this House notes that an estimated 175,000 pensioners claiming the higher rate attendance allowance with combined order books will lose up to £5·00 as a result of the Government's decision to pay a flat-rate payment as compensation to those who lost benefit due to the miscalculation of the retail price index; believes this will cause unnecessary hardship and distress; and calls upon Her Majesty's Government to reimburse them as a matter of urgency.]

They deal with the situation that has arisen in which supplementary benefit claimants who have one combined book are receiving only one payment of £8 to make up for the error in the retail prices index, whereas those who have two books are getting more than one payment. Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that this is causing considerable distress, irritation and anger in many parts of the country? Will the Government consider this matter with urgency and bring forward a statement showing that they are prepared to retrieve the situation?

Mr. Wakeham: With regard to Scottish schools and the question which the hon. Gentleman asked me last week, I am looking for an opportunity in the near future to debate the prayer that has been tabled against the order.

As to the matter of the retail prices index, I believe that Ministers have made the matter very clear indeed. However, if there is any confusion, I shall look into it and discuss it with my right hon. Friend to see whether there is any way in which the matter can be clarified.

Sir John Farr (Harborough): Can my right hon. Friend arrange a fairly early debate on a report relating to miscarriages of justice produced by the Select Committee on Home Affairs and published in the 1981-82 Session? It referred to the setting up of an independent review body, as the Committee described it. In view of the serious misgivings about recent appeal court decisions, I believe that it would be very advantageous if we could have a debate on the recommendations of the Select Committee, which have never been debated by the House, before too long.

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise my hon. Friend's interest. I cannot hold out the opportunity of an early debate, but I shall discuss the matter with the Home Secretary. It seems to me that the Criminal Justice Bill may provide an opportunity for my hon. Friend to air some of those points.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): Given the serious situation and the marked deterioration in industrial relations in the mining industry, does the Leader of the House agree that Ministers should give early and positive consideration to these matters, and that the House should have the opportunity of a relevant debate in the near future?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise the importance of the matter, but I do not think that I can offer the hon. Gentleman the chance of a debate in the immediate future. No doubt there will be opportunities to discuss it.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Does my right hon. Friend recall that two weeks ago I asked the Government for a statement on meningitis outbreaks in Britain, which are causing great concern? The situation appears to be getting worse. We have no facts and it is time that the Government made a statement on the subject.

Mr. Wakeham: I referred the matter to my right hon. Friend, as I said I would, but if the situation is changing I shall refer it to my right hon. Friend again.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South) Is the Leader of the House aware of the case of Mrs. Busby, a victim of Opren who is disfigured and to whom sunlight will always be a means of torture? She has been offered £3,000 by Eli Lilly. Her plight reflects no credit on the House. Will the Leader of the House find the time to debate, first, the legal precedent which led to that miserly offer, secondly, the need for a system of challenging those precedents in such cases when a second legal opinion has said that the offer should have been increased eightfold, and, thirdly——

Mr. Speaker: Briefly.

Mr. Ashley: —will he consider the need for an entirely new system whereby multinational companies are compelled to pay fair and swift compensation?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise the right hon. Gentleman's concern about these matters, but the proposed settlement is entirely a matter between the parties concerned. It would not be appropriate for me to comment further while the matter is still before the courts, but I shall undertake to speak to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State about the points raised by the right hon. Gentleman.

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): Numerous attacks have been made in the House, and outside by Ministers of the Dublin Government, upon certain members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary who have been suspended for more than a year and a half—a period of great anxiety for those officers and their families. Those allegations and attacks have now been extended to include the Chief Constable of Northern Ireland. Those officers cannot reply publicly. May we have a debate on how those officers, who with their colleagues have served Northern Ireland well, can now receive a fair and unprejudiced hearing?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise the concern, but it is important that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland should properly consider these matters. When he has considered them he will make a statement to the House. I am sure that that is the best way to proceed.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): Can I press the Leader of the House on that point? When is the statement likely to be made? Today we were informed that the Minister has already made a statement. When will he answer the questions, and when will hon. Members for Northern Ireland be able to join the interrogation and put the case of the people of Northern Ireland? Will it be possible to have a debate in the near future on the concept of national interest and the level at which protection will be provided to those who serve the nation?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise the concern, but I do not believe that I can add anything more, other than to say that I will pass on the hon. Gentleman's comments to my right hon. Friend who will report to the House as soon as he can.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): May I first thank my right hon. Friend for agreeing to a debate on agriculture, which is much appreciated. With regard to the debate next week about televising the House, will he ensure that either the Government motion or any instructions to a Select Committee will make specific reference to the fact that demonstrations in the Strangers' Gallery must in no circumstances be shown?

Mr. Wakeham: It is our intention that the debate should take place on early-day motion 15 that has already been tabled in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson). Of course, the important points that my hon. Friend makes are very relevant to the debate that we shall have.

[That this House approves in principle the holding of an experiment in the public broadcasting of its proceedings by television; and believes that a select committee should be appointed to consider the implementation of such an experiment and to make recommendations.]

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Let me draw the attention of the Leader of the House to early-day motion 600.

[That this House supports in principle the televising of proceedings of the House for an experimental period of six months; calls for such televising to be conducted on a round-the-clock basis and on a dedicated television channel funded by monies voted by Parliament.]

Will he tell me whether the motion that we shall debate on Tuesday will provide for the setting up of a separate television channel for the broadcasting of Parliament on a round-the-clock basis, thus avoiding the problems of editorialising that concern so many hon. Members on both sides of the House? If not, will the right hon. Gentleman say whether the motion can be amended to include such a provision?

Mr. Wakeham: I am sure that the motion can be amended if the hon. Gentleman does not think that it reflects the point of view that he wishes to express. However, it is not a matter for me which amendments are selected by Mr. Speaker. I am sure that the point of view expressed by the hon. Gentleman in the early-day motion would be perfectly relevant to the debate, and could be discussed then. I see a number of practical difficulties in his suggestion, but that is a subject for next week's debate.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Does my right hon. Friend agree that there seems to be an alarming difference between the legal definition of "charity" and the public perception of it? May we have an early debate on the subject?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise the strength of what my hon. Friend has said. I heard my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister say that she would be discussing the matter with my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, and I think that that is probably the best way to proceed in the initial period.

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): On the question of the debate on the televising of Parliament, can the Leader of the House tell us whether the Prime Minister has yet made up her mind on the subject, and how many Tory Members will switch their votes according to what she tells them to do?

Mr. Wakeham: I do not usually talk about voting or whipping matters from this Dispatch Box. Traditionally, such issues as this have been on a free vote. I have no doubt that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, as always, has an open mind on the subject, but I think that most people probably know her views.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): Will my right hon. Friend arrange for my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to make a statement to the House about the proposal by the Department of Trade and Industry to move the Patent Office from London to Newport, south Wales? It should be borne in mind that the matter has not been discussed by the many industries and organisations that would be involved, and that smaller businesses would suffer immensely from the resulting inconvenience and additional cost.

Mr. Wakeham: I shall certainly refer the matter to my right hon. and learned Friend, and ask whether he thinks it appropriate to make a statement. However, my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) might care to raise the subject on an Adjournment debate.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): May I draw the attention of the Leader of the House to early-day motion 613? The motion is signed by 129 hon. Members from all parties. It arises from the death of my constituent Billy Walker, aged 11, who swallowed the top of a pen and was the 11th child to die in that way.

[That this House calls on Her Majesty's Government to investigate the provision in schools of Bic pens, with separate tops, of the type that caused the death of Billy Walker of Leicester; further calls on the Government to institute research into the safety of pens provided for and to schoolchildren; and expresses its profound sympathy to the parents and family of Billy Walker.]

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that, together with me, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs was good enough to see the boy's parents yesterday, and that he has stated that manufacturers and suppliers of unsafe pens are liable to be prosecuted now? May we have a statement from him to warn manufacturers such as Bic which still refuse even to have the decency and compassion to talk to us about their position?

Mr. Wakeham: I certainly share the sympathy expressed in the motion tabled by the hon. and learned Gentleman and a large number of hon. Members on both sides of the House.

The Government have carried out investigations into the dangers of pen tops. Following completion of the research, the Department of Trade and Industry issued a press notice advising parents and others about those dangers, and made the report's findings available to United Kingdom manufacturers and importers. Suppliers are aware of their responsibilities, and are working towards the introduction of safer pen tops. Local education authorities are responsible for the issue of pens and similar items to schools, and the Department of Education and Science will consider whether any separate notification of authorities about the dangers of pen tops is needed.

Mr. Tim Yeo (Suffolk, South): Further to the question of my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack), is my right hon. Friend aware that, after yesterday's announcement of the decision not to proceed with action against the Moonies, interest in the Government's response to last year's Woodfield report, which recommended a strengthening of the Charity Commission has been greatly increased? Will he urge my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary to consider as speedily as possible the implications of the decision on the Moonies, so that the House can have an opportunity, as the other place has recently done, of debating the matter?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise my hon. Friend's concern and, as I have said, I shall refer the matter urgently to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Has the Leader of the House had a chance to examine early-day motion 574, signed by a number of hon. Members, on the Government's golden share in Britoil?

[That this House notes the assurances given to the House on 31st March 1982 and 1st April 1982, Official Report, columns 333, 334 and 450, by both Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer and Lord Gray of Contin, the then Minister of State for Energy, that the 'golden share' would offer effective safeguards for Britoil's independence; questions whether this has been shown to be the case; and calls for a full debate on the guidance given to the House by Mr. Chancellor and the noble Lord on the efficacy of the 'golden share' provisions when they were seeking 'honourable Members' approval for the privatisation of BNOC.]

Is it not time for a full debate on that issue so that the House can decide whether it was misled by the Chancellor of the Exchequer's assurances of Britoil's independence, freely given in 1982? In the light of the Government's announcement that the bid is not to be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, such a debate would also provide the opportunity to examine the double standards inherent in an industrial policy which protects Britain's largest company, British Petroleum, and will not even consider the protection of Scotland's largest company, Britoil.

Mr. Wakeham: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer answered a private notice question on that subject as recently as 1 February and a debate at this stage would not be the best use of parliamentary time.

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West): Has my right hon. Friend seen various press reports to the effect that hon. Members may attempt to filibuster to stop the Abortion (Amendment) Bill of the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) completing its Committee stage? Will he give us an assurance that if that filibuster continues, he will find Government time for the Bill in Committee so that this exceptionally important business of the House is not decided and stopped by a small minority of hon. Members?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise my hon. Friend's concern, but that is a hypothetical question. I have seen no evidence of what he suggests. However, I am sure that the House would deprecate any such misuse of procedure if the Bill's Committee stage were delayed in the way that my hon. Friend suggests.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Will the Leader of the House arrange for a Minister from the Foreign Office to explain next week why, since 2 January, the British embassy in Islamabad has been refusing permission for a 16-year-old constituent of mine, Nasreen Akhtar, to return to her home in Bradford and to her school? Is he aware that, despite telexes sent to the embassy by the Home Office and the Foreign Office, and despite letters from me to the girl, she was refused permission on 4 and 27 January to return home and she is being denied schooling and reunification with her family? Can he explain that extraordinary refusal by British authorities in Islamabad, and do something urgently to enable this girl to return home and to her school?

Mr. Wakeham: I have no knowledge whether the hon. Gentleman has been given all the information that he needs to make the statement that he did, but I shall refer the matter to the Home Office immediately after I have finished answering questions and ask somebody to write to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): On the Stalker affair and its disturbing ramifications, will my right hon. Friend understand that we need not just a statement from the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, important though that is, but a full-scale parliamentary debate? Will he understand that that debate must include an opportunity to give proper parliamentary scrutiny to the Attorney-General's definition of where the national interest lies in this matter? On that matter, will my right hon. Friend persuade the Attorney-General to explain his curious inactivity in issuing any kind of civil injunctions on, or taking any kind of criminal proceedings against, the breach of the duty of confidentiality by Mr. Stalker in his articles in the *Daily Express*, which makes a curious contrast of double standards with the injunctions issued on all other breaches of confidentiality?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise that my hon. Friend puts a point of view persuasively, but I do not think that I shall shift from my earlier position. I believe that the first stage in this matter is to have a statement by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Mr. Harold McCusker (Upper Bann): The right hon. Gentleman said that we would have that statement as soon as possible. May I press him on what he means by "as soon as possible"? Is he aware that we have already been waiting for two weeks to discuss those matters, in which time foreign politicians have been given an opportunity that has been denied us to press the Secretary of State on them? Is he further aware that, in the past two weeks, men have been identified, convicted and perhaps condemned to death without a single word being said in their favour and without their side of the story being given?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise the hon. Gentleman's great concern about these matters, but I know that my right hon. Friend will make his statement as soon as he can.

Mr. Richard Shepherd (Aldridge, Brownhills): Central to our constitution is the idea of the rule of law and the supremacy of Parliament. Will my right hon. Friend pay heed to what is being said and organise as a matter of some urgency the attendance of the Attorney-General to justify his extraordinary view of the world—that the murder of a 16-year-old fellow citizen and the perversion of the course of justice by police officers in part of the United Kingdom are lesser matters than the supremacy of the rule of law? The House would like to look at the judgment of the Attorney-General in terms of the public interest and of that which we hold to be extremely important.

Mr. Wakeham: I understand my hon. Friend's point of view, but my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General has a duty to discharge. In my view, he discharged his duty in a proper and effective manner. He came to the House and made a statement and that is the proper course of action.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): Before the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland comes to make a statement, will the Leader of the House put one other point to him? Will he ask the right hon. Gentleman to explain why Mr. Stalker is not being prosecuted under the existing Official Secrets Act or, indeed, under the new Bill proposed by the hon. Member for Aldridge, Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) which has in general been approved by the Home Secretary?

Mr. Wakeham: Matters of prosecution are not for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Rees: Yes, they are.

Mr. Wakeham: I bow to the right hon. Gentleman, who knows more about Northern Ireland than me. I shall certainly refer the matter to my right hon. Friend, but I am not in a position to add anything to what I have said.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Is my right hon. Friend aware that we were most impressed by his imaginative, guarded and diplomatic answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. McLoughlin), who asked about the future of the Abortion (Amendment) Bill? However, it was hardly an answer to the question that he was asked. Will he assure the House that if what is now hypothetical ceases to be hypothetical the Government will ensure that there is a proper debate on the subject?

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. — and if I may say so learned — Friend puts another question to me. I shall not answer a hypothetical question.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Does the Leader of the House accept that the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments performs a useful purpose? That purpose is thwarted when orders such as the two orders to limit the precept on Manchester and West Yorkshire are debated before the Joint Committee has had time to consider memoranda. We have asked the relevant Departments why they tried to bounce the Joint Committee into accepting the instruments without adequate time. Will the right hon. Gentleman take that on board and make suitable adjustments to the business next week?

Will the right hon. Gentleman also remind the Department of Transport that we have still not had a statement on the Settle-Carlisle railway? Many people are extremely concerned that the Department of Transport is trying to make the local authorities a scapegoat for the closure, and the local authorities will not accept that.

Mr. Wakeham: I have nothing to add to what I said about the railway last week. I shall look into the other matter to see whether I can assist, but I cannot undertake to change the business for next week.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): Further to the questions asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. McLoughlin) and my hon. Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence), will my right hon. Friend undertake to look at the work of Standing Committee C to establish whether what has been suggested in the press is indeed happening? Does he recognise that if there is a filibuster it will be thwarting the will of the House, which voted for that Bill? We should at least have an opportunity to ensure that the will of the House is fully debated and to show people outside that we have reached a conclusion one way or the other.

Mr. Wakeham: I do not believe that the fears expressed by my hon. Friend have so far been realised. I believe that the House would deprecate such a misuse of procedure if that happened.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): A week on Monday, the Leader of the House said we shall be debating agriculture. Will the Leader of the House give us an assurance that he will ask his right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to ensure that that debate will not be used as a green light for the Government to give the go-ahead for the set-aside scheme for farmers, which will allow them to get up to £150 an acre for allowing land to remain fallow? Is that not a disgrace at a time when agricultural wages are at an all-time low, relatively speaking, when agricultural workers cannot get a 35-hour week and the National Health Service is in tatters? Here is a scheme to give the farming community £150 an acre and yet a third of the world is starving.

Mr. Wakeham: The debate that I have arranged for Monday 15 February was at the request of a number of hon. Gentlemen. It seems to me that the comments of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) are better applied to that debate than they are to business questions.

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): I am not going to ask my right hon. Friend to give us any specific assurances about the Bill to which reference has been made by some of my hon. Friends because I know him well enough to know that he will do his duty with honour and I trust him. However, my right hon. Friend should note the intense feeling that exists among the majority of hon. Members who believe that efforts to frustrate, once again, a Bill that is concerned with a deep moral principle, held by many people in this country, should not be allowed as a result of dirty tricks.

Mr. Wakeham: I certainly recognise the strength of my right hon. Friend's comments, but there is nothing further that I can say at this moment.

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): May I underline the point made by the hon. Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) about the widespread disquiet following the recent

decision of the Court of Appeal, which has implications for the entire criminal justice system, the forensic service and our relations with other countries? I request the Leader of the House to find time for a debate on this and related matters, preferably, as suggested by the hon. Member for Harborough, under the general heading of miscarriages of justice. That debate should have particular reference to the report of the Home Affairs Select Committee published six years ago, which recommended that an independent review tribunal should be set up to deal with alleged miscarriages of justice. Not one of the report's recommendations has been implemented even though there was a Tory majority on that Committee. May we have a debate on this subject as soon as possible?

Mr. Wakeham: I believe that the independence of the judiciary is one of the greatest safeguards of the freedoms of people in this country. My hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) raised this matter and I said that I would refer it to the Home Secretary and I intend to do so.

Mr. Ian Bruce (Dorset, South): Will my right hon. Friend consider the fact that many right hon. and hon. Members are concerned about the continuing loss of jobs of registered dock workers? Last week, the Government put aside £7 million to add to the redundancy fund. Is this not the right time to have a debate on this subject so that we can get a consensus in the House on the best way forward for the registered dock workers' scheme?

Mr. Wakeham: I am not sure that a debate in this House would necessarily produce a consensus. I do not see an opportunity for finding time for a debate in the immediate future.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Is it not an affront to every Member of the House when the Prime Minister, as she did today, comes to the Dispatch Box and reads a very carefully phrased answer to a question on the Stalker affair with the clear objective of blocking questions on the Order Paper? Does the Leader of the House understand that every Member of the House of Commons, irrespective of political persuasion, would wish to deprecate such activity because, on occasions, it may militate against their particular interests? Will the Leader of the House make representations to the Prime Minister and ask her to answer questions and not to use that blocking device, which many of us believe that she intends to use over the next few days?

Mr. Wakeham: If the hon. Gentleman could ask questions as intelligently as my right hon. Friend answers them, the standard would go up considerably.

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): Is my right hon. Friend aware of the fact that many Conservative Members are extremely conscious of the extraordinarily dangerous and difficult job that members of the RUC and the Ulster Defence Regiment must carry out? Any discussion of the Stalker affair or any of the other issues should include our recognition of the dangers that those officers and their families face.

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend makes a valid point and I believe that it is relevant to the issue.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am always reluctant to curtail business questions. I will call the hon. Gentlemen who have been rising, but we must then move on.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Has the Leader of the House reflected on the following early-day motions relating to Westland: No. 228,

[That this House notes in the book, Campaign, by Rodney Tyler, the Selling of the Prime Minister: from behind the doors of Downing Street and Conservative central Office—A unique inside account of the Battle for Power that the author on page 1, chapter 1, paragraph 1, sentence 1, states 'It was an extraordinary turnaround in fortunes from the moment on 27th January 1986 when Mrs. Thatcher secretly confided to a close associate that she might have to resign . . .' and on page 3 that 'On the eve of the crucial Westland debate she herself felt shakey enough to doubt her future' though some around her later sought to dismiss this as late evening anxieties of the sort that had disappeared the following morning). It is certainly true that if Leon Brittan had chosen to, he could have brought her to the brink of downfall, by naming the real culprits inside Number 10. Instead, he chose to remain silent', and calls on the Prime Minister to give a full account of what transpired between 3rd January and 27th January 1986, at Number 10 Downing Street, in relation to the selectively leaked Law Office's letter concerning the Westland Affair.]

No. 253,

[That this House notes that the Member for Aldershot on page 136 of his book Heseltine: the unauthorised Biography, states in relation to the Westland affair that 'John Wakeham issued an order of the day which contained the trite, if effective message, that it was time for all good men to come to the aid of the party. We did and calls on the Leader of the House, The Right Honourable Member for South Colchester and Maldon, to explain when he first knew the role of the then Trade and Industry Secretary, The Right Honourable Member for Richmond, Yorks, in the matter of the disclosure of a selectively leaked Law Officer's letter.]

No. 272,

[That this House notes that in his book Mrs. Thatcher's Revolution, published this week by Jonathan Cape and Co., Mr. Peter Jenkins writes, on page 200 'Brittan himself refused to enlighten the Select Committee on any point of substance. However, he is reputed to have told close friends subsequently that not only has she known perfectly well what had happened but that, on the day following the leak, had expressed her satisfaction to him at the way things had been handled. However at that time, the downfall of Heseltine had not been achieved . . . He (Mr. Brittan) might point the finger at her (Mrs. Thatcher). Potentially he now had the power to destroy her'; and calls on the Prime Minister to give the House a full account of her conversations with the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, the Right honourable Member for Richmond, Yorks, over the period from 3rd January and 27th January 1986, in relation to the selectively leaked Law Officer's letter concerning the Westland Affair.]

No. 273,

[That this House notes that in The Thatcher Years—A decade of Revolution in British Politics, published by BBC Books, Mr. John Cole, on page 170, considering the selectively leaked Law Officer's letter in the Westland Affair, writes 'why did he (Sir Robert Armstrong) not give her a quick interim report when he discovered that the leak was an inside job, authorised by her office? Why did Leon

[Mr. Tam Dalyell]

Brittan not tell her? Or the private secretary concerned? Or his chief, who sits in the same room? Or her press secretary? And why did she never ask?'; and calls on the Prime Minister to inform the House of the answers to these questions.]

No. 286,

[That this House notes that, in the book "Not with Honour—The Inside Story of the Westland Scandal", on page 142, Magnus Linklater and David Leigh write that "Instead, following Havers's complaint, she spoke privately to Brittan about the leak. Although this is something the Prime Minister has failed to disclose, to widespread disbelief, the evidence comes from an authoritative source, who told us: "The Prime Minister knew about the leak. She was pleased it had been done. There was a meeting between Brittan and her after the complaint from Mayhew. Only the two of them were present . . . Brittan assumed she knew of [the leak's] origins. You must draw your own conclusions." One of Brittan's friends adds, "Nobody thought it was a problem. The complaints were out of the public domain and any inquiry was expected to be a formality. Leon wasn't worried at all about it."; and calls on the Prime Minister to give a full account to the House of the meeting between herself and the right honourable Member for Richmond, Yorks, referred to therein.]

No. 622,

[That this House notes that in an article by Mr. Paul Foot in the Daily Mirror, dated 28th January, a Ministry of Defence official, Mr. Paul Newbegin, is quoted as having admitted witnessing the shredding and incinerating of the log book of HMS "Conqueror"; is concerned that if this statement is true, the Ministry of Defence is guilty of having established an entirely bogus investigation into the disappearance of the log book when the facts of its deliberate destruction were already known; further notes the parallel between this case and that of the leaked Solicitor General's letter in the Westland Affair, when a similar investigation was launched despite the availability in advance of all the salient facts; and calls upon the Secretary of State for Defence to set up an immediate inquiry with the genuine purpose of furnishing Parliament with a full explanation of this bizarre series of events.]

and No. 627,

[That this House calls for a debate on the conduct of honourable and right honourable Members of the House, considering the position of back bench Members who resort to unparliamentary language and Heads of Government who misuse Law Officer's letters and then display lack of candour about what they have done.]

Could the right hon. Gentleman turn his mind to the question of which I gave his Office notice, namely, the inquiry that is purported to be taking place into leaks from the Department of Trade and Industry at the behest of Sir Brian Hayes? Should there not be a statement next week to suggest that Sir Brian Hayes might cast the mote out of his eye, so involved was he in the leak inquiry into the selective leaking of a Law Officer's letter, rather than to enter into any kind of major inquiry in his Department? Apparently, when leaks seem to suit senior civil servants and senior members of the Government there is no inquiry, but when leaks are awkward there is an inquiry. What is just in that?

Mr. Wakeham: I have nothing further to say about the early-day motions mentioned by the hon. Gentleman, but I recognise that he referred the matter of his question to my Office. The memorandum from Sir Brian Hayes was to explain to all staff the importance of respecting confidential information and was entirely consistent with the guidance note on the duties and responsibilities of civil servants in relation to Ministers that was circulated by Sir Robert Armstrong in December. It did not, contrary to the suggestion in the *Daily Telegraph*, announce a leak inquiry.

Mr Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): "It says here".

Mr. Wakeham: I have just got that information and therefore, as the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) has noted, I read it out for greater accuracy.

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): May I return again to the subject that has been raised by four of my hon. Friends — the Abortion (Amendment) Bill, which is currently going through the House? If that Bill is frustrated by activities in Committee, will my right hon. Friend give an assurance that any similar Bill introduced to the House in a later Session will have Government time?

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend widens somewhat the hypothetical nature of the inquiries he is making, but I still do not believe that I can answer hypothetical questions.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): In relation to some other questions that have been asked today, does the Leader of the House recognise that the absence of any parliamentary scrutiny of the security services is a blot on our democracy? As for the blocking of questions, there is no way that such questions can be tabled, let alone answered. Does the Leader of the House intend to let the situation rest as it is or does he recognise, as other democracies have done in Western Europe, that the security services should be subject to some form of parliamentary control?

Mr. Wakeham: What I do recognise is that there is more than one view in the House on what should prevail in these matters. I suspect that the hon. Gentleman is in the minority and that the Government's view is that of the majority.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): Will my right hon. Friend, if he is considering granting time for a debate on the Birmingham bomb trial appeal, recognise that many Conservative Members believe that the appeal was a thorough investigation and that a fair judgment was reached at its end? We are in no good position to judge, having heard bits of the evidence, what three senior judges can decide, having seen all of the evidence in the case.

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend makes his point clearly; I have nothing further to add.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): Has the Leader of the House yet had an opportunity to examine the report of the Select Committee on Energy which was placed in the Vote Office one hour and 10 minutes ago? It concerns the need for a debate in the House on new Statutory Instrument 218 governing the rules for public inquiries into new power stations and overhead lines. In the report's words:

"As far as the House is concerned we recommend that the business managers should ensure that a debate takes place on the prayer at present tabled as an early day motion".

Will the right hon. Gentleman look at early-day motion 497, which has been signed by 78 hon. Members, and the prayer in early-day motion 499, which has been signed by 68 hon. Members? The two motions are on the same topic and require the House to examine the new rules that severely constrain the rights of objectors, and ask, in particular, that that should be done well before the Hinkley Point public inquiry takes place so that the objectors can know how much their rights have been reduced since the Sizewell inquiry.

[That this House notes that S.I., 1987, No. 2182, regulating the procedure for tribunals and inquiries under the Electricity Act 1957 and relating specifically to electricity generating stations and overhead lines, was laid before Parliament on 18th December 1987 with an enforcement date of 14th January 1988; notes that these regulations will severely restrict the rights and opportunities of objectors to raise issues of public concern such as energy policy, public health and safety, including reactor safety and environmental impact, local and/or national economics and national security; and calls for the date of implementation of these regulations to be delayed pending the result of a full parliamentary debate in government time.]

[That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Electricity Generating Stations and Overhead Lines (Inquiries Procedure) Rules 1987 (S.I., 1987 No. 2182), dated 16th December 1987, a copy of which was laid before this House on 18th December, be annulled.]

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise that there is concern about this matter in the House. The question of a debate is best left for discussion through the usual channels.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): If there is to be a debate on matters that arose out of the Attorney-General's statement on Monday of last week, will my right hon. Friend bear in mind that some Conservative Members will want to acknowledge and pay tribute to the integrity and judgment of the Director of Public Prosecutions in Northern Ireland and that of my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General?

Mr. Wakeham: Absolutely. I do not anticipate a debate on the decision of the Attorney-General; when the Secretary of State makes his statement we shall see how to proceed from there. I agree with my hon. Friend that my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General and the Director of Public Prosecutions in Northern Ireland are men of the highest standing.

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): Does the Leader of the House recall that, during the replies to questions on the statement on the future of the Crown Suppliers, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State was particularly evasive to right hon. and hon. Members of the Opposition about which parts of the Crown Suppliers would remain in the public sector? In view of that, will he arrange for another statement on the matter to be made by the Secretary of State, because Opposition Members are concerned about not getting the full facts about this undesirable, unwanted and outrageous privatisation proposal?

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment made a statement yesterday about the parts of the Crown Suppliers that are to be sold, making it clear that those with security implications would not be. I do not think there is anything else to add at this stage.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Steel.

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) *rose*——

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): He has not been standing.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The right hon. Gentleman is the leader of the Liberal party — *[Laughter.]* Order. All Back Benchers who have been standing will be called. I do not know whether the right hon. Gentleman was here when I said that I would call those who had been standing. It would be helpful if he stood a little earlier in the proceedings.

Mr. Steel: The point I want to raise arises directly from the reply that the Leader of the House has just given. I sat through business questions, and I am grateful to you, Mr. Speaker, for calling me.

The integrity of the Attorney-General is not the issue that concerns the House. What worries the House is that the Attorney-General's decision and the withdrawal of Mr. Stalker from the inquiry raise the suspicion that the definition of national security is being extended to cover Government embarrassment. That is what concerns hon. Members on both sides. An internal disciplinary inquiry will not be enough: there must be further discussion of the matter in the House.

Mr. Wakeham: I have nothing to add to my right hon. and learned Friend's statement of last Monday, but I repeat that the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland will make a statement on these matters in the near future.

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): Is the Leader of the House aware that the rate-capping order against ILEA, which is down for business on Wednesday, involves a savage attack to the extent of 15 per cent. on the resources of London education? There is no need to bring in the order next week. More time should be allowed for the parents, pupils and people of London to debate the issue, and for the Secretary of State to come to his senses. Will the right hon. Gentleman withdraw next Wednesday's order, or, if he persists in going ahead with it, will he allow more than an hour and a half so that the Opposition can expose these savage attacks on education in London?

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot undertake to accept what the hon. Gentleman proposes, but I shall have discussions through the usual channels if that will help.

Mr. Nellist: Referring to the statement made by the Leader of the House three quarters of an hour ago, when will a debate take place in Government time on the deterioration of the National Health Service? Is he prepared to stand idly by and see the frustration of working people and trade unionists throughout the country building up pressure for a one-day general strike to defend the Health Service? Before that debate finally takes place, as it will inevitably have to, will the right hon. Gentleman have a word with the Secretary of State for Social Services, so that when he comes to make his contribution at the Dispatch Box he will try to lift the proceedings from the patronising level of last night's Tory party broadcast, and, instead of trying to do a five-minute impression of Geoffrey out of "Rainbow", live up to the fact that he is a Cabinet Minister in charge of £22 billion a year?

Mr. Wakeham: The only encouraging thing to say about that is that the hon. Gentleman listened to the broadcast last night; I thought it was very good. I shall certainly not be more forthcoming to the hon. Gentleman than I was earlier to the Leader of the Opposition.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): May I draw the attention of the Leader of the House to early-day motion 547 about the Yorkshire heart hospital, and to the statement by the cardiothoracic surgeon, Duncan Walker, who said that people on the waiting list are dying? May we have an early debate on what is happening with these operations? This week I have had a representation about a young constituent whose heart operation was cancelled last week and whose medical condition is deteriorating every day.

[That this House notes that at the Yorkshire Regional Cardiothoracic Centre, Killingbeck Hospital, Leeds, only six of a 12 bed intensive care unit can be used for heart operations; further notes the comments of Dr. Martin Muers, Chairman of the Hospital Consultants' Committee, that 'we do not do enough heart operations up to Department of Health and Social Services guidelines' (Telegraph and Argus 18th January) and that the Consultants' Committee has sent an urgent letter to the regional health authority signed by three heart surgeons, five heart specialists, all the anaesthetists, cardiologists and cardio-radiologist, imploring the regional health authority to provide three extra intensive care units to avoid tragedies; and notes especially that amongst those signing was Duncan Walker, Consultant Cardiothoracic Surgeon, who recently criticised shroud-waving over the repeated cancellations of children's heart operations in Birmingham and now states that 'people are now dying on our waiting list' (Independent 18th January), which is further evidence of the profound and pervasive crisis in National Health Service operating theatres, a crisis obvious to all reasonable persons and denied now almost alone by the Prime Minister.]

Mr. Wakeham: The Yorkshire regional health authority is currently considering increasing the number of staffed intensive care beds in the next financial year. The number of heart operations in Yorkshire has increased in each of the past two years and is planned to continue to do so.

Inner London Education Authority

4.18 pm

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Kenneth Baker): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement on the organisation of education in inner London.

The Government have consistently maintained that a single education authority for inner London could be justified only if that authority gave the children and students of inner London a good education service at an acceptable cost. ILEA has patently not done that. Its spending is profligate; its service is poor. Between 1981 and 1988, its spending increased from about £700 million to more than £1 billion—while over the same period, its pupil numbers have fallen by 15 per cent. It now spends 52 per cent. more than the outer London boroughs, 45 per cent. more than Manchester, and 83 per cent. more than Birmingham—cities with problems comparable to those of London. That increase in expenditure has in no way been reflected in improved pupil performance, which remains disappointingly low. There is now an urgent need for change.

ILEA's failure is partly a failure of political will, but it is also a product of its unmanageable size. Its administration is cumbersome, excessively costly and too distant from its clients. The Government want to improve standards of education in London and to bring costs under control. We decided that the way to do this was to enable each inner-London council to become the local education authority for its area.

Our proposals are incorporated in part III of the Education Reform Bill. Three boroughs have already stated their intention to apply for LEA status. Other boroughs are known to be considering similar action, but as this positive response to our proposals has emerged, there has been a growing view that our objectives would be better achieved by a single, orderly transfer of education functions in inner London.

The Government have reviewed these developments and have concluded that the time is now right to carry through the logic of their proposals in the interests of better standards and of orderly progress. We therefore propose to table amendments to the Education Reform Bill, while it is before the Standing Committee, to wind up ILEA and to secure the transfer of education responsibilities to local councils from 1 April 1990.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Educational vandalism!

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Baker: We propose that the arrangements for transferring functions should follow closely those established at the time of the abolition of the GLC.

First, a staff commission will be established to facilitate the process of staff transfer. All ILEA teaching and non-teaching staff working at individual schools and colleges will transfer by order to the employment of the council concerned. Where appropriate, detriment or redundancy compensation will be available on the terms applying at the time of the abolition of the GLC.

Secondly, the arrangements for property transfer will be broadly those set out in the Education Reform Bill. It

is likely that the London residuary body will be employed to deal with assets which cannot be allocated between boroughs.

Thirdly, the Education Reform Bill already contains certain counter-obstruction safeguards to protect the interests of the local councils which will be assuming education functions. We shall strengthen those safeguards, introducing the same sanctions as were included in the legislation abolishing the Greater London council and the metropolitan county councils.

The Government propose that each local council should be required to publish in 1989, as a basis for local consultation, a development plan, setting out the way in which it proposes to organise the transfer of responsibilities and the service that it would propose to run. The Government will issue statutory guidance on the subjects to be covered by such development plans, which will provide the basis for property and staff transfer orders.

I recognise that some co-operation will be needed between inner London councils for the maintenance of certain aspects of education provision. I hope that in most cases such co-operation will be secured through voluntary arrangements, which might, in certain circumstances, need to take the form of joint education committees, requiring my approval under existing powers. Were it to become necessary, there are also powers under the Education Act 1944 to enable me to require groups of boroughs to establish joint education committees in respect of particular functions.

The Government propose to maintain rigorous pressure to control ILEA's expenditure over the next two years. We attach paramount importance to improving the quality of education received by inner London's children. They and their parents have a right to something better. The Government's proposals set out the basis for a more cost-effective and responsive education service for inner London.

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): On his way to the Tory leadership, the Secretary of State for Education and Science has just been mugged by two political hooligans, the right hon. Members for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) and for Henley (Mr. Heseltine). Is the Secretary of State aware that this humiliating reversal of the position which he was taking just eight weeks ago has nothing whatever to do with concern for or commitment to the needs of London's children and everything to do with squalid manoeuvring for position inside the Tory party, with London's children —my children—being used as pawns?

Is the Secretary of State aware that the Cabinet of which he was a member concluded just three years ago, in the words of the then Secretary of State for Education and Science, Sir Keith Joseph, that a unitary education service offered the best prospect of meeting the educational needs of inner London, not for the reasons given by the present Secretary of State, but

"because there is so much movement across borough boundaries by London children and students"?—[*Official Report*, 3 December 1984; Vol. 69, c. 127.]

Has this movement across borough boundaries suddenly stopped in the last eight weeks?

What exactly has changed since the Second Reading of the Education Reform Bill on 1 December, when the Secretary of State described his then proposal to retain ILEA as offering

"London's children a better deal"?

The Minister described ILEA as a

"model authority".—[*Official Report*, 1 December 1987; Vol. 123, c. 780-858.]

Is there no limit to the Secretary of State's ability to twist and turn?

Is the Secretary of State aware that the Government have no mandate for this wilful and spiteful act, which will bring anxiety, uncertainty and instability to London's education service at a time when what it most needs is stability? Why was this new proposal for breaking up ILEA not included in the Conservative manifesto just eight months ago, if it now has so much to commend it? Was it excluded eight months ago because it was considered and rejected, or because it was seen as so ludicrous and vindictive as not to be worth considering at all? As the Government have no mandate and as none of this was even included in the Queen's Speech, does the Secretary of State accept that it would be constitutionally outrageous and an abuse of the procedure of the House for this to be introduced other than through a new primary Bill?

As the Secretary of State preaches so much about parental choice, will he say where in all this London parents are to have a say? Is the truth that, as Wandsworth Conservative borough council discovered from its own opinion poll of ILEA parents, 84 per cent. were satisfied with the academic achievement of their children's ILEA secondary schools, he has decided to ignore the clearly expressed wishes of London parents to keep ILEA intact?

Will the Secretary of State also confirm that, overwhelmingly, all the responses which he has received to his proposals from parents, teachers and others in London say, "Keep ILEA and do not break it up"? Why does the Secretary of State continually abuse ILEA for its examination achievements when analysis, accepted as accurate by his Department, shows ILEA in the middle of all LEAs, like Oxfordshire, represented by the right hon. Member for Henley, and well above Waltham Forest, when it was Conservative-controlled, represented by the right hon. Member for Chingford?

How does the Secretary of State dare to criticise ILEA's spending per pupil of about £2,000 per head in secondary schools when, under the assisted places scheme, he has decided that expenditure not at £2,000 but at £4,335 per head is an acceptable charge on the public purse for pupils at Westminster school?

Is the Secretary of State aware that it is the view of all London head teachers that, to go down the road which he is suggesting, involves

"dismantling a system that provides the stability and hope that is lacking in so many other aspects of the life of young people in inner London."?

Is he aware that they have warned that breaking up ILEA will

"spell chaos for the capital's schools."?

Is the Secretary of State aware that this disreputable announcement today will be treated with anger and contempt by parents, teachers, governors and all who put the needs of London's children above the sordid internal politics of the Conservative party?

Mr. Baker: The hon. Gentleman talked about the constitutional position of making changes in a Bill that is before the House. He will have heard the exchanges that occurred earlier this afternoon between the Leader of the Opposition and my right hon. Friend the Leader of the

[Mr. Baker]

House, and the exchanges on Monday. Clearly, more time will have to be found to debate these proposals. The Government accept that.

The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) raised first the question of the manifesto. The principle on which we went to the country in June, and which underlies my education reforms, is the dispersal of responsibility. So it was with ILEA. We wanted to pass responsibility to the inner London boroughs, and we made that absolutely clear during the election campaign. Indeed, the hon. Gentleman quoted my predecessor. The manifesto clearly signalled the end of a unitary education authority in central London. The positive response of borough councils has led us to quicken the pace of devolution. Indeed, the positive response of so many inner-London boroughs means that the debate that we are having today and in the next few weeks would have taken place in about a year's time.

The hon. Gentleman asked also about the review of ILEA. I advise him that many reviews of ILEA have taken place in recent years, but they have not led to an improvement in that authority's performance. ILEA has been on notice since 1981, when my predecessor but one, Lord Carlisle, put it on notice. That was seven years ago to this very day, but little has been done in those seven years.

In 1987 the new leader of ILEA, Neil Fletcher, said:

"We have achieved little or nothing in educational terms this year".

The hon. Member for Blackburn then asked me about parental involvement. However, he knows perfectly well that, when it comes to the transfer of local government powers, it has always been this House which has had to make the decision. Parliament cannot delegate its authority.

If the hon. Gentleman is interested in polls, he will no doubt have seen the recent Harris poll, which showed that nearly one third of parents in inner London would like to send their children to another school. That proportion was higher than the corresponding figures for neighbouring boroughs.

The hon. Gentleman chided me for listening to various voices. I advise him that we have listened to many voices beyond the Conservative party. He will know that the leader in last week's *Times Educational Supplement* stated that the best way forward would be now to accept the amendment.

I have also read a speech by the noble Lady, Lady Blackstone, who takes the Labour Whip in the other place and who is an expert on education in London. She stated:

"the Government should have had the courage of its convictions and abolished the Authority instead of this slow attrition".

I advise the hon. Gentleman, and his colleagues in the other place, that the Government now have the courage of their convictions and will move to abolition.

Mr. Norman Tebbit (Chingford): Is my right hon. Friend aware that in eight years of arguing as a Minister inside Government I failed to secure the abolition of ILEA, but that in eight months of arguing outside it seems that I have done so? Will he be kind enough not to draw any conclusions from that? Will he further ignore all the blatherings from the Opposition, which are only an echo of the foolish blatherings and threats that were made when we abolished the Greater London council, which is now dead, gone and forgotten?

Mr. Baker: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) for his wholehearted support for my proposals. I have long known his views on ILEA. They have been expressed to me on several occasions in terms that were rather more blunt than appeared on the Order Paper. However, I am glad that I have his support and look forward to that support being continued in the weeks and months to come when we move ahead with this important measure.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): If ILEA is so bad, in isolated cases, why then has the Secretary of State not used his powers to intervene to put matters right? How can he justify that, except on the basis of a squalid attempt to provide a political excuse for this hasty and brutal dismemberment? If the Secretary of State is worried about Left-wing inefficiency and influence, how can he hand over the schoolchildren lock, stock and barrel to the tender mercies of councils such as Lambeth, Hackney and Southwark?

Mr. Baker: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman recognises that there is concern about many aspects of the education provided. I read most of the reports that are published about inner London by HMI — the hon. Gentleman may read some of them — and all express real concern, especially about secondary education. At one secondary school, for example, the inspectors found that, in the fifth year as a whole, attendance was only 55 per cent., and in one class it was only 46 per cent. When making a survey of science in secondary schools, Her Majesty's inspectors stated:

"the quality of teaching and learning experience . . . in over one-tenth of classes visited was unrelievedly bad".

Mr. Straw: What reports are these?

Mr. Baker: These are very recent reports. I shall make them available.

I advise the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) that a great part of the problem is that ILEA is too large and remote. We feel that education will be improved and become more responsive to parents' wishes when it is closer to the local community. The hon. Gentleman must appreciate that that is the principle behind the Education Reform Bill.

I find the hon. Gentleman's attitude strangely illogical, because it is the Liberals in Tower Hamlets who want to run their education service, and presumably the hon. Gentleman does not object to that. Are those Liberals in Tower Hamlets less competent than their fellow Liberals in Richmond?

Mr. Michael Heseltine (Henley) *rose—[Interruption.]*

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Mr. Heseltine.

Mr. Heseltine: May I strongly support today's announcement by my right hon. Friend which will give London schoolchildren a more stable, effective and accountable background for their educational arrangements? Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the excess in ILEA's overspending will not be passed to the boroughs under the arrangements that he has in mind?

Will my right hon. Friend accept how deeply I resent the suggestion that my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) and I are political hooligans? I believe that my right hon. Friend is renowned the length and breadth of the land for his charm and courtesy. However, if my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State happens to be looking for a couple of likely lads to help him with the administrative arrangements for bringing about these transfers, subject to consultation with my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford, we might be able to suggest a couple of names.

Mr. Baker: I thank my right hon. Friend for his support for my proposals. I have known his views on ILEA for a long time, and he has known my views on ILEA. Nobody should underestimate my right hon. Friend's ability to hurl himself through a half-open door.

I shall be setting up a unit in my Department which will negotiate with ILEA and with the London Labour boroughs in the coming weeks and months to ensure an orderly transfer. That is an important function and responsibility for my Department.

On the financial matters about which my right hon. Friend specifically asked, we shall consider carefully what the most appropriate transitional arrangements might be, given that the inner-London boroughs are likely to inherit overspending from ILEA.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): If the Government do not think that the inner-London boroughs are capable of running their own housing services—the Government clearly do not think that they are capable of running a lot of other services as well, hence the necessity to hive them off—and since the Government have either rate-capped or fined most of the London boroughs for overspending, why do they think that education services will be better administered by those so-called inefficient, incompetent and worst boroughs than under the present ILEA?

Will the Secretary of State tell the House, and especially me, since I represent one of the poorest boroughs in London, Tower Hamlets, what arrangements he will make to ensure that ultimately there will be no fewer financial resources available to the poor boroughs of inner London than are available today under the cross-subsidisation of ILEA?

Mr. Baker: On the last point, I ask the right hon. Gentleman to look in *Hansard* tomorrow at the responses I have given my right hon. Friend on the financing of London boroughs after the 1990s. Irrespective of the policy change, the present system of local government finance, under which the wealthy boroughs subsidise the poorer boroughs—London equalisation—will cease in 1990, when the community charge and unified business rate come into operation. Instead, a system of Exchequer grants to local authorities will equalise the differences in the need to spend. The new system will provide a means of ensuring the equitable distribution of resources of local authorities to take account of local and social needs. Clearly, in the determination of those separate needs grants for individual London boroughs, taking into account the educational responsibilities, is very important.

On the general point raised by the right hon. Member, I am a little surprised that Labour Members seem so angry and alarmed at the prospect of Labour-controlled inner-London boroughs running their education. Does not the right hon. Gentleman have more confidence in his party colleagues?

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the central thrust of the Education Reform Bill is to devolve power and responsibility to parents? Does he agree that the abolition of ILEA is well in accordance with that central aim and that ILEA will be forgotten just as quickly as the Greater London Council?

Mr. Baker: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, because when I was dealing with the abolition of the GLC I was constantly told that London boroughs could not do it, and that civilised life as we knew it in the capital city would end.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): It has.

Mr. Baker: As for the former chairman of the GLC, I say to him that few people now remember what the GLC actually did. It has left virtually no memorial.

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): Is the Secretary of State aware that the Government have changed their mind three times in the past four years on the best way to organise London education? What evidence is there that giving education to the boroughs will ensure better education for London children?

Mr. Baker: I would say to the hon. Gentleman, who has followed these matters closely, that when my predecessor, Lord Carlisle, made a statement seven years ago to this very day, he said:

> "The long-term retention of the single education authority for inner London is justified only if the authority shows that it can give the children and students of inner London a good service in all phases of education at an acceptable cost. It is up to ILEA to put its house in order."—[*Official Report*, 4 February 1981; Vol. 998, c. 296-7.]

ILEA has had seven years, and the hon. Gentleman knows, because he has been concerned with this for some time, that it has shown precious little effort to put its house in order. It has said repeatedly that it will be better next year. We believe that the education of the children of London would be improved if it were done at a more local level.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg (Hampstead and Highgate): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the last time education was looked at independently was by a royal commission in October 1960? It came down very firmly against a unitary authority, but certain of the educational intelligentsia were able to bring sufficient pressure on the then Government so that they backtracked. As one who opposed the formation of ILEA from the very beginning, when I was in local government, I welcome the support of my right hon. Friends and their conversion to the cause.

Mr. Baker: I well recall my hon. Friend, who was the Back-Bench spokesman for London matters in the 1960s, advocating this throughout that period. As he will know, I have been a long-term supporter of that. In fact, my pamphlet in 1980 advocated the dispersal of responsibility for education, and our manifesto in June of last year signalled the end of the unitary authority. We are now putting that in hand.

Mr. Spearing: What will the Secretary of State say to those 500,000 people who attend day continuation classes

[Mr. Spearing]

and evening classes in the ILEA area, including those from outside Greater London? Is he aware that 60 per cent. of the pupils of primary schools in the London borough of Kensington and Chelsea go outside the borough to secondary schools, based on parental choice? Is he aware that on Tuesday, when in a written question I asked him to set out the numbers of pupils and attendances at colleges in each London borough, his hon. Friend said that the information was not collected centrally? Did the Cabinet take the decision today or previously on information which they did not have, or was that answer incorrect?

Mr. Baker: Since 1980, as the hon. Gentleman knows, when children move from an education authority in one borough to another, the money has followed the child. That has been the position, and it has been done on separate terms for children with special educational needs and other needs.

Mr. Banks: Not within ILEA.

Mr. Baker: No, but from ILEA to outside. It is possible to have exactly the same arrangements. Dealing with the first point the hon. Gentleman raised, on the services of further education and adult education in London, which is very important, I entirely accept that many people outside the inner London area use those services. Many of them are organised on a cross-borough basis, which is one of the reasons why I have set up a unit in my Department to examine with the boroughs and ILEA whether there is a need for any joint education committees.

Sir Rhodes Boyson (Brent, North): If one is to split up ILEA, it would seem better to split it cleanly at the beginning than to have one, two or three boroughs dropping out one by one, with the authority not knowing what will happen in the next year. It seems to me to be sensible to look at co-operation where the parents want co-operation.

I hope that my right hon. Friend will agree that the Inner London education authority has never attained the same reputation as the former London county council, which was renowned throughout the world. An authority that spends 40 per cent. more in real terms than the average in the rest of the country, with children having 40 per cent. less likelihood of getting five O-levels or CSEs, seems to have a death wish.

Mr. Baker: Certainly ILEA, by any standards, is an extravagant authority. As for the list of exam results quoted by the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), even if one accepts the basis for those adjustments, there are considerable reservations on the methodology. The authors of the report said:

> "Limitations on the data used mean that the method should be taken as illustrative of the method of analysis rather than a final judgment on the LEAs concerned."

Even if I were to accept the judgment of the LEA concerned, ILEA comes 56th out of 96, but it is No. 1 on expenditure. It has become clear that there is considerable support in many parts of London for an orderly transfer. That has been expressed by people in ILEA, people who are not Conservatives, people who are concerned, and by certain churchmen. I am sure that we are right to take the action.

Mr. Tony Banks: May I tell the Secretary of State that for me he personifies the smile on the face of Fascism in the latter-day Tory party? Will he tell the House, first, how much Government money goes to the Inner London education authority at the moment? Which London boroughs, other than the three Tory boroughs, have signified any interest in opting out of the Inner London education authority? How has he managed to change his mind so remarkably yet again, first on the GLC and now on the Inner London education authority?

Mr. Baker: I appreciate that the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) has never got over being the last chairman of the GLC. I recognise that the hon. Member believes that he is the king over the water for the GLC, the last of the Jacobites waiting for the restoration. I believe he has the regalia still in store. He knows better than anyone else that the GLC's performance over the years badly let down the people of London, and ILEA is even worse. It has badly let down far too many London children. I find it extraordinary that a Labour Member representing an outer-London borough which has full education responsibilities should wish to deny the same responsibilities to Labour inner-London boroughs.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Is my right hon. Friend aware that today's ILEA is unrecognisable from the LCC education authority, to which I was appointed as a young teacher 31 years ago? The deterioration in behaviour, work and the attendance of children over those years, and the authority's inability to recruit, as it could 31 years ago, the best teachers in the country—it has difficulty today in recruiting teachers in many schools because of its policies — means that the children of London are getting a very raw deal.

Is my right hon. Friend aware that Peter McIntosh, who was a distinguished ILEA chief inspector of physical education for many years, and who chaired the recent committee that looked into sport in London schools following the collapse of sport in London schools—which formerly was very good—wrote to me this week to say, "Harry, will you support the immediate disbandment of ILEA? It is quite the best solution and much better than many others on offer"?

Mr. Baker: The political leaders of ILEA—not its administrative staff—over the years have done a great disservice to education in London by following a series of fads, of which one was to condemn competitive sport. Late in the day, as a result of that committee's report, it changed its policy. That is one reason among many why so many children get a poor deal out of ILEA.

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington) *rose*——

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will take points of order at the end.

Ms. Abbott: The Secretary of State has accused ILEA of letting down the children of inner London. He referred earlier to his plans for equalisation. Is he willing, here and now, to give a commitment that the resources available to

individual boroughs under his arrangements will not be less, in real terms or relatively, than the resources available now? Otherwise, although his arrangements may result in an improvement in the quality of education of children in Mayfair, overall his arrangements will result in a decrease in the quality of education for poor children in London, such as those in Hackney, whom I represent; he will be letting down the children of the poor in London.

Mr. Baker: The points that I have already made on the financial arrangements after 1990 are very important. We have made it clear that ILEA is an extravagant authority. We believe that much can be saved in its administrative costs. It has two and half times more administrators than the average LEA. We should like to see——

Mr. Dobson: What about Stubbs?

Mr. Baker: The hon. Gentleman from a sedentary position makes a comment about Mr. Stubbs. Various remarks that I completely deplore were made about Mr. Stubbs in the debate on Monday. He has been an outstanding servant of inner London. The trouble is that he has had very poor political direction.

Mr. Gerald Bowden (Dulwich): I recognise that my right hon. Friend's proposal will bring great benefit to many children in London. Will he in turn recognise that there is grave disquiet in boroughs such Southwark, where people think that it does not have the ability to run an effective education service? Will he assure the House that there will be special assistance and advice to boroughs such as Southwark? Will he also recognise the important work that is being done Londonwide by the adult education institutes, particularly the excellent work of the Mary Ward centre, the City Literary Institute and Morley college?

Mr. Baker: I completely agree with the latter points made by my hon. Friend. These are the very matters that the unit in my Department will be discussing with inner-London authorities and ILEA.

As to the ability of authorities to run education services, many more powers will be in place as a result of the Education Reform Bill, and many more opportunities will be available. First, there will be the national curriculum, which will provide a bulwark of protection against distortion of the curriculum in schools. There will be open enrolment, whereby parents will have a greater chance to choose the school they want their children to attend. There will be financial delegation, whereby headmasters and senior teachers will have more power over their schools. Last, and very important, there will be the opportunity for schools to opt out. All these will be safeguards for the position that my hon. Friend envisages.

Mrs. Rosie Barnes (Greenwich): The Secretary of State may know that I have been critical of ILEA's performance over recent years, particularly of its levels of bureucracy and its performance at secondary level. But what evidence is there that transferring the education of children such as mine from ILEA to London boroughs will result in an improvement in the quality of education for them? Will the unit consider the needs of children with special needs? They have been extremely well provided for by ILEA, and they may suffer if the centralised provision, which is available only on the larger scale, is withdrawn.

Mr. Baker: The hon. Lady raises a very important point. The great bulk of special education provision in inner London is good—some of it is very good. There have been one or two disappointing reports, but I am glad to say they are the exception. These are the sorts of service for which it is possible that there will be a joint education committee. The transfer of children with special needs from one borough to another is rather more easy because the full cost of education transfers with the child. I assure the hon. Lady that I do not want any diminution in the good provision for special education in London.

Mr. William Shelton (Streatham): Is my right hon. Friend aware that, ever since I was a chief whip on ILEA 20 years ago, I have supported its abolition? However, my conviction was tempered by the fear of what might happen to children in my constituency if education were to be run by Lambeth council. I am reassured by what my right hon. Friend has said, and by the safeguards in the Education Reform Bill.

Will my right hon. Friend keep very much in mind the concern that many of us will have about adult education, the youth service and special needs? Will he consider, for adult education and the new service, transferring the full cost, rather than the national average cost, to the borough accepting people from the other borough? Will he also consider implementing the Thompson report and making the youth service statutory? It would be a good time to do so.

Mr. Baker: My hon. Friend's last point goes rather wider than the measures that we have in hand. I am glad of his support for these measures. He brings a great deal of experience to ILEA matters, having been its chief whip, and I know that over the years he has been particularly concerned about the provision of education in his constituency. I can assure him that the matters that he has raised — adult education, further education and the youth service — will be taken carefully into account during the transfer of education responsibilities.

Mr. Corbyn: Will the Secretary of State accept that many people outside the House will recognise today as a terrible day for education in inner London? He has committed an act of political vandalism against a Labour-controlled authority. He has deliberately starved it of funds ever since he has had the power to do so.

My hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) and I have been in touch with our borough council. We found that the net deficit in spending by ILEA, compared with what Islington ratepayers pay, is about £30 million. As the right hon. Gentleman has been unable to answer any specific questions from other hon. Members about how much money will be available for education in the boroughs, will he assure me that there will not be school closures, loss of teachers' jobs, loss of ancillary workers' jobs and sale of school premises when he has committed this act of vandalism?

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that there will be enormous opposition to this act? Parents, children and employees of the authority realise that they are about to experience the swift destruction of a very good education service.

Mr. Baker: I must ask the hon. Gentleman to look at the various inspectors' reports, including Her Majesty's inspectors' reports and ILEA inspectors' reports, about the standard of education in inner London. He simply cannot have read them. I am surprised at his lack of

[Mr. Baker]

confidence in the ability of his borough to cope with education. According to the ILEA chief inspector's report about Islington:

"As the smallest division, DO3 (Islington) enjoys certain advantages: communication is relatively easy and the scale of the division helps to engender a sense of identity. Inspectors and officers work as a close team, and there exists a tradition of innovation and independence."

The new responsibilities will be built on that.

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams (Kensington): May I congratulate my right hon. Friend most sincerely on his decision, which will be very well received in Kensington and which is obviously essential as part of his campaign to improve education standards in London? May I express the hope that politically motivated opposition to his decision will very quickly die down, so that the teachers, the parents and the local authorities concerned can work together in peace to make this reform a success?

Mr. Baker: I very much hope that that will be the spirit over the coming weeks and months. There will clearly be a much more orderly transfer of responsibilities if there is co-operation from the different boroughs — Labour as well as Conservative. I hope that the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) will give a lead by encouraging Labour boroughs and ILEA to co-operate, so that there may be an orderly transfer. I am sure that there will be a relatively short-lived political campaign to preserve ILEA, but I hope that everyone concerned in London politics will appreciate that the measure will go through and that it is important from the point of view of the children that the responsibilities are transferred in a proper and orderly fashion.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): Before the Secretary of State introduces the proposals which are politically and constitutionally arbitrary and irresponsible, will he arrange for a poll of all electors in ILEA to determine whether he has a mandate? Contrariwise, can it really be right that the future of the education of 270,000 children in ILEA should be determined by the scratching paw of a tabby cat from Henley? Who is in charge of education, her or him?

Mr. Baker: In the general election, the Conservatives did very well by winning two seats in inner London. I have already said that we clearly flagged the end of a unitary education authority for London in our manifesto. We are now implementing that.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the underwhelming welcome from Opposition Members for this proposal may have something to do with the fact that they are members of the party that is responsible for the mess in which ILEA finds itself? Does he agree that there will be a widespread welcome for his statement from everyone concerned about the under-achievements of ILEA? Does he agree that an education authority that produces results whereby under 10 per cent. of children leave school with five or more O-levels and nearly a quarter with no results or achievements on paper has failed the children of inner London?

Mr. Baker: My hon. Friend speaks from direct experience as one of the victors in inner London at the last general election, when he was successful in Wandsworth. The popularity of our proposal to transfer educational responsibilities to Wandsworth was triumphantly vindicated in the Wandsworth council by-election when it was made the issue by the Labour party. My hon. Friend is right to be concerned about the level of educational performance because, at the end of the day, that is what it comes down to. The children in inner-London schools deserve better.

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): Will the Secretary of State withdraw the deceptive and wrong implication that Lady Blackstone is in favour of the break-up of ILEA?

The Secretary of State talks about parent power. Why has he not listened to parents in Southwark? The three hon. Members representing constituencies in Southwark are aware that parents in Southwark who know more and care more about their children than the Secretary of State ever will believe that the best chance to improve their children's education lies with the Inner London education authority. This is not politically motivated opposition to the break-up of ILEA: it is parentally motivated opposition to the break-up of ILEA.

Mr. Baker: I quoted from the words of Lady Blackstone as I read them in *The Times Educational Supplement*. If she feels that the quotation does not represent her views, no doubt she will make that known. She is quite capable of doing so. I repeat what I said in reply to an earlier question: the transfer of responsibilities between an upper and lower-tier authority has always been the duty and responsibility of this House.

Mr. Matthew Carrington (Fulham): Is my right hon. Friend aware how welcome the lifting of ILEA's bureaucracy from the backs of parents and teachers in inner London will be to so many people who have struggled in schools — some of which are excellent — to provide a decent education under ILEA? Is he aware that the lifting of ILEA from their backs will enable those schools to provide not only a good education, but a much better education than they provided previously? I was also glad to hear my right hon. Friend's statements about the transition and the arrangements that have been made to cover special schools, adult education and in particular nursery schools, all of which are tributes to London and must continue after abolition.

Mr. Baker: I am glad to hear my hon. Friend's warm support and endorsement. I remind the House that he was another winner in inner London in the general election. I am glad to hear his support for the way in which we intend to handle this matter. We want to do this responsibly and orderly, so that the education services in London are preserved and improved. We believe that they will be improved when responsibility is transferred closer to the parent and the local community.

Ms. Joan Ruddock (Lewisham, Deptford): Is the Secretary of State aware that I, as a representative of the borough of Lewisham, have received not a single letter from a parent, teacher, parent-teacher organisation or governing body seeking to have the education of children of the borough removed from ILEA and transferred to the borough of Lewisham? I note that hon. Members representing other constituencies in Lewisham are not present in the Chamber — *[Interruption.]* They are on the Tory side. I urge the Secretary of State to give me his evidence from my constituency to support his proposals.

Furthermore, will he answer an earlier question and tell us which local authorities, apart from Tory-controlled authorities, are seeking to have the change brought about?

Mr. Baker: What passes through the hon. Lady's postbag is not a matter for me. In response to the interest about boroughs that wish to take responsibility for education, I can state that three authorities have already decided to do that — Wandsworth, Westminster and Kensington and Chelsea. The City of London has also said that it wants to do that.

Mr. Tony Banks: It is not an inner-London authority.

Mr. Baker: It counts, none the less. Those who follow London politics — the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) knows about local government —know perfectly well that the City of London is a local authority for those purposes.

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): It has no children.

Mr. Baker: It does have some children.

Tower Hamlets has also clearly expressed a view. Earlier—I would not say that this is the view expressed now—there was considerable interest in some Labour-controlled authorities. [HON. MEMBERS: "Which are they?"] Hon. Members opposite represent those authorities and they must find out which have expressed interest. I predict that, after my statement today, many of those authorities will now become infinitely more interested.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): My right hon. Friend has noted that a list of people apart from the Baroness Blackstone, including Mr. William Stubbs and various officers and ex-officers of ILEA, believe that a one-step devolution is preferable to opting out. The paramount importance now is urgency. Will my right hon. Friend assure the House that he will carefully monitor the fact that London boroughs are making full preparations for a changeover in April 1990?

Mr. Baker: Yes, that is the target date. It is an important date, because it means that the provision of educational responsibility in London will feature prominently in the local government elections of that year, as it ought to.

As regards the time available, we are working on very much the same timetable as was used in 1963 for the establishment from scratch of the outer London boroughs as local education authorities. The dispersal of responsibilities for the GLC was undertaken in a much shorter period of eight months. I am satisfied that there will be enough time for a satisfactory transfer.

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): The Secretary of State will be aware of the findings and recommendations of the Swann committee of inquiry into under-achievement among Afro-Caribbean and Asian children. He will also be aware in that regard that the Inner London education authority's centre for urban educational studies, the centre for learning resources, and such ILEA-funded organisations as the Afro-Caribbean educational resource project, have done work that has been praised by his own inspectors, and has been emulated by education authorities, Conservative and Labour alike, and indeed studied throughout the world as examples of best practice in this area. Apart from vague generalisations about joint committees, how is this valuable work to be preserved?

Mr. Baker: If there is valuable work carried on by those bodies—and I do not question it for a moment—those are the sorts of things that will be examined by the unit in my Department in its discussions with ILEA and the London Labour boroughs. Could I say to the hon. Gentleman, because I know that he follows these matters very closely, that some interesting educational research has been done in ILEA on the achievement of black Afro-Caribbean children compared with white children. What they discovered—this is of no surprise at all—was that many of the black Afro-Caribbean children were infinitely more motivated to achieve and do better than many of the white children. But what the research also discovered was that their failure to do as well was due to the absence of basic skills. That is ILEA research. It is very important to embed in children, from whatever background they come, the basic skills of literacy and numeracy, at an early age.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): My right hon. Friend has just mentioned 1963. Does he remember that, back in 1963, he was prospective Conservative candidate for Poplar and I was the candidate for Peckham, both of which are in inner London.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): You did not win.

Mr. Jessel: The then Conservative Government, in abolishing the London county council, had intended to set up the inner-London boroughs as education authorities, but there was a strident campaign by teachers——

Mr. Spearing: And parents.

Mr. Jessel: —the Government wavered, and the Inner London education authority was set up, which was disastrous. Can my right hon. Friend give us an assurance that this time, in the event of a strident campaign by teachers, this Conservative Government will not waver?

Mr. Baker: I can certainly give my hon. Friend that assurance. I remember very well fighting alongside him in politics in the 1960s. I remember fighting Poplar in 1964 —and, as the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) said, it is fair to say that Poplar fought back. I was not elected. But what my hon. Friend says is true and I can assure him that we will resolutely carry through the proposals that I have put to the House today.

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): Since ILEA does not receive any Government money at the moment, how much Government subsidy is planned to be given to boroughs such as Lambeth after 1 April 1990? Could the Secretary of State tell us how many Conservative Members of Parliament from Lambeth, Southwark, Greenwich and Lewisham have made representations in favour of the announcement today?

Mr. Baker: I would ask the hon. Gentleman to listen to the representations that have been made during these questions. The funding of all local services in central London will change after 1990, because all boroughs will receive a grant that will be based in large part upon the needs assessment of that particular borough, which will include education. The assessment of that is a very important factor in this, and, as I have said, it is the sort of thing that the unit in my Department will be looking into.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): As one who was educated at an LCC comprehensive school and who was

[Mr. Nicholas Bennett]

a teacher in one, and who has latterly been an opposition Member of ILEA, may I assure my right hon. Friend that many of us are delighted that he has at last grasped the nettle of overspending in ILEA and its poor examination results?

May I draw my right hon. Friend's attention to a parliamentary answer by his hon. Friend the Minister of State, which showed that ILEA was 84th in the exam league, yet Wigan, which has the same socio-economic problems, came ninth and spent less? Does that not show that it is not merely a question of what an education authority provides, but how it supports teachers in their schools?

Mr. Baker: I agree with my hon. Friend. I am sure that the exam results would be better in the school where he taught if he was still teaching there, but that does not mean to say that we want him to give up being the hon. Member for Pembroke. He brings a great deal of experience to the question, and I confirm what he says.

The analysis of exam results, as those who have looked into the matter will know, needs very careful interpretation. The recommendations of the report of the task group on assessment and testing are that exam results for schools should be reported exactly as they are, as it were — undoctored or unadjusted—because of the methodology in the adjustment. The report also says that, when exam results are published, there should be a report about the socio-economic background of the school. That seems to be reasonable, but the adjustment of examination results and the various methods that have been tried have not won much credit statistically.

Mr. Flannery: Will the Secretary of State accept it from me, coming from a city in the north, that the excellent work of ILEA is deeply admired by local education authorities all over Britain, and especially by my own authority? Will he also accept it from me that that fact is not unlinked to the attack by the Government in the Education Reform Bill on all local education authorities?

I have in my hand the list of assisted places that was given in the written answer on 1 February. For instance, 459 pupils out of 1,200 at public schools in Newcastle-under-Lyme have assisted places at £2,000 each, which is £900,000 of public money. If that figure is multiplied by all the other schools, it means that more than £50 million of public money will go to private education. The figure will go higher and higher with another 126 schools having assisted places. Can we have an answer about that, when the Secretary of State talks about the money that ILEA is properly using for the education of the children of London?

Mr. Baker: The hon. Gentleman is a leading member of the National Union of Teachers. I do not believe that anyone who recalls the disruption of schooling that was caused by the teachers' walk-outs of recent memory will take lectures from the NUT or from him about inflicting damage on children.

Mr. Flannery: Answer the question.

Mr. Baker: I certainly will not take lectures about causing havoc to schoolchildren from a representative of a union that next week will disrupt schools in London yet again.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will call Conservative Members who have been rising because they have a specialised interest in the matter, although they are not London Members.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): May I say to my right hon. Friend how much I welcome his decision? However, a shadow that hangs over it, to my mind. I share some of the anxieties of Opposition Members who represent some of the inner-London boroughs at their competence to run primary education. Can my right hon. Friend assure us that he will look very carefully at the situation of those primary schools which will not be able to opt out and which might have difficulty in obtaining all the resources they need in the very early years of the national curriculum to meet its demands? Will he ensure that some of these Labour boroughs do not destroy their opportunities?

Mr. Baker: My hon. Friend is right to express his concern. We envisage that each London borough will be asked to present a development plan early next year, and that will form the framework and structure. We will examine it together with them. That will be the basis for the transfer of responsibilities. Clearly, we want to be satisfied that a proper structure will be provided. I am optimistic enough to believe that that is what most, indeed all, of the London boroughs will want to do as well.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): Is my right hon. Friend aware that it has beome increasingly the view of head teachers in London that ILEA has become more cumbersome and distant and too bureaucratic and that his proposals present tremendous opportunities and responsibilities to all those in local communities, including Labour borough councillors? I should have thought they would welcome and seize such opportunities and responsibilities.

I suggest to my right hon. Friend that the unit that will oversee the ease of transition and the necessary collaborative arrangements has seconded to it as advisers some representatives from, say, head teachers or the local authority administrations, so that wider general public support can be given to what he is doing.

Mr. Baker: On my hon. Friend's last point, I will consider what he has said. I do not know whether they will be members of the union. That may not be appropriate. Certainly we want to call upon collective advice and individual experience. My hon. Friend used a word which I was glad to hear — "opportunities". There will be better and growing opportunities as a result of what we have announced today. That is one of the exciting aspects of our proposals.

Mr. Robert Key (Salisbury): My right hon. Friend's decision is very good news for children. It brings to an end a great deal of uncertainty, but inevitably it will give rise to more uncertainty in the minds of many teachers. Will he do all he can to ensure that not only our teachers' unions and organisations are well informed about the proposals but that individual teachers are approached directly by letter or in some other way so that the campaign of disinformation which is bound to flow from the vested interests can be circumvented?

Mr. Baker: I very much hope that ILEA will not engage in a campaign of disinformation, particularly on staffing. I set out clearly in my statement the provisions on transfer

of staff. I hope that the various unions and the staff of ILEA will study them carefully. In shorthand, we are keeping to the same proposals as applied to the dissolution of the GLC. I think that will give considerable reassurance to many teachers in schools and colleges.

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): May I say, as a parent whose children are about to start their state education at an inner London school in Lambeth, how warmly I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement? The abolition of ILEA will inevitably mean that schooling will be more cost-effective and more responsive. Many parents will take the opportunity given to them by the Education Reform Bill to ensure that their children who are at state schools in inner London have a decent education, as have children elsewhere in the country.

Mr. Baker: I warmly thank my hon. Friend for saying that. That is the whole purpose of what we are trying to do. We are trying to improve the basic education of children. In the past, far too many have not had a good deal, particularly at secondary level. *[Interruption.]* I hear the Minister of State, who is in charge of our campaign on parent governors, expressing the hope that perhaps my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) will become a parent governor.

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): Is it not clear that, despite the vacuous style of the Secretary State, his statement represents a personal climbdown? I agree with one statement made by the Secretary of State. He was accurate when he said that the statement represented a dispersal of responsibility. That it does—a dispersal of responsibility away from the Secretary of State to his right hon. Friends who made the decision.

Several of the Secretary of State's hon. Friends have welcomed his conversion to the abolition of ILEA. At no stage have the Government or the Secretary of State had a mandate for the proposal. Despite the words of the Secretary of State, there was no reference to the abolition of ILEA in the Conservative party manifesto. There was no proposal for its abolition in the Government's consultative document which was published in the autumn. Certainly there was no proposal for the abolition of ILEA in the Bill published in November and debated in the House on 1 December. If there had been such a proposal, why would there have been a need for the campaign by the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) and 100 other Conservative Back Benchers?

The Secretary of State has to answer the question of where the mandate has come from. He also has to answer the question, what has happened since the Second Reading of the Education Reform Bill, when he pronounced that the proposals in the Bill were good for the education of the children of London? The proposals announced today are totally contrary to those in the Bill. Has the Secretary of State had a conversion or is his previous tenuous hold on political principle now severed?

Mr. Baker: The hon. Gentleman should perhaps read the pamphlet that I produced in 1980. I have consistently believed that education in inner London would be better if it was returned to the boroughs. What we signalled in the manifesto was the end of a unitary education authority for central London because that has become so popular, with a number of boroughs indicating support for it. The voices that have grown, not just from the Conservative party but from many other places, indicate that it will be better to have an orderly transfer of education responsibility. I very much hope that the proposal will have the support of the practical, active Labour politicians on the ground in inner London.

5.24 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the decision of the Government to seek to abolish the Inner London education authority."

The Secretary of State's statement of intent represents an abuse of power. There has been no consultation whatsoever on the proposal with the people of London who foot the entire bill for the Inner London education authority. It is a classic example of an elective dictatorship at work. It is constitutionally improper and represents an insult to the House of mammoth proportions.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) has said, the Government have no electoral mandate to abolish ILEA. Perhaps the Government have become so arrogant or authoritarian that they no longer have any regard for an election manifesto.

The Government considered abolition of ILEA at the same time as abolition of the Greater London council, but rejected it. They could have included abolition in the Education Reform Bill when it was presented to the House; they did not. On Monday, when we took the decision on the guillotine motion for the Education Reform Bill, an announcement could have been made; it was not. What different factors prevail now that did not exist in 1985, or eight weeks ago when the Education Reform Bill was debated, or last Monday when the guillotine motion was moved?

This is not the first attempt by the Tory party to abolish ILEA. It was considered in 1977, in 1979, in 1980 and between 1983 and 1985. All previous reviews of ILEA have come to the conclusion that it was in the interests of inner-London pupils, teachers and parents to preserve the unitary education authority. The statement by the Secretary of State has nothing to do with the educational needs and interests of Londoners.

Mr. Speaker: One minute more.

Mr. Banks: We believe that it is all part of the squalid, ideological campaign being waged by this noxious Government against Labour-controlled local authorities. For all we know, it is probably part of a leadership battle to establish the successor as leader of the Conservative party when Mama Doc finally stands down.

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is not like the hon. Gentleman to use such phrases.

Mr. Banks: The circumstances are somewhat different today, Mr. Speaker.

The Secretary of State does not have one single principle that he would not willingly trade for personal political advantage. The implications for Londoners and for the boroughs of the abolition of ILEA are too profound to be dealt with other than by a separate Bill which would be discussed on the Floor of the House. Since that is not to happen, it is essential that we have a full debate in the House as soon as possible. I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to consider the application sympathetically.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) seeks leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the decision of the Government to seek to abolish the Inner London education authority."

I listened with great concern to what the hon. Gentleman said. I listened also to what the Leader of the Opposition said to the Leader of the House, and again to what the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) said to the Secretary of State. I noted the responses of the Leader of the House and of the Secretary of State. As the hon. Gentleman knows, my duty in assessing a Standing Order No. 20 application is to decide whether it should be given priority over the business set down for today or tomorrow. I regret that I cannot submit his application to the House today.

Mr. Straw: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I have given you notice of the point of order, which does not relate to the application under Standing Order No. 20 but is concerned with whether it would be more appropriate for the change of policy announced by the Secretary of State for Education to be introduced by way of a new Bill rather than being spatchcocked into the Education Reform Bill.

I fully understand that you are not responsible for the content of legislation, Mr. Speaker, but you are responsible for the order of the House and for the orderly progress of legislation. On many occasions Ministers introduce amendments and new clauses as Bills are going through the House. However, I do not think that any hon. Member can recall an occasion involving the introduction of a major change of policy into a Bill after that Bill has been the subject of a guillotine motion, with a timetable laid down for its progress in Committee and in the House.

The simple reality is that it will not be possible properly to consider the major issues raised by this new policy within the timetable either in Committee or in the House. Moreover, there would, if this were included in the present Bill, be no chance for the House to have a debate upon the principle, as would be possible in a normal Second Reading debate.

In view of all those circumstances, Mr. Speaker, may I ask you to rule that it would be far more appropriate for the Government to bring this forward by way of a new Bill than to abuse the procedures of the House and truncate consideration of new clauses?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think that I could rule in the way that the hon. Gentleman suggests, but I fully accept that the House would expect more time.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): On a similar point to that raised by the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), obviously there will be a political debate because the Government are clearly putting their internal political battles ahead of the interests of 270,000 children in inner London. There is an important constitutional point here. We have a fundamental new principle being tacked on to the end of a Bill and it is quite clear from what the Secretary of State has said that this cannot be a matter of one new clause; there will have to be schedules and a considerable number of new clauses.

I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to consider the point raised by the hon. Member for Blackburn and what the precedents are for such a fundamental change of policy, and to give your considered view to the House, perhaps next week, on whether the Government have acted with propriety and whether there is a precedent for a separate Bill being brought in.

Mr. Dobson: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it not the case that an amendment to a Bill in Committee is not in order if it reverses the principle of the Bill as agreed on Second Reading? Is it not the case that a new clause may not in effect redraft clauses already in the Bill?

We maintain that this is a reversal of the principle of the Bill as agreed on Second Reading, in which case it is unacceptable. The Secretary of State would say that it is a redrafting of clauses already in the Bill. If it is, it appears to us that it is still out of order. But, setting aside the technicalities of "Erskine May", you, Mr. Speaker, as the person in the House principally responsible for maintaining the reputation of the House, from time to time say that certain activity in the House is likely to bring it into disrepute. As members of the Opposition, we can think of nothing more likely to bring the House into disrepute than an effort by the Government totally to reverse their election manifesto commitment on one item seven months after the general election, and as a sideshow in an existing Bill.

We believe that the only way in which the reputation of the House can be preserved and the interests of children, young people and mature students in inner London protected is by having a new Bill. Nothing less will protect the reputation of the House or satisfy the people of inner London whose interests are being denied and damaged today.

Mr. Speaker: Let me take up one point which the hon. Gentleman made. I have no idea what kind of amendments are likely to be moved, or whether amendments are likely to be moved. I can tell the hon. Member that, if amendments were proposed which went beyond the scope of the Bill, they would be out of order. That would, of course, be a matter for the Chairman of the Standing Committee and not for me.

Mr. Flannery : On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am a member of the Standing Committee on the Bill, which has already been guillotined, so that we are not having a chance to discuss very large parts of it. To insert into the Bill a huge issue such as this, when it is already a vast Bill —indeed, one of the biggest ever, and we have already spent about 90 hours on it, with more to come—seems to many of us to be completely out of order.

We want it placed on record that this is a very major decision which has apparently been thought out as matters have been running along so as to get rid of ILEA in one fell swoop. We believe that it is sufficiently important to merit a Bill in its own right and not to be inserted in a Bill which has already been guillotined.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I too speak as a member of the Standing Committee on the Bill and also, incidentally, as a parent of children at ILEA schools. I believe that abolition was fully foreseen in the Bill because it is provided in clause 1(1)(*v*) that ILEA would be completely abolished once eight boroughs had chosen to opt out. Furthermore, members of the Committee have put down

amendments to the effect that that trigger should operate after five boroughs have opted out. It is now clear that, on the strength of advice from many worthy figures, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has decided that it is more orderly to abolish ILEA in one step. So I see nothing irregular in the provisions of the Bill.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): I wonder whether you could consider, Mr. Speaker, whether it would be in order for the Government to amend this Bill rather than bring forward another Bill on the basis of the composition of the Committee. The Committee of Selection, acting on behalf of the House, selects hon. Members to serve on a Committee on the basis of the Bill when it comes to Second Reading. On Second Reading, the provisions concerning ILEA were relatively small, and I think it is fair to say that the Committee of Selection took into account its impact on London.

Clearly, if these proposals were to be added at this stage it would be appropriate for the Committee of Selection to reconsider its selection and ensure that there were rather more representatives from inner London on the Standing Committee. I believe that that would produce considerable procedural difficulty, so surely it is right and proper that we should start with a new piece of legislation and not have these proposals added to the present Bill.

Mr. Speaker: We have to have regard to later business, in which a large number of right hon. and hon. Members wish to take part. All these matters are for the discussions which the Leader of the House has said that he will carry on through the usual channels. I cannot answer them.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): I wonder whether it would be helpful, Mr. Speaker, if I were to indicate how I see the position.

During the debate on the timetable motion on Monday, I indicated that if there were to be a major change of policy we would look again at the timetable for the rest of the Bill.

We have had an important statement today. I think that the right thing now is for us to have discussions through the usual channels to decide how best to proceed from here. The right hon. Gentleman the Leader of the Opposition, in the way that he framed his question to me, made what I thought was a constructive suggestion. I shall look at that and see if I can find a solution that is acceptable to all hon. Members of the House.

Mr. Spearing: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. You said when you gave your ruling to my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) that you would not be prepared to grant a Standing Order No. 20 application today, and I understand the reasons for that. The scope of the Second Reading of the Bill, whatever may have been the technical extent of the short title, included optional, not mandatory, provisions for education in London, which, I remind hon. Members, has been in being since 1870, for the bulk of the children in the area, organised by virtually a single continuing authority.

The Bill in Committee will clearly be changed by the amendments that are to come. The Leader of the House has referred to a certain possibility, but, whatever the technical scope of the Bill—to which you have already referred, Mr. Speaker—a debate on the order which will be before us next week and which is a narrow statutory instrument will not properly deal with the point that has been raised unless the Government make a statement very soon that there will be a separate Bill. If they do not do that, Mr. Speaker, may I revert to the point with which I started concerning a future Standing Order No. 20 application on another day?

Mr. Speaker: Certainly.

Mr. Corbyn: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am sure that you will recognise and agree that the statement made by the Secretary of State this afternoon is of major importance. It envisages a major piece of legislation, and it is not acceptable that such a piece of legislation should be tacked on to the end of a Bill that is timetabled and guillotined in Committee.

Would it not be better if you, Mr. Speaker, now ruled that you would not allow amendments to be tacked on, but insisted that the Government went through the legislative process, as they do for everything else, issued a White Paper on their proposals to break up and destroy ILEA, and then proposed a Bill after consultation on the White Paper, instead of allowing the destruction of education in inner London to be rushed through in a few weeks on an already guillotined Bill?

Mr. Harry Greenway: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Are not these points of order rather synthetic? [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] However the Bill is framed, the education of children in London's schools and of adults in further education, higher education and other educational institutes in London will continue. The method of organisation is subsidiary to that. The fact that Opposition Members are calling for an emergency debate seems somewhat synthetic. I hope that you, Mr. Speaker, will not respond to them.

Mr. Tony Banks: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) would expect me to respond to any point of order that he put to me. I have an obligation to respond to them all.

Mr. Dobson: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Page 556 of "Erskine May" refers to proceedings in passing public Bills and says:

> "An amendment . . . which would reverse the principle of the bill as agreed to on the second reading is not admissible."

I put it to you, Mr. Speaker, that today's proposition absolutely reverses the principle of part III of the Bill which received a Second Reading. That is one reason why the points of order we are making today are not at all synthetic. We seek your guidance, not necessarily today but certainly in the course of discussions through the usual channels.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I am not sure that it will help, but I shall hear it.

Mr. Gow: The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) read out a reference to an amendment. Surely it is not possible for you, Mr. Speaker, to rule upon an amendment before that amendment has been tabled. Even if it were possible for you to rule on an

[Mr. Gow]

amendment that had not been tabled, the ruling would be given not by you, Mr. Speaker, but by the Chairman of the Standing Committee.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have said that once, and I was about to say it again.

Mr. Tony Banks: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let me take one point of order at a time. If an amendment is proposed in a Standing Committee, it is a matter for the Chairman of the Standing Committee to decide whether that amendment is outside the scope of the Bill.

Mr. Dobson: I understand your ruling, but surely the question of the acceptability of amendments in Committee is a material consideration for the House when deciding what to do about the Government's proposition. It is an attempt to introduce new legislation that totally reverses the propositions that were accepted by the House on Second Reading. We put it to you, Mr. Speaker, that that would be a material consideration for you to bear in mind when considering any future applications under Standing Order No. 20.

Mr. Speaker: I have already dealt with that matter.

Mr. Banks: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Following the Second Reading of the Education Reform Bill, there was a money resolution. I understand that amendments cannot be tabled in Committee that would exceed the limits set out in the money resolution. If the money resolution, as presently designed, is exceeded, would the Government have to come back to the Floor of the House and move a second money resolution, or could it be taken in Committee?

Mr. Speaker: I can do no more than to say, yet again, that if amendments proposed by the Government go beyond the scope of the Bill, they will be out of order, but that would be a matter for the Chairman of the Standing Committee.

Human Fertilisation and Embryology

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

Mr. Speaker: In view of the late start of this Adjournment debate on a very important matter in which a large number of right hon. and hon. Members wish to take part, I ask for brief contributions, please.

5.44 pm

The Minister for Health (Mr. Tony Newton): Although modestly cloaked as a debate on the Adjournment, the issues involved in our discussion today are of very great significance, I hope, if I may express at least one personal opinion, that this will prove to be one of the best occasions in the House, when we have the opportunity to debate a major subject without the pressure of reaching an immediate set of conclusions, but in a way that helps to influence and strengthen the standing of whatever conclusions are eventually reached.

I assure the House that that is the spirit in which the Government approach the debate. On a number of issues, the White Paper sets out considered Government proposals for legislation, on which we remain anxious to take full account of the views of the House in shaping the precise form of the Bill which in due course will follow. The Government have neither expressed, nor seek to express, a collective view on the issue of research. They seek to provide, by discussion of the White Paper and by proposals for alternative draft clauses in the subsequent Bill, a basis for the House to reach a properly considered conclusion.

Despite the size of the subject, I see my task in quite limited terms — principally to set the scene for the expression of views by hon. Members on both sides of the House. I shall seek — my aim has been reinforced by what you, Mr. Speaker, said a few moments ago—to be correspondingly brief, thereby maximising the opportunities for those views to be expressed. I am conscious—as I observed recently in another context — that being Minister for Health gives me no special status to advise on matters of conscience or morality, such as those involved in our discussion.

In the 10 years since the birth of the first test-tube baby, subjects of embryo research and in-vitro fertilisation—to give test-tube babies the proper terminology — have rarely been out of the news. That is not surprising, in view of the revolutionary developments that they signify. These are very difficult, new topics and touch on issues on which most people hold strong personal views. I have no doubt that today's debate will reflect the various strands of opinion.

Perhaps I should observe that, alongside those who hold particular views about embryo research, our debate will obviously be followed closely by the many thousands of couples who suffer from infertility. Despite the increased independence of women, and the more general acceptance—at least in some quarters—of the other life styles, the ideal of the nuclear family — father, mother and children — is still the ambition of many, indeed most, people in our western society. It pervades our everyday lives in countless ways, and it comes home strongly to those couples who cannot, for whatever reason, have children as a particularly painful issue. Their

emotions and desires are not matters that any hon. Member would wish to dismiss or ignore, whatever conclusions may ultimately be drawn from the debate.

Medical treatments are constantly being improved. For some, a course of drugs may be all that is required to enable them to conceive naturally. However, for most infertile couples the problem is less easy to treat, and for many there may as yet be no answer at all. The treatments for infertility covered by the White Paper "Human Fertilisation and Embryology: A Framework for Legislation" include some of the most advanced treatments yet available. They bring hope to couples who have tried all else to no avail, and to some they have undoubtedly brought great joy and happiness. However, as we are all aware, at the same time they raise questions for society as a whole—questions of an ethical, social and legal nature. It is those difficult issues that we all have to face, particularly all of us in this place, to whom it falls to determine the legal framework.

The wider public debate on the subject began in earnest with the publication in 1984 of the report of the inquiry into human fertilisation and embryology set up by the Health Ministers, the Lord Chancellor and the Secretary of State for Education and Science, and chaired by Dame Mary — now Baroness — Warnock. That report still stands as the prime document in the debate. It would be an understatement to say that not everyone agrees with all its conclusions, but there is fairly general acknowledgement of the acclaim that it has received, in this country and internationally, as a survey of some of the problems and issues. It has certainly provoked deep thought and a good deal of response from many individuals and organisations, and it remains the foundation of the discussions that have subsequently taken place.

The publication of that report was followed by debate both in this House and in the other place. Many responses were received, the chief focus of debate being embryo research and surrogacy. A clear consensus emerged at an early stage on commercial surrogacy, and the Government felt in a position to make a suitably quick response in the form of the Surrogacy Arrangements Act 1985, which banned commercial surrogacy agencies and advertising of, or for, surrogacy arrangements. Parliament has also had a number of opportunities to consider embryo research as a result of a series of private Members' Bills.

Surrogacy and human embryo research remain important topics. However, the Warnock report covered a far wider range of issues which also deserve detailed consideration, and which were somewhat overlooked in the aftermath of the report. To try to redress the balance, the Government published a consultation document in December 1986 specifically inviting views on matters such as the nature of the licensing authority, storage and access by children to information about donors.

Many responses were received — again revealing a wide variety of views. But despite that wide variety of views, on the strength of the responses received—taking the consultation process as a whole—the Government felt able to make proposals on the direction that legislation should take. My right hon. Friend announced the publication of the White Paper in November last year.

It could be seen as a rather leisurely process—over-leisurely, some might think. I believe, however, that we shall find that this steady, even slow, progress towards legislation, which has been open at all stages to debate, will prove invaluable in the face of fast-developing and extremely sensitive and difficult issues. I expect it to result in the ultimate formulation of legislation that is clear and effective on matters on which sufficient consensus can be found, but does not go too far, too fast, on those on which society is still forming its view.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): I may be anticipating what my right hon. Friend is going to say. However, in view of the concerned letters that I have received, will he assure the House that he would see the licensing authority as a totally impartial body, not weighted in favour of embryonic research or, necessarily, against it?

Mr. Newton: I can give my hon. Friend an absolute assurance that that is our aim. It is possible that, in the course of the debate, hon. Members will wish to express views about how that can best be achieved, and those are precisely the sort of views that we would wish to take into account in any further thinking.

I should like to outline some of the basic principles underlying the White Paper's proposals. On one matter there is well-nigh universal agreement—indeed, I hope that it is universal—that due respect must be given in law to the presence of human life. That means, unequivocally, that the early embryo must be protected in law. However, it must be acknowledged that there are significant differences of opinion on the extent of protection that should be afforded to the embryo. Tension still remains between the need to protect the early embryo and the need to offer as much help as possible to infertile couples, or couples at risk of passing on severe hereditary diseases to their children. How that tension is to be resolved is for Parliament to decide.

As I have already said, the Government have decided that their role is to provide the House with alternative clauses, and to encourage as informed a debate as possible on the issues at stake—which they have done through their consultation document, their White Paper, and which they hope to advance further through today's debate.

A second principle underlying the White Paper is the desire not to cut off hope unnecessarily from infertile couples and others who may be helped by the new developments. The procedures exist; we must recognise that they will continue to exist; and desperate couples will continue to find help somewhere. The general view emerging from consultation was that treatments like in-vitro fertilisation and artificial insemination by donor should be allowed to continue in this country, but under strict regulation to ensure that there are proper safeguards.

A further guiding principle is that the welfare of children born as a result of such treatments must be of paramount importance. They, as much as every other child, have a right to a sense of identity and a secure family life. Society as a whole, in permitting the treatments to be developed, has a responsibility to the children born as a result of those treatments, and must ensure that they have the best chance possible of achieving that sense of identity and secure family life. That is why the White Paper proposes that counselling should be statutorily available to all couples considering these treatments, and to children who subsequently wish to find out some information regarding their genetic background. For the time being, we propose that the donors should remain anonymous, but we must recognise that public attitudes may change, as they did with adoption. In the future, it may seem right to allow the child access to the donor's name.

[Mr. Newton]

That brings me to another point, which I hope the House will keep in mind, if it agrees with me. This is a fast-moving issue, and it would be wise to avoid legislation that is completely inflexible and cannot assimilate developments as they occur. That is why the White Paper suggests that, while the basic remit of the proposed statutory licensing authority should be set out in the primary legislation, it should be adjustable by regulations. In addition, a number of finer points of detail should be left to the authority to determine in its code of practice, which will be laid before Parliament.

We must aim to provide the licensing authority with a clear legal framework within which to work, and, while providing a line of accountability to Parliament, we must not try to do the authority's work for it. In the decisions that it makes, and the advice and guidelines that it gives to both Government and clinicians, it must be genuinely independent, and seen to be independent. I reiterate what I said a moment ago to my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) about the need for genuinely balanced advice from a balanced and representative membership.

Mrs. Ann Winterton (Congleton): Can my right hon. Friend reassure me that the ultimate responsibility for the work of the statutory licensing body will be his and that he will be answerable to the House?

Mr. Newton: I think it is clear that the framework that we propose would provide a proper line of accountability to Parliament. If my hon. Friend feels that that is not sufficiently clear in the White Paper, we shall wish to take account of any views that she expresses in the debate. However, if she is asking me whether Ministers could, on their own responsibility, overrule decisions of the statutory licensing authority within that framework, I do not think that that is appropriate, or indeed that Parliament would want it.

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): My right hon. Friend is, of course, aware of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, for the enforcement of which the Home Secretary is responsible. Ultimately, the responsibility rests here. Is the Minister going to tell us that less responsibility will be vested in Parliament—as my hon. Friend the Member for Congleton (Mrs. Winterton) suggested—in respect of the human embryo, a human being, than for animals used in scientific experiments?

Mr. Newton: We all deeply respect my right hon. Friend's feelings on these matters. We shall listen with great care to the points that he will no doubt make in the debate.

Ultimately, anything which happens under statute and which, in the broadest sense, falls within his remit, a Minister must be prepared to account for to the House—but that is a different matter—if only to explain why he feels it right not to change the legislation or to undertake some other action urged upon him. There is a clear distinction between that and the suggestion—I am not sure whether my hon. Friend the Member for Congleton (Mrs. Winterton) was making it and whether my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) was picking it up—that Ministers should have the right, on their own responsibility, to overrule decisions of a statutory licensing authority of the kind proposed in the White Paper. But if it is the view of my hon. Friends that that should be the case, I shall, at the very least, undertake to consider what they say in the course of the debate.

I am conscious of the desire of the House that I should be reasonably brief, so let me deal now with some of the key points in the White Paper. First, its proposals for statutory regulation concentrate on procedures or treatments which require regulation primarily because of the ethical as well as the social and legal problems that they raise. Thus, the proposals would apply to embryos fertilised or maintained outside the body; also to donated gametes, that is, sperm and eggs, and any treatments involving them, such as artificial insemination by donor, or gamete intra-fallopian transfer, using donated gametes.

The proposed regulatory mechanism that we have just discussed briefly is the independent statutory licensing authority. That is really the keystone of this aspect of the White Paper and is one subject on which there was a wide measure of agreement among those who responded to the consultation document. Seventy per cent. of respondents were in favour of a statutory authority, which included the existing Voluntary Licensing Authority set up two and a half years ago by the Medical Research Council and the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists to provide voluntary professional self-regulation of IVF and embryo research.

I say again that the statutory licensing authority would be entirely independent in that it would have the power to grant and revoke licences for all of the regulated procedures without reference to Parliament or Ministers. However—I hope this will give some reassurance to my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point—Ministers will retain certain important powers, including the appointment and termination of membership. At least half the members of the authority will be lay members and at least one third will be doctors or scientists expert in this area. Licences would be required for all clinics offering any of the regulated treatments or procedures and, if Parliament permits research at all, for all research projects. It would be a criminal offence to undertake any of these procedures without a licence.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: Will my right hon. Friend assure the House that those medical and research-based members of the statutory licensing authority would not all be 100 per cent. in favour of embryo experimentation, and that there should be a balance among the scientific members as well as the lay members of the authority?

Mr. Newton: I can assure my hon. Friend that careful consideration will be given to membership issues within the powers granted by the House. Today's debate is precisely to enable my hon. Friend and other hon. Members to make their points on these issues which we can then take into account as we develop the legislation and in the course of any action which would subsequently take place.

Let me deal now with the proposal in the White Paper to which most attention has been and no doubt will continue to be paid—embryo research. There is some important measure of agreement here. There are some, mainly speculative, areas of possible research which most agree should be prohibited. Those include the creation of embryos with certain predetermined characteristics by

cloning, and the creation of hybrid creatures, half man, half beast. Such experimentation, if it ever took place, would be regarded as ethically unacceptable and the Government—this will be welcomed by nearly all hon. Members—are committed to making such procedures a criminal offence, even if Parliament were to accept research in general.

However, there are other areas of research which, while recognising the need for controls, some, but by no means all, consider to be ethically acceptable in view of the benefits they could bring. Those include research to develop infertility treatments, to prevent certain congenital disorders or to improve contraceptive techniques. I do not need and I shall not seek to rehearse the arguments of those who believe such research should be permitted, nor of those who wish all research to be a criminal offence. To assist the House, they are set out in annex B of the White Paper and I am sure that many speakers will address that issue.

The Government's position is clear, and I make no apology for reiterating it. On a matter such as this, where hon. Members are likely to hold strong personal beliefs of a moral or religious nature, the Government do not take a collective view. In order that in this instance Parliament may be completely free to decide on the future of embryo research, the White Paper proposes that the draft legislation will include alternative clauses on embryo research—one banning all research, the other permitting it under strict controls. Our aim throughout has been to assist the choice which each and every individual hon. Member will have to make.

Mr. W. Benyon (Milton Keynes): I have listened carefully to my right hon. Friend. Does he accept that the position is moving so fast that there really is a need to put these proposals into law at the earliest possible moment? Can he assure me that such legislaton will be introduced in the next Session of Parliament?

Mr. Newton: If I remember rightly, my hon. Friend has some experience as part of the usual channels, so he will know that the Government have clearly stated their intention to legislate in the present Parliament. He will equally know that all the conventions, apart from anything else, would preclude me from making a statement as definite as the one that he is seeking from me about what or might not be in the Queen's Speech for any particular Session. I hope that he will acknowledge that.

The White Paper, like the Warnock report before it, deals with far more than just embryo research. It includes important proposals covering the donation and storage of gametes and embryos, further clarification of the law on surrogacy, counselling and the legal status of children born following donation of gametes — the last being additional to the provisions already made, with regard to children born following sperm donation, in the Family Law Reform Act 1987, which is due to come into force later this year in England and Wales. While less attention is usually paid to these matters than to those on which I touched a few moments ago, they are none the less vital to the people that they will affect, and I hope that today's debate will give our proposals in these areas due consideration.

Today's debate is an important stage in our progress towards legislation. As I have just said, we are committed to introducing legislation during this Parliament. We owe it to the infertile couples of Britain, and to all interested in the matter, to conduct our debate in an informed and responsible manner, recognising that the ideal, if it can be achieved, is a framework which will allow the proper use of the knowledge that we have, or can gain, to assist people to a sense of fulfilment in their lives, while clearly protecting the fundamental values on which our society is based, not least the respect due to human life itself.

The House needs no further reminder from me of the size and difficulty of the task ahead of us in legislating in this area, but I am sure that we should make that attempt and then translate the work that underlies the White Paper into a well-considered statute. I hope that today's debate will help to achieve just that.

6.8 pm

Ms. Jo Richardson (Barking): I am glad that we are now having a debate on the White Paper on human fertilisation and embryo research which has arisen, as the Minister has said, from the consultation conducted by the Government on the proposals in the Warnock committee's report.

I pay tribute to the work done by the noble Baroness Warnock and the members of her committee. They were facing, in a disciplined and responsible way, complex issues raised by advances in medical science. Their report has aroused considerable controversy, as it would do, in deciding how best, and with what guidelines, society should tackle new concepts which up to now have been beyond our comprehension. They were divided in some of their views but they gave us a lot to think about.

It was unfortunate that some hon. Members decided, following the publication of the Warnock report in 1984, to isolate their particular objection to one aspect of it—research on pre-embryos — and thereby give the impression that that was all that the report was about. To use private Members' Bills to legislate on one aspect—however crucial or controversial—is not the right way to deal with this matter. It is for the Government to draft much more comprehensive legislation — as they now intend to do — with all the resources and advice that they have available. Parliament should not be required to make important choices with lasting effects on women and their partners, families and future children, in isolation, in an ill-considered way based largely on prejudice and with badly drafted proposals. That was true of the Powell Bill a year or two ago and it is true of the Abortion (Amendment) Bill.

Many other issues arise from the Warnock report and the White Paper. On the assumption that the Government will legislate on all of them later, I shall touch on some of them now. I support the setting up of a statutory licensing authority and I have taken that view since the Warnock report was published. Clearly, the establishment of such an authority is the only way to ensure good practice. I welcomed the setting up of the voluntary licensing authority, because it showed a sense of responsibility on the part of doctors. However, its performance has shown that the medical profession is, frankly, unable to impose objective controls on some of its members with respect to in-vitro fertilisation.

In theory, the decision not to enshrine too many fine details in law but to leave them to guidance on good practice is a good one. In practice it would depend on the composition of the statutory licensing authority at any one time and on whether changes in composition are allowed to result in sudden changes in recommendations. As the

[Ms. Jo Richardson]

Minister acknowledged, there must be a range of experience on the statutory licensing authority — the White Paper proposes that—and it should include lay representatives. However, those lay representatives must not end up as separate factions with irreconcilable views, as happened on some aspects in the Warnock committee. The interventions that we have heard seem to suggest that some hon. Members want differing views to be represented on the statutory licensing authority. If the House has taken a view about that licensing authority's functions, its members should reflect that view. How do the Government propose to tackle the possibility that there might be separate factions on the statutory licensing authority — even among non-lay and non-medical members? Presumably, the authority will include professional sociologists and some high-profile professional sociologists today oppose such treatments in any form that is practised. It would be a pity if the authority became polarised.

The Government propose that there should be a reasonable balance between men and women. I hope that the Minister recognises that the appointment of a handful of lay and professional women will be regarded as nothing more than a token gesture if there is a preponderance of men on the statutory licensing authority. We have to reflect the society in which we live, and there is a wealth of talent, experience and sound common sense among the majority of the population — women — from which to draw. After all, because of their child-bearing function, women are the ones who are principally affected. They should, therefore, form a strong part of the statutory licensing authority.

Let me pick out one of the functions of the authority for comment. I hope that the guidelines will ensure that counsellors are independent and trained in non-directive counselling. It is not the function of a counsellor to push the patient in one direction or another but to ensure that she understands what is in prospect. The woman—and her family, if they are with her when the consultation takes place—must be informed that there may be delays and disappointments but that it is to be hoped that there will be rewards as well. The counsellor's job is to ensure that the woman and her partner make an informed choice.

I seek clarification on the provision of funds for the statutory licensing authority's operation. Paragraph 18 of the White Paper says that a contribution will be made from public funds but that

"it will be expected to meet a large proportion of its expenditure from fees collected in connection with its licensing activity."

How will that work? Will NHS clinics offering infertility services be required to pay fees to the licensing authority, part of whose funds will come from the public purse?

I understand that the authority will be funded partly from private funds, but part of its money will come from public funds. The Medical Research Council, which is funded from public money, supports research aimed at improving in-vitro fertilisation techniques and reducing the risk of genetic diseases. Its function is to undertake research that will improve people's lives, including the medical care available to them. Will the MRC be required to pay money to the statutory licensing authority out of the public funds allocated to it to fulfil its function? If so, that seems an unnecessary and bureaucratic way of book-keeping, which might cost more in the end.

I am not opposed to infertility clinics in the private sector contributing to the work of the authority. They make money. However, I hope that they will not pass on the additional cost to their patients, who already pay heavily for treatment. Three of my constituents undergoing private infertility treatment have told me that they have had to remortgage their houses to do so. As far as possible, I would like the service to be available to all women, whatever their income, so I hope that we shall examine that matter.

In all this, the person to be considered is the patient. Women and their partners who seek advice and help because of infertility problems must be assured of a free service under the National Health Service. At the moment, the NHS is in crisis and we have all been arguing and pleading for more resources for patient care. I do not believe that infertility treatment should be regarded as a luxury to be paid for, because if it is, only the better-off will be able to afford it.

I have to confess to being unsure whether children who are born following artificial insemination by donor—AID—or egg/embryo donation should have the absolute right to information about their origins. My instinct is that parents should be able to choose for themselves whether to tell the child, and I suspect that, in practice, that is what will happen in most cases. There has been a good deal of public debate about this issue. Some feel that the child should have the right to know his or her genetic origins and point to experience in adoption to back up that view. However, adoption is not exactly the same as AID and I believe that we need to examine the matter further before we enshrine such a right in law. In the White Paper the Government acknowledge the problem and propose to keep it under review. That is the correct step to take.

The most controversial part of the Warnock report is that concerning whether research should be carried out on pre-embryos. Every woman who is pregnant wants to produce a normal, healthy baby. Two weeks ago, when we debated the Abortion (Amendment) Bill, some of the debate centred around that theme. A great deal was said about the tests that can now be carried out, amniocentesis, ultrasound and a new technique that will be available in a few years' time, chorionic villus sampling. That technique is still in its early stages of development.

The termination of a wanted pregnancy, even if it is done at an early stage, can be distressing. During our debate on the Abortion (Amendment) Bill much was said about developing techniques to detect severe handicap at the earliest possible stage. Indeed, such techniques were discussed by some hon. Members opposed to pre-embryo research as part of their argument for abortions to be carried out at the earliest possible stage.

Some women who know that they are at risk either because they or their partners carry a disorder would like to feel that they can start a pregnancy in the sure and certain knowledge that it can be carried right through and that the baby will be born healthy. The new research that is now being undertaken could be the answer. That includes screening for genetic defects before the embryo begins to develop, which is on the 14th day. Genetic defects are a common cause of handicap and the death of babies. Genetic defects and congenital malformations occur in 2 to 5 per cent. of all live births and cause between

40 to 50 per cent. of deaths in childhood. The technology has been developed in a relatively short time, but in the foreseeable future it may be possible to detect those pre-embryos that would develop specific disorders such as Down's syndrome, muscular dystrophy, cystic fibrosis, Hunter's syndrome, Hurler's syndrome and Huntington's disease.

Are those hon. Members who are opposed to research unwilling to face up to their responsibilities to help those couples who want to take advantage of the available research? Are they so prejudiced that they will deny couples the chance of the baby they so dearly want? One of the worst inherited diseases is severe combined immune deficiency. The baby is born apparently quite perfect. However, pre-programmed by the genes inherited by its parents, it has no immunity to disease. The baby appears healthy at the beginning, when protected by the antibodies of its mother, but it will suddenly die from its first infection, usually after a few months. That is a great tragedy for any family.

In December 1987 two doctors completed tests that may eventually help doctors to diagnose the presence of combined immune deficiency in a human egg only a few days after fertilisation. More research is needed on human fertilised eggs before the suffering caused by such incurable, fatal diseases can be eased. Everyone should search their hearts to decide whether they should say that research to seek solutions for such handicaps should not take place because of their prejudice against pre-embryo research.

Research using pre-embryos is still at a relatively early stage. However, many women have been helped as a result of improvements in test-tube baby treatment. As infertility affects at least one in 10 couples and pre-embryo research has been so beneficial in the development of IVF I believe that that research is essential if the present low success rate is to be improved. Such research is also likely to help those with hormone problems and women whose early embryos are not properly implanted. We must not forget that many women miscarry because the pre-embryo and the subsequent foetus are malformed. Such miscarriages occur naturally, but I am sure that none of us would want to go through one or more miscarriages with the accompanying distress. Research could enable doctors to detect the reason for some miscarriages and, I hope, to prevent them in the future.

I hope that hon. Members have had the opportunity to read a serious article written by Dr. Anne McLaren—director of the Medical Research Council's mammalian development unit — in the "New Socialist" of 10 December 1987. [HON. MEMBERS:"New Socialist"?] I apologise, I meant the "New Scientist". She might well have written an article in the "New Socialist". That article is well worth reading. It is highly technical, but it demonstrates the advances that have been made and could be made in the future.

The White Paper states that the Government are proposing to table alternative draft clauses when a Bill comes before Parliament. It is rather unusual for a Government, at the first printing of a Bill, to propose two separate concepts contained in separate clauses rather than choosing one and having an amendment put down to it. However, if that practice will make the debate clearer, so be it. When we come to vote on this matter I shall certainly vote in favour of research, with safeguards. Frankly, I find it hard to understand the moral objections to research on the pre-embryo. It is the size of a needle point and hardly visible to the human eye.

A great deal was said about the moral questions involved with pre-embryo research in the House of Lords on 15 January. That debate is well worth reading. Indeed, the Archbishop of York discussed the problem of the status of the embryo and spoke of the need

"to ascribe full personal value to human matter which possess none of the attributes which normally belong to persons." —[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 15 January 1988; Vol. 492, c. 1462.]

There appeared to be consensus about that problem.

I fail to understand those hon. Members who are calling for an end to late abortions simply by lowering the present upper time limit to 18 weeks or fewer when some of their contributions to the debate a couple of weeks ago accepted that abortions should be permissible as early as possible. I know that many hon. Members are opposed to abortion as such and I respect their view. However, they are supporting the Abortion (Amendment) Bill, which allows abortions in certain restricted circumstances. I do not understand how they can adopt that position and yet oppose research at a much earlier stage of development.

Mr. Jerry Wiggin (Weston-super-Mare): I agree with almost everything that the hon. Lady has said. She quoted the Archbishop of York and in that same speech he also said:

"I regard as totally unrealistic and indeed immoral any proposal to continue in-vitro fertilisation without a proper backing in research".—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 15 January 1988; Vol. 492, c. 1461.]

Will the hon. Lady confirm that she believes that the opportunities for childless couples to have babies, as a result of IVF, is something that the House must support?

Ms. Richardson: I entirely agree with the hon. Gentleman. Indeed, I agree with most of what was said in the House of Lords and I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has also read that debate.

There is a connection between this debate and the debate that we have had about abortion rights. I believe that it is curious that the same people who are now accepting that abortion should take place, but at an earlier stage, are not prepared to take that argument to what I believe is its logical conclusion and to try to seek the causes of genetic handicap at the earliest possible stage.

I would guess, noting the hon. Members who are waiting to speak, that we shall shortly hear how they manage to do that. It is curious that some of the early postcards that arrived in October last year in the mail mountain organised by SPUC advised voting for the Alton Bill but against medical research. That seems odd: that Bill is an 18-week Bill, so I do not know how the two ideas can be reconciled.

As well as support for controlled medical research from informed and distinguished scientists, doctors and the Upper House, support also comes from many organisations concerned with helping the handicapped. They have shown their concern by speaking out for research. They include such highly respected bodies as Mencap, and last December they reconfirmed that they were in favour of continuing medical research. I am a member of an organisation called PROGRESS which has brought together a number of organisations—some of them of handicapped people, some of hospitals and some of

[Ms. Richardson]

concerned people. We have been trying to put forward the message that controlled and accountable research can help us all—and the future of this country's children.

Within and outside this House there are fundamentalists who would outlaw all research; and there are fundamentalists at the other end of the spectrum who would allow unlimited and uncontrolled research. I support neither group. I hope that Parliament will eventually take the view that research on pre-embryos should be permitted — with proper controls and accountability—to scientists and clinicians. Parliament has a role to play in protecting the public interest, and although 14 days has been proposed as the limit for such research, the White Paper rightly acknowledges that new developments might make exceptions permissible, and we may include those by affirmative resolutions in the future. I agree that we must have a certain flexibility of approach and not be hide-bound by a specific date.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): I wholly share the hon. Lady's view that research should be allowed and controlled. Does she agree that the clear and available publication of what is being done, and how it is being done, is of fundamental importance to the control of research?

Ms. Richardson: I quite agree. Parliament and public alike are entitled to know what research is being carried out and what the prognoses for that research are. That cannot be done immediately, because all research is inevitably slow, but we must have the opportunity to know what is going on and what it might lead to.

We must bear in mind the need for a properly resourced National Health Service to do the necessary work of research and treatment, and to ensure that funding of those things is not done by private, unaccountable bodies. Funding for research of this sort must not, however, be at the expense of other commitments. To judge by the way that the Government have so far failed to recognise that, whatever extra money they have put into the National Health Service, that has not been enough to stop patient treatment crumbling. I am worried about their willingness to find more money for research and treatment in this area. Couples who suffer from infertility problems will take that point to heart. They believe that they are as much patients-to-be as people undergoing other sorts of treatment in the National Health Service. Parliament must take these momentous decisions about the future of infertile couples and assess their value to women, their partners and the children of the future. We should demand that public funding be available for this research.

Like the Minister, I hope that we shall have a sensible, calm debate today on all the important points raised in the White Paper. I look forward to listening to the rest of the debate and hearing what the Government propose to include in the Bill that they will bring forward later this year.

6.35 pm

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): I agree on one point with the hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson): I am glad that we are having this debate.

I shall go at once to the fundamental issue before the House. In a debate on the Warnock report in 1984, I recall saying:

> "the committee performed its task without first considering the very question on which all else depends—the nature of the human embryo".—[*Official Report*, 23 November 1984; Vol. 68, c. 539.]

To put it mildly, the committee was uncertain about the human embryo. It did not answer the question whether the embryo is human, and, if so, deserving of special consideration from the outset, although it described it as such. It did not dare to say that the embryo was not human, because we all know that it is capable of becoming a child, an adolescent and an adult, and is incapable of becoming anything else.

Because it could not answer many of the questions that it posed, the committee jumped over them:

> "Instead of trying to answer these questions directly we have therefore gone straight to the question of how it is right to treat the human embryo."

How odd that the Warnock committee was ready to consider treating the human embryo without being clear about what it really was. So odd was it that some members of the committee could not stomach the recommendations to which they were asked to agree. Led by Professor John Marshall, the distinguished professor of clinical neurology at the Institute of Neurology, they signed a minority report saying that there should be no experimentation on the human embryo and they gave what were, to many of us, convincing reasons. They recommended that

> "the embryo of the human species be afforded special protection in law".

They were not opposed—neither am I; nor are those who share my views—to IVF procedures designed to overcome the distressing condition of infertility. That was made clear by my right hon. Friend, the former Member for South Down, Mr. Enoch Powell, who introduced a Bill on the subject which obtained a substantial majority on Second Reading.

Again, the Warnock committee sounded an uncertain trumpet on other matters. Yes, there could be experimentation on human embryos, but only up to 14 days. Why 14?

Mr. Doug Henderson (Newcastle upon Tyne, North) *rose*——

Sir Bernard Braine: Mr. Speaker enjoined upon us the duty of being as crisp as possible, because many hon. Members want to speak. If the hon. Gentleman wants to intervene, he can speak later in the debate. By holding me up, he may frustrate his own chances.

Why 14 days? Why should it be lawful to tamper with and destroy a human embryo in the first fortnight of its existence and not afterwards? The hon. Member for Barking mentioned the Abortion Act 1967. It is lawful under that Act to destroy every year thousands of perfectly normal healthy children without any protection under the law. The pro-experiment lobby—and the hon. Member for Barking — has argued that such experiments are necessary to combat a whole range of genetic disorders. It is a fallacy to believe that embryos, at such an early stage of their existence, can be of any help with such disorders as cystic fibrosis, muscular dystrophy and Down's syndrome. At 14 days the embryo has not developed to the point at which it can yield any helpful information. Leading specialists have made it plain that 14 days is not long enough.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Sir Bernard Braine: I have not finished the point. Perhaps my hon. Friend will listen to me carefully and make a more informed speech when he catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In this kind of debate, we must develop what we know and we feel, and that is what I propose to do. I shall not give way, and I serve notice to that effect. I am not frightened of my hon. Friend or of anybody else. If I am forced to give way, I shall do so——

Mr. Thurnham *rose*——

Sir Bernard Braine: —but if I did so I should not have the support and encouragement of the Chair. My hon. Friend must listen.

When Lady Warnock was pressed on the issue of 14 days, she said that it would do for a start. What precisely did that mean? We are anxious to hear the Government's view about such uncertainty. We are on a downward slide with these people and we do not know where it will end.

The Warnock report is also uncertain about other fundamental issues. Paragraph 12.2 deals with public concern about trans-species fertilisation. The report states that certain experimentation in this field should be permissible, but acknowledges that the possibilities

"have caused public concern about the prospect of developing hybrid half-human creatures."

What did the report mean by going on to say that some experimentation in this field would be possible? Of course, that will need strict regulation by a licensing authority. The report even referred to the possibility that human embryos could be used to test the effects of newly-developed drugs or other substances that may possibly be toxic or cause abnormalities, and it went on to point out the deep concern that this might be exploited commercially. Yet paragraph 12.5 states:

"We concluded however that there may be very particular circumstances where the testing of such substances on a very small scale may be justifiable."

In short, the end justifies the means. The House must forgive me if I recall the defence of the murderer of that brave Polish priest, Jerzy Popieluszko:

"I thought that, by doing a little evil, I might prevent a larger one."

Although the Government are bold and adventurous in some respects, it is no wonder that against that background they have taken over three years to come up with a White Paper. Even then they are so uncertain that they put forward two alternative courses of action—to experiment or not to experiment.

What is one to make of the White Paper? I certainly welcome the first proposal, on page 6, to prohibit research on the human embryo. I reject the second proposal, to permit research subject to licence by a statutory licensing authority. Indeed, the second proposal begs an important question. To permit research on the human embryo gives man the power to play God, and so the Government propose that God should be regulated by a statutory body. Who then will regulate that body? Currently the Medical Research Council monitors such research on a voluntary basis, without the benefit of a statutory watchdog. The work is carried out by at least one distinguished figure whose early claim to fame rested on experiments with live human foetuses, injected with steroids, which were then killed and dissected. The facts are contained in the medical literature. That is the kind of watchdog employed at present and it explains the anxiety expressed by my right hon. Friend the Member for Congleton (Mrs. Winterton) to my right hon. Friend the Minister for Health.

Is this the sort of policeman we can expect if experimentation is controlled by the new statutory body? Will it be directly answerable to Parliament? If not, who will ensure that that statutory body will authorise only ethical procedures? We are entitled to ask that question. Parliament is the only real safeguard against the abuse of power. The judges and the press play an important role, but this surely is a matter for Parliament—the buck stops here.

If the Government's first proposal becomes law, it will not prohibit in-vitro fertilisation. That would continue and I am in favour of that, but I cannot support much else in the White Paper. Ever since the Warnock report and the debates on the Unborn Children (Protection) Bill, which received so large a majority on Second Reading but was later frustrated by one means or another, we have been regaled with promises of cures for genetic diseases if Parliament would allow experiments on embryos to continue. I respect the views of the hon. Member for Barking, as she has been consistent over the years in hoping that Parliament will allow experimentation on the human embryo to continue. I am sorry to see the White Paper give so much credence to this point with little or no consideration of alternative methods of finding the same information. I would remind the House that no one in the scientific community supporting research has come up with any real evidence to support their claims that the human embryo will provide answers to genetic and congenital diseases, particularly not in respect of experimentation on the human embryo in the first 14 days.

The all-party pro-life group, of which I have the honour to be chairman, is advised by a distinguished group of scientists and doctors, including Professor John Marshall —a member of the Warnock committee and former president of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists — Sir John Dewhurst and Professor Erwin Chargaff who, in work on the cell in the late 1940s, discovered material that was crucial to Crick and Watson in formulating their model of DNA. The group is also advised by Professor Jerome Lejeune, one of the most distinguished geneticists in the world. Professor Lejeune's work on Down's syndrome is well known, and he has been working towards an amelioration of that disease without the use of the human embryo.

Our scientific and medical advisory committee has advised us that there is much potential for research involving gametes, ovum and sperm separately. On cures for infertility, we have been advised that there is much scope for research on the biochemistry of the reproductive system, as in-vitro fertilisation is applicable to a minority of cases of infertility and there is a great need for research to be directed to the majority. Research to enhance the future growth and development of a particular individual human embryo is also acceptable.

In evidence submitted to my right hon. Friend's Department, in response to its consultation paper, Dr. John McLean, the distinguished secretary of our scientific and medical advisory committee, outlined an alternative method to in-vitro fertilisation for the treatment of infertility. This method does not involve super-ovulation; it works with the natural reproductive cycle.

One of the papers submitted in response to the consultation paper by Professor Lejeune, professor of fundamental genetics at the Universite René Descartes in Paris, stated:

[Sir Bernard Braine]

"My prediction concerning effective research without the use of human embryos has been amply demonstrated by numerous investigators in several countries. Vitamin supplementation in early pregnancy has been shown to protect the embryo from neural tube defects in spina bifida. The new developments in molecular biology applied to cells taken from adult patients with cystic fibrosis, muscular dystrophy, Huntington's disease and retinoblastoma have also generated a much greater understanding of the genetic factors responsible for these diseases as well as their location within the human genome. In addition, there is now the possibility of treating and curing certain genetic blood diseases with bone marrow transplantation. None of these achievements have involved the use of human embryos."

At the end of his paper, he added:

"The proponents of the use of the human embryo as a guinea pig were mistaken when they put forward to the public this cruel suggestion: either you accept our philosophy that embryos may be used or else you condemn families affected by genetic diseases and you wash your hands of their sorrows . . . Medicine is not forced to choose between playing Herod and Pontius Pilate. There are possible lines of research in full accordance with medical norms and already they are being demonstrated as fruitful."

In short, those who share my view of this grave matter are not opposed to research, but we reject that which lessens human dignity and reduces the weakest and most vulnerable form of human life to the level of a laboratory rat. The House should know—I made a recent inquiry about this and my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet), who knows about scientific procedures, will no doubt bear me out—that, under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, an animal that is used for scientific investigation is granted more protection than we give to our own species. I am referring here to the aborted human foetus which is not protected by the Infant Life Preservation Act 1929. That is disgraceful.

It is about time that people faced fundamental facts. I believe that by proceeding in this way the Government are putting the cart before the horse. We want to know what sort of horse it will be. We want to know who will constitute it—who will be the front legs and who will be the back legs. We want to know which alternative of the two before them the Government will choose.

6.51 pm

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): The right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) will not be surprised to hear that I do not share his comments, save possibly on one point—that the Government could have been more positive on this matter. However, I suspect that the right hon. Gentleman and I want them to be positive in different ways.

I take up the right hon. Gentleman's point about the slow progress that has been made in overcoming genetic diseases. Yes, that progress is slow, but it is equally slow by the alternative methods that the right hon. Gentleman advocates. Both methods take time but I suspect that both are showing ways forward. We who favour research want to make sure that no stone is left unturned in overcoming the crippling disabilities which have been referred to.

I should like to pick up the right hon. Gentleman's point about IVF techniques. He stressed that he supports the continuing availability of those techniques. However, those techniques, as currently used, would not have been available if there had not been research. The clause that is one alternative — the restrictive alternative — in the White Paper could close the doors to research that could improve IVF techniques. Had it been on the statute book 20 years ago, who knows whether we would be in a position today to rejoice at some of the progress that has been made:

If and when the proposals in the White Paper become legislation, they will have a significant effect on many individuals and families. I thank the Minister for the way in which he presented the White Paper. I noticed his concluding remarks and the way in which he referred to using knowledge in a constructive and responsible manner. That should be the guideline as we seek our way forward.

I am mainly concerned with the implications of the White Paper for research, both in terms of improving the IVF technique to help women who desperately want children, and in terms of the prevention of congenital handicap. Such legislation can be very intrusive into the most sensitive areas of personal and family life and has a particular implication for women, who are often the most directly affected. In some areas, there may well be a case for new frameworks. However, if they are to be imposed by legislation, I suggest that it must be by general consent. That should be a guideline also.

I have a deep personal and family interest in this matter, from the point of view of research into congenital abnormalities and profound mental handicap. I want to concentrate on that aspect. Hon. Members may know that, as a family, we lost two boys arising from such a genetic condition. Alun was 13 when he died in December 1984, and Geraint was 12 when he died three months later. Their condition was the San Philippo type of mucopoly saccharide group of disorders. It caused profound mental and physical handicap and a short life expectation. It was necessary for both my wife and myself to be carriers, which we were, and as any other hon. Member may be but be unaware of that fact. Even then, when both of us were carriers, there was a 1:4 chance that the children would be affected. Unfortunately, of our two elder boys, two out of two were affected. Mercifully, our third and fourth children are not affected. Thankfully, the risk of their children being affected with the San Philippo condition is very small. However, whereas we are lucky other parents with children suffering other varieties of condition must suffer the terrible anguish of knowing that their children's children may be afflicted by profound handicap.

I give my personal background so that hon. Members can appreciate the background against which I speak, and the reasons for my passionate advocacy that research into such types of disability must not be prevented, as would be the case if the House refused to accept the Warnock report recommendations and passed into law the restrictive clause outlined in the White Paper. Such a decision would close the shutters on the faint ray of hope for many families suffering genetic disorders. It would be an act of callous and calculated brutality against thousands of parents and potential parents who have to travel through life with the enormous and depressing responsibility of knowing that their offspring may be afflicted by a crippling condition. Further, those children, even if they are not disabled, have to go through their early adult life with the same uncertainty in regard to their offspring.

The relevance of the White Paper for such families is that medical research is moving ahead rapidly and holds the key to the possibility of overcoming at least some forms of such genetic disorders. It is still early days, and

it would be wrong to say that there is a panacea round the corner. However, it is equally wrong to deny that for a number of conditions, such as the Lesch Nyhan, which occurs fairly rarely, and Duchene muscular dystrophy, which is more commonplace, there is not a glimmer of hope that the frontiers of medical science are moving forward.

Medical science now holds out the possibility, at the pre-embryo stage, of identifying the pre-embryos which carry faulty genes and implanting into the uterus only those pre-embryos which appear not to be carrying the congenital disorder. Those pre-embryos are, in fact, a cluster of identical cells a few days old. That state is before the cells begin to differentiate; before implantation; before the primitive streak appears; before it is known whether the pre-embryo is to become a single foetus or twins and before individual identity. In the ordinary processes of life, such pre-embryos may develop in several ways. The majority will not become embryos, but will form the placenta. Some may develop into a malignant tumour. Some may be lost in the menstrual cycle and some may develop to become embryos. However, those pre-embryos carry the genetic information that can help to identify potential congenital abnormality.

The technique now being developed involves the extraction of a few cells from the pre-embryo and their analysis by chromosome, gene-mapping and DNA identifying techniques to recognise possible genetic abnormalities. The technique has been shown to be effective in research on mice at the 8-cell stage. However, before using the technique on human beings, on a pre-embryo that is intended to be grown into a foetus and a baby, clearly careful research is needed on the human pre-embryo to make sure that we know what we are doing.

The restrictive alternative in the White Paper would prevent such research from being undertaken and close the door on avoiding profound abnormalities such as the Lesch Nyhan syndrome. That is the syndrome for which we appear to be nearest to developing diagnostic techniques. The disease is caused by a lack of enzyme production associated with the X chromosome. It is possible to establish whether an embryo is deficient by looking at a single cell. Children with the Lesch Nyhan syndrome are normal at birth, but deteriorate rapidly, becoming mentally handicapped and self-mutilating and do not usually live beyond the teenage years. There is an application with an ethical committee waiting for the go-ahead to diagnose the Lesch Nyhan disease in pre-embryos. The outcome of the work could be the key to certain forms of cerebral palsy that are genetic, although not all cerebral palsy is genetic.

Another important disease which depends on enzyme tests is the Tay Sachs disease, which causes babies to die within two years of birth. It should be possible to develop a similar single cell test to establish whether Tay Sachs disease is present in an embryo. Two other major diseases where similar advances are likely are Duchenne muscular dystrophy and cystic fibrosis. Cystic fibrosis is carried by one in 20 people and is therefore a particularly serious problem. Many babies with cystic fibrosis die in infancy.

At a recent joint meeting of the all-party group for children and the all-party disablement group in the House, we were told by Professor Robert Winston of Hammersmith hospital of a case of a woman with Duchenne muscular dystrophy who had seen her brother die at the age of 15 and had two nephews with the disease. She was determined not to have a child with Duchenne muscular dystrophy. She had two terminations of pregnancy and the stress on her and her husband caused her marriage to break up. She subsquently remarried and had three terminations. She decided that she could no longer try to have a child. However, if an embryo diagnosis were possible she would wish to try to establish a pregnancy using in-vitro fertilisation.

These techniques will enable couples, who would otherwise be too fearful of having a child suffering from a chronic disability, to have children. It will avoid abortions at a late stage — something which we must surely all agree is desirable. It is worth stressing the enormous strain which profound disability places on a family, particularly multiple profound disability. It leads to marriage break-ups and suicides, places tremendous strain on other siblings and has a massive financial, social and psychological effect on the family. I know this from my own personal experience.

People who are insensitive to such experience sometimes suggest that we who advocate such research to avoid profound disability somehow place a lesser value on disabled children. I find the suggestion deeply offensive. I hope that we loved our two boys as they were and for what they were. Our wish was not that Alun and Geraint had not been born but they could have been born without such heart-rending handicaps; that they could have lived full lives without suffering what they endured. After all, how many other hon. Members who have been lucky enough to have had normal children would have chosen for their children to be so severely handicapped?

The miracles of medical science now hold out the chance of a choice for families afflicted by profound genetic disorders. They may be able, very soon in some cases, to have a pre-embryo selected which is free from disability. Does the House in all seriousness believe that such a choice should be denied to them?

In earlier debates on the matter some hon. Members have opposed such research and have asserted that they are taking the Christian view on the issue. The implication is that those of us who support research are in some way unChristian. I find that allegation offensive, arrogant and ignorant. I quote from the Archbishop of York, to whom reference has been made, in a debate on this subject in another place, when he said:

"First, let me say that I believe research must continue if in vitro fertilisation is to continue. One cannot separate them, and I regard as totally unrealistic and indeed immoral any proposal to continue in vitro fertilisation without a proper backing in research.

This is for the simple and basic reason that imperfect techniques without a backing in research are bad practice medically and, I believe, wrong morally. There is a duty to patients to do the best which can be done, and any technique which involves the present traumas and uncertainties and wastage of embryos must be capable of improvement and therefore open to research."

He went on:

"I believe that in the very early stage when personal attributes are non-existent and when identity is yet to be established there is room to allow experiment. But it has to be hedged round by safeguards which make it publicly obvious that respect for our human origins is being properly observed. I see this as the tenor of the Government's proposals, including the tentative proposal to allow embryo research, and I hope that we shall see legislation along these lines in the very near future."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 15 January 1988; Vol. 492, c. 1461-63.]

[Mr. Dafydd Wigley]

I refer also to a comment from the Spastics Society—we heard a moment ago the comment from Mencap—of which I am the president in Wales:

"The Spastics Society has been concerned with the prevention of handicap and has promoted research and information to ensure that avoidable handicap is reduced. We would therefore be seriously concerned at any move which limited the possibility of detecting the causes of congenital handicap, or knowledge about factors leading to congenital disease . . . The Spastics Society would be appalled at any move which led to such vital and important work being stopped. The alternative if this happens is that many preventable handicap births will continue. The Spastics Society will always fight for a better quality of life and for the dignity of disabled people. But we also want to see all preventable forms of handicap avoided."

I believe that doctors have been blessed with an enormous talent which, if it can be carefully developed, can avoid the pain, anguish and suffering of many profound congenital handicaps. The choice posed by the White Paper is whether those talents should be allowed to develop under strict control to the benefit of thousands of families or whether those talents, as in the parable of the talents, should be buried in the ground. The decision is critical for many vulnerable families, and the House should ponder long and deep before closing the door on their glimmer of hope.

7.7 pm

Mr. Robert Rhodes James (Cambridge): It is a profound honour to follow the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley), just as it is a profound honour to be a Member of the same House of Commons as him. I remember several years ago—no doubt he does—a speech made on a Friday morning by our former colleague, Keith Wickenden, on the subject of Down's syndrome, related to one of his children who was afflicted with that disease. In a debate of such seriousness and high quality, I cannot speak in the same personal terms as the hon. Gentleman. In reference to the quality of the debate, I refer particularly to the speech of the Minister, which I felt met the objections and concerns of the House with remarkable sensitivity. I speak with humility. I emphasise that the fact that a considerable amount of pre-embryo and in-vitro fertilisation research is done in Cambridge does not affect my view of the matter, because I am not making a constituency speech; my reasons are more personal.

First, I am in favour of the general principle of research, particularly into such subjects. I do not see that there is much of a role for Parliament or the Government to stop research which is positive. Secondly, the research has created life and has brought hope to the one in 10 families who are infertile—and in many cases not only hope but realisation. A friend of my family has recently given birth to a healthy daughter, after years of infertility and frustration, entirely as a result of the research and IVF. They are inseparable. I must disagree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine), because they are inseparable.

Of the many letters that I have received, I shall quote one from a constituent, whose name I shall not give:

"When we first wrote to you in October 1986, we were a couple among many others in this country. Frustrated and extremely desperate, as the result of not being able to have children naturally.

In less than three months from now, we expect the birth of our first long awaited child whom we totally owe to those whose work is now being threatened . . ."

Pre-embryo research, which is carefully controlled and licensed, provides early indications of serious abnormalities, prevents miscarriages and avoids the need for late abortions. I am slightly puzzled by the illogicality of some hon. Members who support the Abortion (Amendment) Bill, but at the same time try to deny the research that will prevent the necessity for late abortions.

The Bill is strongly supported by organisations closely involved in these matters. In that regard, Mencap has been particularly mentioned. For some couples this research is a lifeline. At Bourn Hall, which is just outside my constituency, we have just celebrated the birth of the 1,000th baby to be born through IVF and this research. I should emphasise that we are talking about research for life.

Fewer than one in 10 IVF insertions are successful. Unless research continues, the possibility of misfortune and tragedy will continue. This research makes it possible to discover the causes of diseases such as cystic fibrosis, spina bifida and other genetic diseases that have hitherto baffled us and caused such misery.

I join the hon. Member for Caernarfon in imploring the House to give its support to this research. We are the world leaders in it. For the sake of future generations, why should we throw it away?

7.12 pm

Mr. Doug Henderson (Newcastle upon Tyne, North): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak so early in the debate. Many people in this country, like myself, doubt the need for any extensive or restrictive legislation. Whatever the nature of the legislation, it would be wrong to introduce it too quickly. I welcome the opportunity that is afforded by the publication of the White Paper to have a debate on the main issues involved in embryo research. These issues involve morality, and the appropriateness and practicalities involved.

Some people in this country—hon. Members will have been deluged with correspondence on this subject—argue that there is no moral justification, under any circumstances, for the premature termination by a scientist of the life of an embryo. They oppose all research that must inevitably lead to the disposal of an embryo by a scientist. I do not agree with that view, but I concede that there is an internal logic in it. If one takes that view, one cannot have option 1 in the White Paper, which has already been referred to.

I must say to the right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) that there is a contradiction in his position. If one takes the view that there should be no interference in the normal course of events with an embryo, one cannot have option 1. Option 1 would legalise procedures that are aimed at preparing the embryo for transfer to the uterus. As the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) said, if there had not been research in the past, it would not be possible today for thousands of couples to have the benefit of it. Option 1 is ridiculous, because it legitimises past research but outlaws current research. One cannot have one's cake and eat it.

Other arguments have been put forward by opponents to research that are less moralistic, and I think that they have less validity. One argument is that we should not have research because we cannot guarantee that there would be

any beneficial results. That is a ridiculous argument. Would those opponents hold the same view on research into AIDS, cancer, arthritis or any of the other terrible diseases that affect our society and for which there is no known cure at the moment?

Another argument advanced by those who fundamentally oppose research is that it would be better to have research into animals, and that the results can be just as good. That cannot be argued consistently. It is accepted medical opinion that there is a significant difference between species, and that sensible results cannot be obtained on how human cells might react when compared with those of animals.

I do not concede that the fundamentalists have all the moral arguments on their side. I would be the first to defend their right to a philosophical belief, and I am sure that the House would also want to defend that belief, but they must judge the value of their ideology against the potential value that can accrue to society from research. They must judge whether their straitjacketed ideological thinking should outweigh the potential to relieve the problem of infertility, which affects more than one in 10 couples of child-bearing age in this country. They should remember the anguish, loneliness and insecurity, the sense of inadequacy and the mental pain of childlessness. I know a little about that, because I was married for 12 years before we had a child.

The right hon. Member for Castle Point mentioned humanity. The human test of opinion on ideological purity is whether the right hon. Gentleman could square it with the anguish, soul-searching and sense of inadequacy of hundreds of thousands of couples not only in this country but worldwide.

Currently, IVF has only a 15 per cent. success rate. If opponents want to test their morality they should do so on the people who have suffered and on the small percentage who have been lucky enough to have the chance of treatment.

I am not making a party political point, but the chances of receiving that treatment depend on the part of the country in which one lives. The facilities in this country are completely inadequate. Even where that treatment is available, the success rate is only 15 per cent. Some people find it necessary to spend any additional resources on private facilities. I know of people who have had to sell their houses and cars, and sometimes change their job, just to be able to have the chance of having a child.

I challenge opponents outside and inside the House to spend time with those people who have suffered, to live their experience and then say that their moral position stands the test. Surely we have enough resources in one of the wealthiest countries of the world to make that provision. Surely we can make provision for all those who suffer and so badly need the treatment.

Those who oppose this must judge their ideological position against the case for embryo research to prevent genetic disease. I do not want to refer to that aspect in great detail, because the case was made clearly and with great compassion by the hon. Member for Caernarfon. I am sure that others will further the arguments on that point later. It would be a scandal and a condemnation of the lack of liberalism in this country if we prevented research when scientists were telling society that they were almost ready to develop treatment for people with single-gene defects to overcome the problems of cystic fibrosis and other diseases.

Having accepted the case for research in future, is there a case for regulation? On balance, I believe that there is. A body is required to review developments, to encourage the best practice and to consider the need for resources. This is a party political point. It galls me a little that we can apparently trust the City of London to self-regulate, but we cannot trust medical scientists to regulate their own affairs.

Having said that, I must concede certain aspects. I would certainly support the establishment of a licensing authority, although we must be clear in establishing the rules for it that we are not imposing the scientific priorities on medical researchers. It is Parliament's job to impose the financial rules, but scientists must use their intelligence, initiative and adaptability to investigate areas that they believe might be important.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): Surely we need to go further than that. We cannot say that we can completely trust the scientific community. I know that this is an extreme example, but surely no one would trust the scientific community in Nazi Germany.

Mr. Henderson: I accept my hon. Friend's point. Society must have some control over the actions of scientists.

One of the reasons why I am hesitant about the efficacy of a statutory body is that I am not sure that it would exercise proper control. I would rather see a legal requirement laid down by Parliament that scientists should notify Parliament about the purpose of research work. That would be the proper control and a way of ensuring that there was no abuse by the scientific community.

I agree with those who argue that at the moment the 14-day limit is acceptable. We know from the literature that an embryo has not been kept alive so far for more than eight or nine days. However, we must look to the future. Researchers such as R. E. Edwards of the physiological college at Cambridge have said that research into hereditary diseases cannot prove wholly useful and diseases cannot be detected until the 14th day. However, if scientists believed that it was possible to detect a disease on the 15th or 16th day, what view would Parliament take? We might have to face that question in the very near future. I would say that scientists must have the right to go beyond the 14-day limit, but I concede that there must be some regulation.

Miscarriages are a major problem which affects many women many times in their lives. Again, scientific evidence shows that examination into miscarriages cannot be conducted adequately this side of the 14-day limit. Scientists may say that the limit must be extended to 15 or 16 days and we may have to face that problem soon.

There are many reasons for supporting the need for research. The Medical Research Council, the British Medical Association, the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, the Warnock committee and many others have supported legitimising research on the embryo. Public opinion is also in favour. A Marplan poll in 1985 showed that 63 per cent. were in favour of research. However, I believe that a more telling poll was conducted by the Medical Research Council. It questioned 1,000 women attending a family planning clinic; 78 per cent. of them thought that research should be permitted on pre-embryos in an effort to prevent genetic disease and that women should be free to donate eggs for that purpose.

[Mr. Henderson]

All those authorities are good reasons for supporting research. However, I still believe that the best reasons for supporting research are to give life to babies who would otherwise not be born; to give a better life to babies who would otherwise have been physically and mentally handicapped; to give hope to and alleviate the pain and misery of the millions of childless couples; to assure the many women who suffer from miscarriages; and, finally and importantly, to give the extraordinary talent and diligence of our scientists and medical researchers the chance to help ordinary people.

7.26 pm

Sir Trevor Skeet (Bedfordshire, North): I am glad to have the opportunity to follow the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson). He asked whether we could trust our scientists. I would ask "Can we trust this House and the bureaucracy?"

I have read the Warnock report from cover to cover. When I looked at those people who had drawn up the report, I discovered that there was not a clergyman among them, even though this is a moral issue. Indeed, I read all the speeches in another place on 15 January and I found that only one clergyman spoke, the Archbishop of York.

Mr. Frank Field: Does the hon. Gentleman believe that perhaps morality is too important to be left to the clergy?

Sir Trevor Skeet: That is a very fair observation, but I hope that the hon. Gentleman will make his contribution later.

I want to consider where this whole matter will lead us. The prohibited areas are probably the most interesting. Ectogenesis involves maintaining the embryo in vitro for progressively longer periods. Why have a limit of 14 days? Why should it not be extended to 20, 30 or 40 days? The ultimate goal may be to produce a child entirely in vitro or to produce genetically identical individuals by cloning. In other words, the goal may be to mimic the natural process leading to selective breeding or the creation of human beings with predetermined characteristics. Those of us of my generation will recognise exactly what Hitler did and we remember his domination and his concept of the master race. One can see that coming, not in a lifetime but in two lifetimes. All those matters are hypothetical, but they may come about. As we are aware, we slide from one piece of legislation to another piece of primary legislation and so on.

I want to consider sex selection next. That is of benefit where it is learned that either of the couple is a carrier of a sex-linked hereditary disease, for example, haemophilia, or Duchenne muscular dystrophy. However, it may be detrimental if it is allowed to affect the ratio of males and females in society. It is of vital interest to Indians in my constituency who welcome the birth of sons, but it is disturbing for the role of women in our society.

I now want to consider trans-species investigations. We are all aware that in agriculture they have combined a sheep and a goat and a rather remarkable beast was formed. It would not take a great leap of imagination to imagine what might happen. Each cell has its DNA. It is possible through genetic engineering and manipulation of cells to remove or to splice in a link and that might have catastrophic consequences.

Lady Warnock puts her case this way: "We can stop our descent down the slippery slope at any point we wish, and the way to stop ourselves descending to unknown horrors is by legislation." But in many countries in the world there have been absolute monarchies or dictatorships, and we know what they have done with legislation in the course of time.

The White Paper, Cm. 259, at paragraph 27, says that we must have a system of mandatory licensing. That system, of course, would create a criminal offence. But I must ask the Minister how one can ever enforce a conviction to fortify the prohibition. There will be a problem of evidence. Most of the activities in breach of the law could be compiled clandestinely. Therefore, while one might get the respect of those who have respect for the law, those who thirst for knowledge, regardless of restraints, will work unceasingly for what they term their own aspirations.

We were advised by Lord Skelmersdale, the Leader of the Upper House on 15 January 1988, at column 1505, that the 14-day limit after fertilisation could be extended through primary legislation. Of course it could. I mentioned a moment ago that any length of time might be allowed. Once we get on that slope, the time can be extended further. On the other hand, a list of prohibitions that I have been talking about could be detailed. Paragraph 36 of the White Paper says:

"legislation should clearly prohibit all such activities, but with a power for Parliament itself, by affirmative resolution, to make exceptions to these prohibitions if new developments make that appropriate."

Everybody in the Chamber will know how often we have debated affirmative resolutions in a one-and-a-half-hour debate. This is a process of change by stealth. After a short debate such resolutions are sanctioned by the House. The ratchet turns only one way.

AID has grown in its operation without any official encouragement. Abuse of the Abortion Act 1967 has proceeded apace, regardless of the law. Euthanasia is practised to some extent throughout the United Kingdom.

I was very impressed by the minority report of Carrilene, Marshall and Walker. Their words impressed me:

"because embryos have the potential to become human persons neither the relief of infertility, nor the advancement of knowledge justifies their deliberate destruction."

The Select Committee of the Australian Senate has said that genetically new human life, organised as a distinct entity, is oriented towards future development. I will not quote Professor Thomas Torrance, nor Professor Lejeune, whose words were referred to by my right hon. Friend. He was denigrated by Professor Bobrow in a letter to *The Times* of 19 March 1985. I have looked at that letter. He said, finally, that research on very early post-fertilisation stages will be of medical value. He put it no higher and no lower than that. Later, he argued that, due to the parlous state of NHS finances, he doubted whether resources would be available to fund such research.

This is a solemn occasion. The dignity of man must remain inviolate. His status is degraded as soon as the legislature permits us to interfere, to man's detriment, with any part of his being, whether in the time of growth or synthesis. Infertility is a serious deprivation, but not fatal. It can cause no greater anguish than the lot of a very plain girl who fails to marry. It is ironic that the world may sympathise with infertility, but shows little interest in the plight of the latter. In abortion, as in experiments on

human embryos, allegedly for his benefit, scant regard is paid to the fate of man, who may already have begun his pilgrimage course towards birth.

I shall put a few points now to the Minister. I am naturally concerned, because I am perplexed in my own mind, that there are benefits here, of course, which we have noted, but where does this legislation take us? Will we be able to find out the course that is absolutely important to us?

The Medical Research Council has indicated that it is not possible to extrapolate the research results from experiments on animals into man. I accept that. It further claims that certain genetic abnormalities occur only in humans, as in cancers of the outer placenta and in cystic fibrosis.

I received a letter recently from the department of biochemistry and molecular genetics, St. Mary's hospital, which makes an important point. It says:

"Advances toward any of these objectives, particularly the latter two"—

and it indicates them—

"would require a very small number of early embryo experiments carefully regulated and only using material which would otherwise be discarded."

It continues:

"Animal experiments cannot suffice, since there is no animal model for cystic fibrosis."

Will the Minister give the House a complete list, when she winds up or perhaps at a later date if she cannot do so now, of the diseases that are likely to affect infertile people, apart from those such as cancers of the placenta and cystic fibrosis, which we are advised can be studied only in human pre-embryos? Will she tell the House whether the understanding of certain diseases can be enhanced, first, by the study of animals, and, secondly, by the study of adult patients, and, thirdly, by study of the sperm and ovum rather than the embryo? Fourthly is there any other method such as micro-surgery of the fallopian tubes that might be used? I have the following diseases in mind: Down's syndrome, or mongolism, Tay Sachs, muscular dystrophy in various forms, Huntington's chorea, Lesch Nyhan syndrome, Friedrich's ataxia, and brittle bone disease. These are some of the important diseases to research, and there are many more as well. If we could get to the true facts, research into human embryos could be limited to a very narrow field. This list could be included in the Bill, and added to if necessary by regulations.

Techniques cannot be disinvented. The work that has been achieved in the United Kingdom cannot be undone, and nobody would wish that to happen. The Medical Research Council has laboratories at Carshalton and there are others at Edinburgh, and at the Cromwell hospital in London. I understand that there are 15 research centres in the United Kingdom. There have been great achievements throughout British medicine and I pay tribute to the work that has been done. Having said all that, surely we in the House can see, down the labyrinth of years, the dangers to which we are exposed, and the dangers to which we are exposing the nation. While acknowledging the remarkable work that we have done, can we remove some of the hard edges beyond infertility? I ask the Minister to consider such questions carefully. I will be satisfied with the answers.

If I am the son of a mother who received AID, I am entitled to my name and I am entitled to know who my father is. The Minister said that a child would not be entitled to the name of his father and that therefore the child would have no link with his father. The child might have a passport but would have no link with identity. *[Interruption.]* The Minister said in his opening remarks that the child produced by AID would not be given the name of his father. The White Paper proposes that the name will not be disclosed. However, the Minister said that this might change. It might be wise to follow the policy in Sweden where the name is revealed. The child is entitled at the ages of 16 to 18 to know who his father was, what he was, what he did and everything about him in the same way as is obvious to the average individual.

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the policy of allowing children born by artificial insemination by donor to find out the name of the father is being reconsidered because the supply of sperm for donation has begun to dry up?

Sir Trevor Skeet: I would not have thought that there was any shortage of that material. I will not pursue the point. There are students everywhere; there are students at universities. I am talking about the basic right of the child; I am not putting any emphasis on the parent. The child has a right to know his identity. He has the right to know who his parents were. He has the right to know whether there was any moral problem in his line of descent.

I could say more but it would be unfair to other hon. Members who want to speak. I am not against AID provided it does not lead to destruction. Once a human is conceived, it is on the slow course which will lead it to birth. It is open to science to prevent it, but in that case we are all culpable for the result which follows.

7.42 pm

Mr. Ronnie Fearn (Southport): The White Paper is only a framework, but its drafting can be commended. Although the Warnock report was a study into which a great deal of work and research went, not all of us agreed with all its findings. Therefore, I am pleased that the White Paper is a significant improvement on the original report. The wide consultations with many organisations provided significant ground work for further consultation. I believe that almost 200 detailed responses were received.

The great support for the Unborn Children (Protection) Bill had a significant effect upon opinion. I trust that the statutory licensing authority will keep all the representations in mind when it makes decisions. The body will be completely independent in its decisions. I am glad that half of its members will be lay persons. I hope that there will be one member from the nursing profession and perhaps one from the Royal College of Midwives. The Minister should consider the composition carefully.

Research is the key word in the White Paper. One's views of research are personal. The recommendations which permit research and those which prohibit research will allow embryo experimentation to take place. Research is essential, but opinion on whether embryonic research is necessary is divided.

Professor Martin Bowbrow, professor of paediatric research at Guy's hospital medical school, believes that human research of this type is essential in the search for a cure for Down's syndrome and other chromosonal defects, including muscular dystrophy, cystic fibrosis and haemophilia, because cures are unlikely to be found purely through animal research. This is disputed forcibly.

[Mr. Ronnie Fearn]

One of the world's leading geneticists, Professor Jerome Lejeune, who discovered the cause of Down's syndrome, and Mr. Rex Brinkworth, the founder of the Down's Children's Association, have both categorically denied that the use of human embryos is necessary for research into genetic disorders. They maintain that there is no genetic information which could not be provided by a study of adult patients. Researchers who do not use the human embryo have achieved major breakthroughs in understanding and tackling cystic fibrosis, muscular dystrophy and Huntington's disease, using the techniques of molecular biology. There has been great progress in the treatment of genetic blood disease through bone marrow transplants and of spina bifida through vitamin supplementation for pregnant mothers.

The word "pre-embryo" is bandied about, but I maintain that there is no such being. Let us just talk about the embryo. Is the embryo a child? This is perhaps the most difficult question of all and one on which any decision will probably be based. The Warnock committee wants a ban on research after 14 days because that coincides with the feature known as the primitive streak, which is described in the report as

"the heaping-up of cells at one end of the embryonic disc on the fourteenth or fifteenth day after fertilisation. Two primitive streaks may form in a single embryonic disc. This is the latest stage at which identical twins can occur. The primitive streak is the first of several identifiable features which develop in and from the embryonic disc".

Those who say that it is not a child point out that the early embryo is a mass of cells, nearly all of which are destined during normal development to form part of the afterbirth. It is morally defensible to give absolute legal protection to this early embryo. From the moment of conception the embryo is a genetically unique, living, individual human being. At conception everything about the new human is established—the colour of hair and eyes, the sex, the eventual height and the complete genetic make-up of the individual with all his or her gifts and talents. At conception the human embryo simply has to grow and develop, as at any other stage of life.

I will quote what the Royal College of Nursing has said about experimentation on human embryos:

"We have little to add to the debate surrounding this issue. Our own view, and the view of the college, is that experimentation on human embryos is unacceptable save for therapeutic purposes which directly benefit the embryo. As practitioners whose daily work is taken up with close personal contact with prospective parents and real live children, we cannot but view embryos as something special."

The White Paper has another flaw in that there appears to be a lack of training initiative. Persons working in gynaecology, family planning and genetic counselling may be involved in limited assessment and follow-up work. One problem that seems to be identified is the lack of training for those undertaking this counselling of parents and the resultant supportive role. The Royal College of Nursing has said that as long as counselling is seen as a secondary objective it believes that the client is receiving an inferior service. It would therefore welcome comments on the need for properly organised counselling services for couples receiving infertility services, with adequate preparation of staff and regulation of the service in terms of resourcing and recording of information.

In closing, because I know that other hon. Members want to speak, I quote what my hon. Friend the Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) said in the debate on the Unborn Children (Protection) Bill. He echoed my sentiments when he said:

"We should get away from and dispense with the charges and counter-charges about motive and who has what reason for taking which point of view.

It is not part of my case in favour of the Bill to question the motives of the scientists and doctors who carry out work in the disciplines which may be in some way restricted by the Bill, some of whom approve of the Bill and others of whom are opposed to it. Their motive is the advancement of humanity and the advancement of knowledge, and they pursue those objectives with a determination and single-mindedness which from time to time inevitably brings them up against the test of what the law should tolerate and where the boundaries should be drawn. But I do not question or challenge the motives of their work, for which I have the highest regard.

It does not follow from saying that everything which anyone working in any of these fields might feel should be done should be sanctioned. Our experience over the years is that there will always come a point where the researcher wants to do something which society thinks should not be done, and the argument is about where those boundary lines should fall."—[*Official Report*, 15 February 1985; Vol. 73, c. 693.]

The human embryo is my boundary line, and I will not cross it, although I respect the views of others in this Chamber. I am interested to hear the information that is coming out in the debate tonight.

7.52 pm

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): I am sure that all hon. Members will have been deeply moved by the speeches of those hon. Members who have had personal experience of the tragedies of infertility and genetic handicap. It is worth remembering that it is estimated that each one of us carries on average six defective genes in our make-up, and it is purely a matter of chance whether our partner has the same genes so that we carry the risk of passing on this handicap in the form of a child who is born with a dreadful disorder.

The most common of these handicaps is cystic fibrosis and one in 20 of the population carries this gene. I take the strongest exception to the remark made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) that cystic fibrosis research does not require the use of human embryos. I have had a letter today from Professor Williamson of St. Mary's hospital, who is leading the team in this country which is doing the most work in this respect, and he confirms that every member of his team accepts that human embryo research is necessary for that work.

I should like to start by congratulating the Government on bringing forward this challenging White Paper with a view to legislation on these issues, it is hoped, later this year. As my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Mr. Rhodes James) has said, there is no doubt that we in this country are leading the world in this science. As we heard from the Minister, it is now 10 years since the birth of Louise Brown, the world's first test-tube baby. Since then, well over 1,000 IVF babies—I believe nearly 2,000 now—have been born in this country, and worldwide the total is now over 4,000. So approximately one third of all the IVF babies in the world have been born in this country.

I think it is worth asking why this country is in the lead in this pioneering work. I believe that it is because we not only have outstanding medical skills but also the rarest of all virtues—British common sense—so that we can come to terms with the ethical, moral and social implications of these new developments.

The report of Baroness Warnock's committee has been admired by people all over the world who look to this country to establish a legal framework in which our doctors and scientists can continue to do this work while society as a whole can be assured of both the continuing benefits of this work and the establishment of strict controls to regulate future research.

The Medical Research Council and the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists are to be congratulated on setting up the Voluntary Licensing Authority in 1985, which has an excellent lay chairman in Dame Mary Donaldson and a committee with a balance of lay and medical members. There is no such body in any other country, and it sets the basis for establishing a statutory licensing authority, as recommended by Baroness Warnock in her report.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has commended the work of the Voluntary Licensing Authority and I would remind Members of her reply to me on 24 April 1986, when she said:

"I noted that the authority's first report had been published, and I hope that it will be widely studied, because the organisation's work is excellent."—[*Official Report*, 24 April 1986; Vol. 96, c. 422.]

One can hardly approve of the work of the Voluntary Licensing Authority if one does not approve of the research that it carries out.

However, some sections of the public have expressed their reservations about these new developments, with massive petitions and letters to Members of the House. Some of our religious leaders have found it difficult to come to terms with these new dilemmas. The Church of England Synod voted narrowly in favour of continuing research, but the Catholic Church, with some notable dissenters, has been opposed. I was much heartened by the speeches in the other House, where I think there was a balance of 17 speakers in favour of research against four who did not want it, and particularly by the speech of the Archbishop of York, which has already been referred to. He gave a lead to those who look for the religious argument in favour of research.

The Catholic Father John Mahoney, first president of the Catholic Theological Association, has put the divided views of the Catholic Church excellently in his book "Bioethics and Belief".

The House has recently had a passionate debate on abortion, and the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) pointed out to us all the dilemma of late abortions. IVF research holds out the promise of fewer abortions through the possible new technique of pre-implantation diagnosis for couples who are at risk of carrying genetic disorders, as well as of improved contraception, which in itself would reduce the number of abortions.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point referred to Professor Lejeune. I would remind him that 95 per cent. of the experts in this area in this country would endorse the statement made by Professor Bobrow of Guy's hospital:

"Sadly, Professor Lejeune has, over recent years, become an isolated figure in the world of human genetics."

Professor Bobrow said that the letter which he wrote to *The Times* was signed by eight senior colleagues, and that the editor of *The Times* limited the signatories to that number, as otherwise the massive preponderance of his profession would have signed the letter.

One of the most moving experiences of my life was a meeting held here last month in the Grand Committee Room for parents of handicapped children, when mother after mother expressed her fear of giving birth to another child carrying dreadful inherited disorders. At present the only option, if any, is late termination of affected foetuses, with all the attendant stress. Who here would deny them this new pre-implantation diagnosis possibility and hence the opportunity of carrying a healthy child without the fear of a late abortion?

The former right hon. Member for South Down, Mr. Enoch Powell, spoke about the dignity of man, but where is this dignity for the many hundreds of severely handicapped children in institutions and psychiatric wards whose parents cannot cope? Must we deny research that could reduce the incidence of severe congenital handicap?

I speak also for that other silent minority, the one in 10 couples who have difficulty in becoming parents. Those of us fortunate enough to have children should not be so selfish as to deny to others, usually too embarrassed and unhappy to speak out for themselves, the right to found a family. Is this not one of the fundamental rights in the European convention? It certainly is in the United Nations body of rights declarations in 1968, article 16 of which states:

"Parents have a basic human right to determine freely and responsibly the number and spacing of their children."

If people suffering from infertility have a right to IVF treatment, how can we deny them the benefits of research to improve this technique, for, however beneficial, it is still in an early stage of development?

The Voluntary Licensing Authority has given me these figures for the United Kingdom in 1985 — the latest available figures, because gestation takes nine months. The number of patients treated in 1985 was 3,717. The number of treatment cycles in 1985 was 4,308—because some patients had more than one treatment. The number of clinical pregnancies arising from those treatments was 481, and the number of live births was 364. That is a success rate of only 8·5 per cent. for each treatment cycle. Surely that is evidence of the need to improve the efficiency of this technique.

To outlaw that research would not stop it—it would drive it abroad. It would be no solution to the ethical problems posed, because surely we in Britain would want to benefit from any advances. It is far better to give the Voluntary Licensing Authority legal backing and sanctioning power so that the public know that research is properly conducted, monitored and controlled.

The VLA has shown that limits can be agreed and adhered to without the danger of the "slippery slope" that concerns many people. I would remind hon. Members that no embryo has been kept alive beyond nine days of development, and that the fourteenth day indicates a point at which the embryo cannot exist without attachment to the mother's womb. Before the fourteenth day, many contraceptives, such as the IUD coil, prevent the embryo from implanting and so it is lost. Are we questioning the morality of those commonly-used methods?

The pre-14-day embryo has the potential to divide and form twins, and also to join together again to form only a single individual. That phenomenon shows the absurdity of trying to give the status of a human individual to a pre-14-day embryo.

Perhaps later this year hon. Members will have the novel opportunity to choose, on a free vote, between two

[Mr. Peter Thurnham]

clauses, one forbidding research and one allowing research, subject to the regulations of the statutory licensing authority. I hope that hon. Members will bear in mind the benefits of research within strict guidelines, and decide to vote in favour of the Government's proposal for a statutory licensing authority, and allow that authority the freedom to decide the criteria for embryo research within the balance of overriding limits laid down by Parliament.

8.1 pm

Mrs. Rosie Barnes (Greenwich): The main suggestions in the White Paper seem eminently sensible and clearly command a broad level of support. In my opinion, an independent statutory licensing authority is the right body to make those sensitive decisions. It is not an area for direct Government intervention, but more than professional self-regulation is needed.

We have not discussed the controls over surrogacy that are referred to in the White Paper, but again the balance is right. It proposes the sensible and compassionate withdrawal of any facility for any party to take another to law over money that may have changed hands. However, it pays due regard to any child who may be born in that way. The White Paper contains no Government sanction. The suggested regulations about the storage of gametes and embryos again hold the right balance.

I shall concentrate my remarks on research on embryos. That clearly is the most heated point of the debate. I speak with some humility, having listened to the speeches of those hon. Members who spoke from personal experience. I was extremely moved and convinced by what they said. In many ways, they made their case completely.

What are the reasons for such research? It is not a question of scientists getting carried away by their ability to research cloning and the fanciful subjects which seem to have stolen the headlines in the debate, but which are irrelevant to what happens in clinics that do such invaluable work to solve the problems of infertility.

We have heard today that one in 10 couples face the problem of infertility. Having gone for treatment, fewer than one in 10 couples go home with babies in their arms. The problem is huge. It is a problem which those of us who are lucky enough to have children will never experience, but we can imagine the inadequacy and emptiness of life when children are very much wanted and are not forthcoming. Who are we to deny those people something that comes so easily to so many of us?

Without a certain amount of research, even those one in 10 mothers would not be taking home their babies. There would be no babies as a result of in-vitro fertilisation if there had been no research. It is impossible to separate the two. Without further pre-embryo research, the success rate in helping infertile couples can be increased only by a greater number of re-implantations, thereby risking multiple pregnancies, miscarriages, premature delivery and infant mortality.

Pre-embryo replacement must not be done on a random basis, but only where there is a clear family history of genetic disease. The opportunities that modern science provides to detect those pre-embryos which carry disorders must and should be screened out. Pre-embryo research is the crux of the matter. It helps infertile couples and helps to eliminate genetic disorders.

Yesterday, I went to a fertility clinic to look at a pre-embryo. There has been so much talk about experimentation on embryos following the debate on abortion that there is a public misconception that we are discussing experimentation on microscopic babies. It may sound silly to say it in the House, where hon. Members are so well informed, but in the country there is such an illusion.

We are talking about a small cluster of cells no bigger than a pinhead, which cannot be seen by the naked eye. For up to 14 days following fertilisation, pre-embryos exist with no nervous system and no recognisable foetal characteristics. Indeed, 90 per cent. of the cells formed in that way go on to form the placenta and not the embryo itself.

After fertilisation under normal circumstances, most of those pre-embryos fail to attach themselves to the wall of the uterus and are lost as part of the next menstrual cycle. The hon. Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) has already said that forms of contraception such as the coil prevent the pre-embryo from attaching to the side of the uterus and developing into embryos.

There has been much discussion about the nature of life and when life starts. We must be realistic about it. We must recognise that it does not start with an instantaneous, star-studded explosion. Fertilisation is a continuous process taking up to 24 hours and ends when the fertilised egg begins to divide.

If we allow our scientists and medical advisers to continue with careful and strictly controlled research, it will be possible to screen out genetic disorders, not only to stop one child carrying those disorders but eventually to screen out those disorders altogether from our population. It can be done.

In most instances, the chromosomes — the genetic make-up of a potential future embryo—are identifiable in that pre-embryo cell. It is simply a matter of removing one cell from an embryo, freezing the embryo, which may be only four or eight cells—they do not increase one at a time, they double — removing one cell and checking for genetic disorders. If that disorder is present, the pre-embryo will be allowed to perish naturally. If it is healthy, it can be implanted in the mother's uterus. We have heard today, only too convincingly, about the tragedy that can befall not only the children concerned, but their families, when such genetic disorders are allowed to continue while we have the means to prevent them.

Pre-embryo research will also help to establish the causes of infertility, and to tackle the problems of contraception. I have lived through an era in which we thought that we had the contraception problem cracked. In the sixties, the pill appeared. Everyone thought that was fine, and we could forget about the problem. As time has gone on, however, we have heard about risk after risk attached to different forms of contraception. Clearly we do not have the answer. There is a great deal of work to be done, and embryo research can add considerably to our knowledge.

Research must, of course, be carefully controlled. No one is advocating a completely free rein for scientists to become involved in work that is not possible, and not likely in the foreseeable future. We must, however, be clear as a Parliament that we cannot endorse some of the more fanciful elements of pre-embryo research. Continuing embryo research must be very strictly controlled. However, in my view, the benefit to mankind far

outweighs any disadvantage. While it has become clear that research of this kind cannot be performed on animals, I emphasise that it is being performed not on microscopic babies, but on human material which is not an inherent human being.

Let me add a specific point to what I have made the main thrust of my argument: the need to allow research to continue. That is my anxiety about children who are the offspring of artificial insemination by donor being allowed to know their natural fathers. We have already heard that, in Sweden, the number of people coming forward to donate sperm for this cause has plummeted as a result of such a measure. Most young men would be very reluctant to indulge in such an exercise in the knowledge that, in 20 or 30 years, someone could knock on their door and say, "Hallo, Dad." That is a frightening prospect. However, more mature men have come forward, who may have had experience of infertility themselves, and may know the problem. Perhaps that is no bad thing, but the number of couples seeking such help has declined. There is evidence that some of them may be going abroad to seek help, where they will avoid the problem of a possible future revelation for the child which may be to the detriment of the whole family.

Most children know their true father only by courtesy of their mother. There is considerable evidence that up to 20 per cent. of children could not be the natural offspring of the person they have been brought up to think of as their father. We are giving those children rights that the rest of the population do not have.

We must allow controlled research. There must be regulations on this vital matter, but we must also recognise that what can be achieved will alleviate human misery substantially. For us to turn our backs on that potential achievement would surely be very wrong.

8.14 pm

Dr. Charles Goodson-Wickes (Wimbledon): Less than a fortnight ago, we debated another issue that centred on moral and medical issues. The hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) presented a Bill that caused much heart-searching on both sides of the House, and I would be very surprised if similar reactions did not occur this evening.

The issues of abortion and in-vitro fertilisation are clearly, to an extent, related. Many of us opposed the Abortion (Amendment) Bill on the basis of our scientific knowledge. I, for one, could not reconcile an 18-week gestation period with the knowledge that, even with today's highly sophisticated medical techniques, no baby born before 24 weeks' gestation had survived.

I very much doubt whether legislation should pre-empt medical advances to the extent that mothers carrying undetected abnormal foetuses should be denied abortions. The House may find it significant that the three practising medical men elected to the House last year—the hon. Members for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith) and for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie), and myself—all voted against the Abortion (Amendment) Bill. I trust that those hon. Members who voted for a period of 18 weeks on the understanding that it would subsequently be amended to 24 weeks—a date that I would endorse—will not be disillusioned.

If we believe, as do so many Roman Catholics and, indeed, Christians of all denominations, that life begins at conception, the whole principle of IVF is presumably unacceptable. I understand the pure logic of their argument, and I admire the consistency of deeply held views. However, from my previous remarks, the House will understand that I cannot, as a physician, accept them. I understand that the new technique of gamete intra-fallopian transfer—referred to by the acronym GIFT—may overcome theological arguments, in that ova and sperm are introduced into the fallopian tubes, where fertilisation usually takes place, as opposed to the uterus, separated by a pocket of air.

For me, the overriding issue in both the Abortion (Amendment) Bill and the subject of tonight's debate—other than the mother's well-being—is her opportunity to decide whether to bear children with varying degrees of handicap, within the context of the whole family. Surely it cannot but lead to fewer abortions if abnormalities can be detected not in the 18th, 24th or 28th week, but in the first 14 days. At this stage, the term "pre-embryo" is utterly appropriate — before cell differentiation has occurred, and before any neurological tissue has been laid down. We should never forget that the cells in the pre-embryo, roughly the size of the point of a pin, can develop either into the embryo itself or into the placenta.

Apart from the avoidance of congenital defects such as Down's syndrome, muscular dystrophy, Huntington's chorea and cystic fibrosis—I shall spare the House a litany of diagnoses—which are just a few of about 50 serious genetic abnormalities which affect 15,000 babies annually, I cannot see that the techniques of IVF should be denied in efforts to produce normal children for previously infertile couples. Much happiness has been brought to childless marriages, and the pleasure of knowing that their own genes have produced the baby enhances the parents' joy. That does not apply to the practice of artificial insemination by donor, about which I have many reservations. How much more desirable is pre-embryo diagnosis, as opposed to late abortions, which I suspect no hon. Member views without the deepest concern.

In-vitro fertilisation is a technique developed in Great Britain after 20 or more years of research. Parallel research in the United States was held back owing to antagonistic state legislation, which may be a lesson in itself. In contrast, Australia has taken the lead unencumbered by overbearing legislation and assisted by ample funds.

The success rate of implantation in Britain 10 years ago was about 1·5 per cent. It has now risen to around 25 per cent. However, the "take-home baby rate", which, Madam Deputy Speaker, I am sure you will agree is an inelegant phrase, is only 8 to 9 per cent.—in other words, less than one in 10 succeed. That is a disappointing figure. A plateau has now been reached, but I am led to believe by my medical colleagues that a major breakthrough is likely in the next five to 10 years if two conditions are satisfied —first, that legislation does not stand in the way, and, secondly, that adequate funds are available.

This week I visited an IVF unit in London—I was glad to see the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mrs. Barnes) following in my footsteps — which has the unique distinction of being a joint project between the National Health Service—at Barts—and the private sector. Some hon. Members know of my keenness to encourage such co-operation and this is an excellent example. Of the other 36 units, one third are in the NHS, one third in the private sector and one third are attached to academic institutions.

[Dr. Charles Goodson-Wickes]

The Voluntary Licensing Authority, set up on the initiative of the Medical Research Council and the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, has done admirable work, under the chairmanship of Dame Mary Donaldson, in regulating the work done in this area and has worked closely with local ethical committees. It has licensed 25 units and another 12 are under assessment.

It is no reflection on the VLA that I now support the setting up of a statutory licensing authority with advisory and executive powers, in cases of prima facie unethical practices. It should consist of professional and lay members, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said in his introductory remarks.

I would go further than the Warnock report in proposing the inclusion of a religious leader of any faith. That representative need not necessarily be ordained. For example, a doctor who has been a lay preacher might be an admirable choice. Indeed, such a person might find more favour in the House than the sociologist suggested by the hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson).

I fully support the introduction of a new criminal offence, backed up by severe penalties, for the unauthorised use of embryos, trans-species fertilisation and genetic manipulation. The sale of embryos should in no circumstances be tolerated.

Above all, I urge the House to keep the whole issue in proportion, untainted by exaggerated and emotive propaganda. Assisted reproduction, necessarily dependent on successful and integrated research, is already of vast benefit to those 10 per cent. of couples who are infertile. We want to see more than the 2,000 healthy babies already born in this country by that means.

In conclusion, assisted reproduction is an important, worthy and humane venture and our responsible medical profession would not hazard the technique's great potential by abusing ethical standards in its country of origin. The case is compelling and I trust that the House will not stand in the way of further properly supervised research.

8.24 pm

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): I am glad to follow the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mrs. Barnes) and my hon. Friend the Member for Wimbledon (Dr. Goodson-Wickes) because, in their own respective ways, they summarised clearly the position that I generally oppose.

We have had what on any account has been a good-tempered and well-balanced debate, and an enormous amount of time has been given to White Papers, to the Unborn Children (Protection) Bill which was introduced by Mr. Enoch Powell — I was a member of the Committee which considered it—and to discussions in the media over the past four years or so.

I gave evidence indirectly to the Warnock committee, and I have been involved with this subject for about six years now. I have done my best to grapple with the difficult problems that it represents, but I find the issue extremely difficult. I have a clear idea of what I think should be done, but at the same time I have to acknowledge—in the hope that I am a compassionate person and also aware of the grave concern of those people who are infertile or who suffer from potential genetic defects—that there is a serious problem that we must address.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Mr. Rhodes James) asked whether we should sacrifice this research for the sake of future generations. The issue that has concerned me in particular has been whether we might be sacrificing future generations for the purposes of research. I say that seriously and gravely, because major questions relating to potential political control lie at the root of this important subject.

Some years ago, in the debate on the Warnock report, I said that I thought that the matter should be referred to a Select Committee. I also said that if a private Member's Bill were to be introduced, there was a strong case for such a Bill being referred to a Special Standing Committee. I add as a rider to that that we could ad hoc change our Standing Orders to enable the usual three days allowed for a Special Standing Committee to be extended to, say, 10 days.

I had many discussions with Senator Brian Harradine of the Australian Parliament. As a result of his efforts, a Select Committee was set up in Australia. I kept in touch with him throughout the whole of its proceedings, and I have the volumes of evidence that were given to it which anybody could fairly say represents an enormous amount of work. If we were to have a Special Standing Committee to consider the crucial questions which arise from the White Paper, its members would have the opportunity to look at the evidence that had already been provided in Australia, sieve it, and come up with an interesting and important contribution. That Committee could cross-examine the experts concerned who so far have not been subjected to sceptical, or even cynical, cross-examination, which it is our job to provide.

I have heard much talk from hon. Members who take an opposite view to me about the relative unimportance of the pre-embryo. The Australian Select Committee considered voluminous evidence, carefully and seriously, in a balanced way and came to a number of important conclusions. After the most thorough inquiry into the status of the human embryo undertaken by any Government body anywhere, the Committee found:

"1. that the human embryo from conception is 'a genetically new human life organised as a distinct entity oriented towards further development' . . .

2. that the embryo's orientation to 'further development as a biologically individuated member of the human species' commands such respect as to preclude destructive non-therapeutic experimentation on it.

3. That any 'marker' or distinction between embryos, such as 'pre-embryo', 'pre-embryonic disc', 'pre-conscious' or 'spare' which purports to distinguish between embryos which are entitled to such respect and ones which are not is arbitrary, ethically unsound and impractical . . .; and

4. that 'prudence' dictates that, until"—

I would say "unless"—

"the contrary is demonstrated 'beyond reasonable doubt . . . the embryo should be regarded as if it were a human subject for the purposes of biomedical ethics . . .".

There is much more in that report.

The importance of this subject was borne out by my visit to the United Nations some years ago with my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security. I am glad to see that she is in her place, as she may recall the discussions that took place in the Population Control Committee room. I raised the question of eugenics, which lies at the centre of gravity of the problem. I had been referred to a book called "Human Fertility — Health and Food." I remember that book vividly. In effect, it said, "There are a lot of nuts running

round the world. There is absolutely nothing for anyone to worry about. The research will be undertaken anyway and we will package them up and dispatch them." The evidence that I have accumulated since then proves beyond reasonable doubt that we need to consider positive eugenics very seriously. I would recommend all hon. Members to read a book by Dr. Glover, a distinguished philosopher and fellow of New college, Oxford. It is called "What sort of people should there be?" It is not a joke book. It describes analytically, calmly and unhysterically genetic supermarkets, positive eugenics and related matters. We know of the works of Mr. Muller writing in America in the 1930s and we have evidence of the way in which the Germans behaved in the pre-war period and during the war. Anyone who does not believe that it is possible for this research to be turned to evil purposes is under a grave illusion.

That brings me to my next question. Would the proposed Bill ban all research, as many have thought? I hope that my right hon. Friend the Minister for Health will forgive me if I misquote him, but I think that he said that it would ban all research. Writing in *The Independent* of 14 December, Tom Wilkie said that one of the options to be considered was

"whether research should be banned altogether."

If one examines the White Paper and, as it were, translates it into a Bill — I have no doubt that parliamentary counsel will be doing that with the next Session in view — one finds that research is not as prohibited as we had thought, or perhaps hoped. I shall not go into all the technicalities, but paragraph 30, relating to the alternative draft clauses, says:

"It will be a criminal offence to carry out any procedures on a human embryo other than those aimed at"

a number of purposes, and there is a similar draft dealing with the question of permitting research.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mrs. Edwina Currie): The White Paper makes it clear that it will be for the House to decide whether research should be permitted. The present proposal is to offer the House alternative clauses, one which would permit research and one which would not. It would be for the House to decide on a free vote.

Mr. Cash: Of course, that question will be implicit in the Second Reading debate and it will be decided then. But when we have got past that point and the scope and long title of the Bill have been conceded on Second Reading, we have to ask: what degree of research will be allowed? My hon. Friend the Minister will agree with me on that point.

I shall now deal with the question of extending the activities—or reducing the prohibition—by regulation. Effectively, that would be done by means of affirmative resolution and the so-called Henry VIII clause. For those hon. Members who do not know what that means, it means that the Act can be amended by subsequent statutory instruments subject to the affirmative procedure. The problem is that if that technique is employed, we are on the slippery slope — the phrase used by my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) in his telling speech and I believe by me in the debate on the Warnock report in 1984. I am bound to ask whether we are entitled to examine the relationship between the benefits on the one hand — I concede those benefits, because I have compassion for those affected — and grave political dangers on the other.

I shall come to my point on that straight away. I see that another distinguished Minister, the Minister for Local Government, is in the Chamber. When he was at the Department of Trade and Industry, I think I asked him whether we should have international treaties to deal with these matters. It is not just a question of what we do in this House; we may significantly affect what goes on elsewhere, just as the Australians may significantly affect what we do. That is the way that the world goes round these days. We live in a small global village. We could possibly work through the EEC. I believe that these matters would fall within the provisions of the treaty reserving our right to determine matters of public health. If that is so, we should be able to sustain the veto if we had to do so while negotiating in that context, or unilaterally, with other countries.

The implications for the world as a whole are serious enough for us to consider that. I say that because there is now much evidence of the dimensions of the problem. An article in the *Spectator* of 29 August 1987, referring to the physiology and genetics research station at Roslin just outside Edinburgh, says:

"They have plans to try to transfer a copy of a gene taken from a human being — the one responsible for the production of an essential ingredient of blood plasma—into sheep. They are using human tissue."

The author of the article refers to it as being a "scary subject", and says:

"The need to spend money has its own momentum and few human beings need a purpose beyond insane curiosity to meddle with nature."

I got 150 signatures for my early-day motion on trans-species fertilisation. *The Daily Telegraph* subsequently reported the creation of an ape-man hybrid in Florence. These are not scare stories. They are questions of great importance and we need to take them into account in determining how to deliberate on this matter. There are some well-intentioned people who want to produce helpful research for other people, but there are nevertheless significant problems which Parliament needs to contain and control.

I wonder, therefore, whether it would be sensible to impose a 10-year limit on the Bill on the assumption that we are dealing with experimentation and that many of the proposals may be overtaken by events. Those who take the opposite view to mine may well find that the Abortion Act 1967 had a time limit imposed on it. It may have been another Act. It does not matter which one of those seminal pieces of legislation had a time limit imposed on it, which was subsequently erased by resolution of the House, but the important part is that a time limit was imposed. It would be useful to consider that.

It might also be helpful for a Sub-Committee of the Social Services Select Committee to be given the specific task to monitor, within Parliament, the activities of the SLA. I believe that Congress follows that practice. I am concerned about what the word "therapeutic" means. I am speaking almost in shorthand because I am aware that other hon. Members wish to speak, and I apologise if I have taken too long.

At the end of the day, we must consider this subject from the point of view of the child—not children. We

[Mr. Cash]

have to make our first priority the preservation of life, not its destruction. This subject is too important for us to play games with it.

8.40 pm

Mr. John Hannam (Exeter): This has been a quiet, well-informed debate. Anyone who listened to the moving speech of the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) detailing the tragedies within his family and also listened to the opposing but probing speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) will appreciate the careful approach that has been adopted by my right hon. Friend the Minister who has tried to find the right path for this delicate subject.

I have consistently supported measures to restrict unlimited abortion and other campaigns for the protection of the unborn child. Therefore, it may be rather surprising that I now wish to speak in support of research on pre-embryos. However, in common with my hon. Friends the Members for Cambridge (Mr. Rhodes James) and for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham), I see no contradiction in adopting that position. Obviously, if we can remove the flawed cell at the beginning we shall remove the need for an abortion at a later stage. If, as a result of research, contraception methods are improved we also remove the need for abortion at a later stage.

Hon. Members will be aware that I am deeply involved in working with and for handicapped people. For some 15 years I have been an officer of the all-party disablement group and in common with other hon. Members I am an active member of many organisations such as Action Research for the Crippled Child, the Parkinson's Disease Society, Alzheimer's Disease Society, Mencap and other disability groups. Much of the work of those organisations involves preventive care, that is, helping to find ways of preventing those dreadful, disabling diseases that cause such distress not only to the sufferers, but to the parents and families concerned.

During my 17 years in Parliament much progress—medical and social—has been made for those who are unfortunate enough to be handicapped and disabled. A great deal is now being done to help them live reasonable lives. Nevertheless, I will do everything that I can to prevent such disabilities occurring. I am convinced that the harnessing of medical and scientific progress, under proper supervision, can lead to great advances in preventive care.

Earlier I mentioned Parkinson's disease and Alzheimer's disease. With both of those dreadful afflictions, and possibly with multiple sclerosis, we are on the verge of an amazing breakthrough with brain cell transplantation. With that issue we run up against perceived moral and ethical obstacles because the transplant material comes from aborted eight to nine-week-old foetuses. The Government will have to clarify the law on that matter if that great medical breakthrough is to be put into practice in this country as it already is in Sweden and Mexico.

The key issue today is the use of pre-embryos for research into the genetic diseases or abnormalities that can be detected in the first 10 or so days of a fertilised cell's existence. As we know, when a male sperm fertilises the female egg it is one cell. That cell divides quickly into two cells, which in turn divide into four and so on. They are clustered together and at that early stage each new cell looks just like the other. During the first 14 days after fertilisation the majority of those cells separate to form the placenta. At this time they can be seen only under a powerful microscope. It is at the 14 day stage, when the process of separation is complete, that the remaining cells then form an embryo—in the case of twins two embryos are formed. If all remains well, the embryo may grow into a foetus and become a baby.

The bulk of the research that is under discussion in the White Paper concerns helping people to get pregnant or avoid losing their babies before birth and, of course, IVF. As well as improving infertility treatment, research on pre-embryos could also help to improve contraceptive methods and prevent human genetic defects. Such defects are a common cause of handicap and death of babies. Genetic defects and congenital malformations occur in 2 to 5 per cent. of all live births and are the cause of 40 to 50 per cent. of deaths in childhood. Genetic diseases account for 10 per cent. of all diseases and such diseases are untreatable. Some 12 to 15 per cent. of all paediatric admissions are due to congenital abnormalities. One person in 50 has a major congenital abnormality—that equals 14,000 births a year. One in 100 people have a single gene defect and one in 200 a major chromosomal disorder. It is estimated that 20 per cent. of pre-embryos are abnormal and certain couples are at particular risk. Screening for pre-embryos would help those couples who were known to face a substantial risk of defect. In the foreseeable future it may be possible to detect those pre-embryos that would develop specific disorders such as muscular dystrophy, Down's syndrome, cystic fibrosis, Hunter's syndrome, Hurler's syndrome and Huntington's chorea.

Mencap and the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation believe that research on embryos under 14 days could help to reduce the genetic diseases figures and must be supported by Parliament. The advantages of such research are only now becoming apparent because of recent developments in relevant technology. In January at a joint meeting of the all-party disablement group and the all-party children's group, Professor Robert Winston, professor of fertility studies at Hammersmith hospital, pointed out that, within the next few months, it would be possible to establish guidelines for diagnosing certain genetic conditions two days after fertilisation. The first condition with which the model has been successfully developed is the Lesch Nyhan syndrome. Children with that disease are normal at birth, but deteriorate rapidly, becoming mentally handicapped and self-mutilating. Such children do not usually live beyond their teenage years. It is now possible to establish whether an embryo is deficient by looking at a single cell. The two other diseases where major advances are likely are Duchenne muscular dystrophy and cystic fibrosis. The cystic fibrosis gene is carried by one in 20 people and is a particularly serious problem. Many babies with the disease die in infancy.

At present the only way of discovering whether a woman is carrying an abnormal foetus is by amniocentesis. That test cannot be carried out, as we know from recent debates, until the 14th or 16th week of pregnancy.

An embryo up to 14 days after fertilisation is one tenth the size of a dot of newsprint and it has no organs or feelings. During this stage a woman would not normally know that the egg had been fertilised because implementation would not have taken place. In addition, at least 40 per cent. of fertilised eggs are shed before

implementation and widely accepted methods of contraception such as the coil and low-dosage pills work by preventing implementation of the fertilised egg rather than preventing actual fertilisation.

It is easy to imagine the heartache that parents must endure as they consider whether to terminate a pregnancy or whether they will be able to cope with a severely mentally or physically handicapped child. All that could be saved if the presence of an abnormal gene or chromosomal defect could be detected in a pre-embryo. It would then be possible to ensure that only normal pre-embryos were transferred back to those women whose families carry serious genetic diseases.

The alternative to that handicap prevention development is our present system of identifying an abnormality at the 14th to 20th week of pregnancy. The parents are then faced with the terrible choice of either having an abortion or the birth of a severely handicapped child. Surely if such terrible abnormalities could be identified and the defective cell replaced by the mother's normal, healthy cell that must be right. Banning pre-embryo research will halt essential work being carried out to find ways of preventing chromosomal abnormalities and hereditary genetic illnesses that affect up to 14,000 children in Britain every year.

The claim that human embryonic material is not needed for dealing with genetic diseases is refuted by nearly all the experts involved with medical science. The latest claim that recent advances in understanding cystic fibrosis, which is the most common severe genetic disease affecting children, had come about without the use of embryos is vehemently denied by one of the leaders in the field, Professor Williamson of the department of biochemistry and molecular genetics at St. Mary's, whose research group has been one of the major teams studying that disease. He points out that 2 million people in Britain carry the lethal genetic defect that causes the disease. He says that tremendous progress is being made towards finding a long-term solution:

> "Advance towards any of those objectives . . . would require a very small number of early embryo experiments, carefully regulated and only using material which otherwise would be discarded. Animal experiments cannot suffice since there is no animal model for cystic fibrosis."

It seems, therefore, that the general White Paper approach of the development of a statutory licensing authority exercising strict controls over surrogacy and the storage of eggs and sperm and acting, if Parliament sees fit to approve—I hope that it will—as the licensing authority for the specific limited time approach on pre-embryos, is ethically and morally right. I hope that, like those in another place, hon. Members will eventually support that.

For those of us working in the area of disablement and handicap the extending of the frontiers of medical knowledge towards finding methods of eliminating and preventing severe abnormalities and curing established disablements incurred later in life represent a satisfying and rewarding future. From my personal contacts with the medical experts working on such research projects, I can say that I find them to be quiet, dedicated people who are responding to all the ethical and moral dilemmas that face us all. We must remember that they face and treat, day after day, the many thousands of sufferers from such dreadful diseases—and deal with their families. Their motivation to use the increased knowledge that they slowly acquire to help alleviate this suffering is surely understandable. It does not lead to an excess of desire to drive a coach and horses through the ethical and moral barriers to which society adheres. They are intelligent people conscious of their moral responsibilities.

This debate, like that on 15 January in the other place, has been a deliberate one, but I hope that it will help to influence hon. Members and the world outside. I am grateful for the opportunity to put forward my views, which I desperately hope will accord with those of the majority in the House.

8.52 pm

Mrs. Ann Winterton (Congleton): I want to follow in the footsteps of my hon. Friend the Minister by using a moderate and constructive approach similar to his. It is right that we should approach the debate's subject matter with compassion for couples who face the blow of childlessness due to infertility. As a mother of three, I want to reassure the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mrs. Barnes)—I see that she is no longer with us—that I know the father of the three children concerned, and if she saw them, she would be in no doubt who he was. My hon. Friends certainly know him. Perhaps the hon. Lady is as fond as I am of the old calypso: "Your father's not your father but your father don't know".

However, as a mother I know only too well the mixed blessings that the children can bring. Predominantly, they bring joy, happiness and fulfilment to their parents. To those unfortunate people who yearn for children but are denied that fulfilment I express my genuine concern, understanding and sympathy.

My first point is that, however greatly a couple may wish to have children, to do so is not an absolute right. If it were, we should have devalued children to little more than property to be possessed. Children are not like that; they are not a right: they are a privilege. We must ensure that our Health Service makes provision to seek to alleviate infertility when it is realistically practical to do so, but we must not lose sight of the fact that it rests with an authority higher than doctors or specialists to decide whether a woman bears a child.

Secondly, the simple fact that can all too easily be overlooked is that experimentation on the human embryo is not the best way to alleviate infertility. Nor indeed is the technique of in-vitro fertilisation an appropriate one for dealing with the majority of such cases. I shall not enter into all the details of the argument now—it would take too long—but I should point out that infertility due to tubal occlusion is avoidable in many cases, arising as it all too often does from sexually transmitted disease, the after-effect of abortion or a complication from having used an intra-uterine device.

Furthermore, IVF is only an appropriate treatment for infertility in a minority of cases. Those who want a solution to the majority of cases of infertility would do well to heed this fact and to accept that it would be a far better use of resources, and would help a great many more women to bear children, if those resources were used to highlight the problems of promiscuous sexual activity and abortion so as to prevent the occurrence of infertility in the first place. In other words, prevention is better than cure—and it is possible in the majority of cases of infertility. I want the House to take that point to heart.

I also want to highlight the work now being done by Dr. Kevin Rees, consultant obstetrician and gynaecologist, of Stepping Hill hospital, Stockport—which is near my

[Mrs. Ann Winterton]

constituency—and of Dr. John McLean, senior lecturer in anatomy and embryology at the university of Manchester medical school. Those two doctors are working on a project to simplify the procedure of treating infertility due to tubal occlusion by transferring the ovum directly into the uterine cavity and allowing natural intercourse to provide the opportunity for in-vivo fertilisation. That new technique is particularly exciting because it could be used in many other types of infertility in addition to those for which IVF is considered appropriate.

I also draw to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Minister for Health the fact that not only is this technique more widely applicable than IVF but it is also much cheaper and could, in the near future, be available through every district general hospital. If that does not strike the fear of God into my right hon. Friend's heart at the present time, I do not know what would. It should also be noted that the technique has been introduced and is being developed with no need for experimentation on the human embryo.

As the new technique holds out much brighter hope than IVF, at lower cost, for more women, why do a small number of individuals continue to promote IVF as the only solution? Could it be because of the financial gain that is possible through that high-tech but low-effect treatment? Perhaps it presents the opportunity for scientists to get their hands on the human embryo for other purposes. We can only speculate, but it remains beyond doubt that the usefulness of IVF is extremely limited.

Dr. Rees and Dr. McLean have applied to the North-West regional health authority for financial assistance with their work. I hope—I am sure that thousands of infertile women will share the hope—that such funding will eventually be forthcoming.

If we accept that IVF has a continuing role to play in the treatment of infertility, experimentation upon the human embryo need have no part in IVF. To explore the reasons behind the poor success rate of IVF, we need a careful study of those embryos which fail to implant and die, and of the wombs of the affected women, not of other living healthy embryos. It is not logical to suggest otherwise.

I wish to deal with one other aspect during this reasonably short speech—the false promises which have been made by so many people with an interest in allowing human embryo experimentation to continue. In debate in Committee on the Unborn Children (Protection) Bill, on which I served, we were repeatedly told by many, including the Medical Research Council, that such experiments would find a cure for genetic disease. This has proved a totally unfounded hope. During the five years which have passed since the Warnock committee began to consider these matters, there have been no great discoveries from those who argued for the use of the human embryo in this way.

Yet, on the other hand, dedicated research workers have shown considerable success in dealing with the problems of handicap without the use of the human embryo. Vitamin supplementation in early pregnancy has been shown to protect the human embryo from neural tube defects, such as spina bifida. New developments in molecular biology, applied to cells taken from adult patients with, for example, cystic fibrosis, muscular dystrophy, Huntington's disease and retinoblastoma, have generated a much greater understanding of the genetic factors responsible for these diseases, as well as their location within the human genome. There is also the possibility of treating and curing certain genetic blood diseases with bone marrow transplantation, and progress is also being make in seeking to work with those suffering from Down's syndrome.

It is clear, therefore, that there are fruitful and practical lines of investigation into handicap which do not require the use of a human embryo. I believe that this argument for the use of the human embryo as a guinea pig is nothing more than a red herring to distract attention away from those who wish to experiment in other directions, for example, in the development of new abortifacient drugs or contraceptives and, I fear, for possibly more sinister purposes. On the latter point, millions of pounds will be made by those scientists who are successful in those experiments. The House should address that point.

As the Medical Research Council, which has campaigned so actively for experimentation on the human embryo, has failed to acknowledge the wealth of opportunity which is available without the use of embryos and, as it has so persistently misrepresented to hon. Members the possible benefits of human embryo research, the time has come to re-examine whether this body should continue to receive Government funding.

If the MRC cannot supply accurate, impartial and useful information to hon. Members, we are left with no alternative but to call into question its ability to supervise the use of funds allocated by the Government from taxpayers, with the approval of this House, for research purposes.

Finally, I should like to remind my hon. Friend the Minister of the recommendation of the Warnock committee that the status of the human embryo is a matter of fundamental principle which should be enshrined in legislation. No other principle than that of a right to life, free of experimentation, could possibly be enshrined in legislation by this House. The duty of upholding this right must rest with the Minister, to such an extent that he would be abrogating his responsibilities if he passed responsibility for such matters to any new quango, such as a statutory licensing authority.

However, I hope that, when the House finally has the opportunity to enshrine these matters in legislation, it will accept that there is no ethical or constitutional alternative but to establish in law the right of the human embryo to be protected against those who would seek to experiment upon it, and to rest responsibility for ensuring that this remains the case directly with the Secretary of State, who is answerable to the House.

9.4 pm

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley (Surrey, South-West): I appreciate the opportunity to contribute to the debate. I have not spoken in the previous debates on this subject. I have tended to reserve my contributions in this area to children at a later stage: child benefit, child abuse and family courts. However, I now have the privilege of being the parliamentary representative of the Medical Research Council, taking over from our former colleague, the previous Member for Canterbury, Sir David Crouch.

The Medical Research Council has been mentioned during the debate, not only by my hon. Friend the Member

for Congleton (Mrs. Winterton) but by my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine). It is important to note that during the past 65 years the Medical Research Council has offered independent advice to Government. It was established by royal charter in 1920. Its research activities are wide ranging, covering the areas of cancer, heart disease, strokes—still the third-largest killer — mental illness, Alzheimer's disease, addiction, disorders of movement and balance, low back pain and much else.

It is important to see the Medical Research Council's involvement in embryo research in its proper context. Of a total budget of around £140 million, perhaps only 0·1 per cent. is spent in that area. However, it is important work. Together with the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, the Medical Research Council has been responsible for the voluntary licensing authority. In the light of remarks that have been made about the activities of the Voluntary Licensing Authority, it is important to give credit to Dame Mary Donaldson, the chairman, who, with impeccable credentials, has carried out that important work without reproach as a lay chairman working for the best interests of research and the public.

During this thoughtful debate, mention has been made of contributions from the other place. I refer especially to the comments of the Archbishop of York who talked about the moral need to continue research. To stop research on pre-embryos at this stage, with in-vitro techniques in their present state, would be a cruelty to those receiving this treatment for infertility. The success rates are so low and the dangers of multiple births are so great that to stop now would be an inhuman option.

Similarly, important research remains to be completed in the area of contraception. With the world's population increasing at the rate of 250,000 people per day, there are further developments to be made in that area.

A similar argument applies to the prevention of handicap. Many moving accounts have been given today of people's personal experiences. Before entering Parliament, I worked with a family with Huntington's chorea, where each member of the family had a 50-50 chance of inheriting that mentally and physically degenerative disorder, leading ultimately to death. For mothers with Huntington's chorea in the family, having the option of producing a healthy child can be regarded only as a pro-life solution.

The National Federation of Women's Institutes urged caution before hastily outlawing research during our earlier debates on the Bill of our former colleague, Mr. Enoch Powell.

A report of the Conservative Women's National Committee showed a majority in favour of the establishment of a statutory licensing authority to permit supervised research on the embryo before the 14-day limit. It is broadly understood by many people that at 14 days the embryo becomes a rather more developed cell cluster. At the early stage, embryos are regularly lost by means of the intra-uterine device.

There are arguments now for moving with considerable speed towards legislation. Time and trouble has been taken in the preparation of the White Paper. There is broad agreement on many areas. Opinion has moved with the publication of the White Paper.

This is an important subject. We debated only recently the time limits for abortion. In conclusion, I can do no more than remind hon. Members of the contribution made by the Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science when we last discussed the subject three years ago with which I entirely agree. He then said:

"Parliament has licensed the termination of the life of embryos by abortion up to the 28th week after conception." Many hon. Members would support that being reduced further now.

"Among the circumstances that are implicitly allowed to permit an abortion is the possibility of serious congenital abnormality in the unborn child. Parliament has thus recognised the legitimacy of terminating the prospect of human life for a defective embryo. Should it now turn its back on the emergence of technical possibilities which might enable an embryo to come to a normal and natural life with its abnormalities corrected or prevented in the womb? These technical possibilities . . . might make it possible to avoid procuring an abortion. In these circumstances we must surely ask, which stance is 'pro-life' and which stance is 'anti-life'." —[*Official Report*, 15 February 1985; Vol. 73, c. 681-682.]

9.10 pm

Mr. Ken Hargreaves (Hyndburn): Not least because of the Minister's well-balanced and reasonable opening speech, we have had an excellent debate. We have heard many sincerely held, if different, views. I do not think any hon. Member would do other than congratulate the Government on their initiative in 1982 in setting up the Committee of Inquiry into Human Fertilisation and Embryology. However, while their foresight is to be commended, the composition of the committee left a great deal to be desired, as every member started by being in favour of the use of the human embryo as a guinea pig. Two members afterwards changed their mind and signed a minority report opposing the use of the human embryo in that way, but it would have been a prerequisite for anybody serving on the committee to favour the experimental use of the human embryo. It was not a good start.

It says a great deal for those involved that, in the ultimate, seven of the 16 members of the committee dissented from the main report, which recommended that it should be permitted to manufacture embryonic human beings specifically for experimental use. Not surprisingly, the report was not acclaimed by the general public, albeit the media did its utmost to present it as a step in the right direction for a civilised society. The fact is that the vast majority of the British public were not having it, as many hon. Members can confirm from their post-bags or from public opinion surveys that have been carried out.

This became obvious when the Department of Health and Social Security sent out the Warnock report, calling for comments on it. Many of the comments demonstrated clearly the revulsion with which many people viewed the recommendations of the Warnock committee, despite the huge press campaign which was launched to try to convince people that if the use of the human embryo for experiments was banned we would see research into cures for genetic and chromosomal diseases brought to a halt, as well as work on infertility stopped. To my mind, this was one of the most cruel aspects of the campaign against pro-lifers, particularly as those involved must have known this to be totally untrue. They must have known the tragic effect this would have on the many thousands of couples who were unable to have children or who have handicapped children.

Every hon. Member owes a debt of gratitude to the right hon. Enoch Powell when in December 1984—at that time he was the Member for South Down—he

[Mr. Ken Hargreaves]

decided to use his place in the private Member's ballot to introduce the Unborn Children (Protection) Bill, with the aim of outlawing the experimental use of the embryonic human being. It would not have resulted in the prevention of in-vitro fertilisation if the aim was to allow an infertile woman to bear a child. However, it would have stopped the use of either spare embryos or especially manufactured embryos from being used as guinea pigs.

The House does not need to be reminded of what happened to the Powell Bill. Few of us will ever forget the manner in which it was talked out, with the result that not only were pro-lifers outraged, but many hon. Members who do not support my views on the issue were appalled, and the media became more anxious to put across the pro-life cause.

The following year I decided to reintroduce the Unborn Children (Protection) Bill. However, our antagonists were determined that it would not even be given a Second Reading. As a result, I reintroduced it as a ten-minute Bill, when we determined that we would have a vote, particularly as our opponents kept informing the press and the media at large that we had lost support since Enoch Powell attempted to change the law. The vote on my Bill showed that this was not so, as we won by 229 to 129. That indicated quite clearly that, if anything, there had been an increase in the number of hon. Members who supported it.

Since then my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt) and my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) have demonstrated the determination of the majority view of the House, reflecting the majority view of the people, by attempting to reintroduce the Bill.

In the meantime, we have witnessed an innovation. Like other hon. Members, I have heard of all manner of press launches for any number of marketable products. I was surprised that those in favour of experiments on embryos organised a press reception at which they launched a new word. They did not announce it as a new word, but launch it they did. The word was "pre-embryo", and we have heard it many times in the debate. They spoke as if it were the norm and as though anatomists, doctors and scientists had been using it for centuries. It appears in no book of biology, anatomy or medical dictionary published in this country or, to my knowledge, anywhere in the world.

It certainly was not used by the Warnock committee. One of its members, Dr. David Davies—who signed the main report supporting the production of embryonic human beings, especially for use in experiments—had the integrity to point that out when he wrote in the scientific journal, *Nature*. He said:

"I am reasonably sure that at least in (Warnock Committee) discussions the word 'pre-embryo' was never used . . . If research on embryos were an uncontentious matter, and if scientists were generally of the opinion that the new terminology helped their understanding, nobody would have any qualms at the name change. But those who are introducing the word 'pre-embryo' into the vocabulary know full well that the research is indeed contentious and that fundamental issues have yet to be resolved."

In other words, a member of the Warnock committee, who quite obviously does not agree with us, was complaining at the manner in which some scientists strive to manipulate public opinion by the invention of words that have no true meaning, and which certainly do not describe the human at conception. Pre-embryo may fairly describe the sperm and ovum before fertilisation, but there is no way in which the human at conception or after conception could be so described.

I am delighted to see that the ploy has not worked. The majority inside and outside the House still want the human embryo protected. They regard it, as do I, as a member of the human family from the moment of conception. They reject words such as "pre-embryo", which are intended to suggest that it is less than human.

It is to the credit of the Government's White Paper that it does not indulge in the misuse of words. However, on reading it, it is difficult not to suspect that the decision to indulge in a second round of consultation on the Warnock report was made to delay a decision in the hope that public opinion might change. I am glad to have received an assurance from the Minister that that was not so.

There is nothing new in the White Paper. It simply reiterates what the Warnock committee said on the issue. That is made even more regrettable when we realise that evidence was submitted, which was approved by some of the most eminent scientists in Britain, America and Europe, showing that what we said in 1985 was being substantiated by developments in the scientific world. That evidence shows that the human embryo is not required to make advances in seeking the cause and cure of genetic diseases, infertility and other problems.

I note with some concern that the Government have concluded that an independent statutory licensing authority should be established. What guarantee will Parliament be given that it is independent and unbiased? If the committee of inquiry can be made up of members who all share the same views, as I have outlined, how can we be sure that the statutory licensing authority will not be manned in the same way? That remains a worry, although I was glad to hear an assurance about that from the Minister in his opening speech. Infertility treatments and services should be directly controlled by Parliament under the Secretary of State. So far-reaching will be the effects on society of the legislation that we shall shortly introduce that it will be one of the most, if not the most, important pieces of legislation to come before the House.

I hope that we shall ensure that the most defenceless of our society — unborn human beings — are at least preserved from being used as human guinea pigs. When an experiment could not possibly be for his or her benefit, it has never previously been acceptable for it to be carried out without that person's consent. That position must continue, otherwise we shall be setting out on a slippery slope.

I should like to congratulate the Government on the part of the report that promises that the House will be granted an opportunity to vote on two alternative clauses. It lays that out quite clearly and fairly. I call on the Government to ensure that that clarity is maintained when the Bill is ultimately produced. I urge that that should be done without further delay. We have waited long enough, and it is time to act to give the human embryo the legal protection that we all enjoy.

9.19 pm

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): It was an honour for me to come 17th in the ballot for private Members' Bills this Session and to take on the mantle of my hon. Friends the Members for Hyndburn (Mr.

Hargreaves) and for Bury, North (Mr. Burt) and the former right hon. Member for South Down, Mr. Powell, in introducing the Unborn Children (Protection) Bill which lies at the heart of the discussion this evening.

I congratulate my right hon. and hon. Friends at the Department of Health and Social Security on bringing forward the report that is the basis of this evening's debate. They have recognised that there are deep feelings inside and outside the House over the sensitive issue of embryo research. I hope that in the very near future—I stress very near future — the report will be translated into legislation. I hope, too, that the legislation will reach the statute book in Government time.

I am sure that my colleagues would agree that it is only the strength of feeling inside and outside the House that has ensured that we will be given the choice, through the White Paper, to decide whether to allow embryo research in legislation in future. That is the central point. I do not want to discuss any other details from the report now.

I speak for people who have children and for those who have struggled to have children. My wife and I, unlike many other fortunate members of the community, did not have children easily. We had to struggle. I appreciate the problems about infertility and childlessness. However, deeper issues are involved, as many of my hon. Friends have said.

I am also interested in research. As president of the charity Action Research for the Crippled Child in my constituency, I am keen to see that research to prevent child diseases is fully funded. However, setting aside my interest in those things, I must state that there is a deeper and more fundamental argument about the nature of life. Whatever view we may take about this, our view of life and its creation is fundamental to this issue.

The major division between us is that those of us who would outlaw research on embryos believe that life begins at fertilisation, inside or outside the womb. Once fertilisation begins there is the potential for life. I want to bury some of the arguments that have been put forward tonight against that view.

It has been suggested that the embryo has only the chance for life. Not only has it a chance for life; the embryo is life. We should not forget that fundamental point. It has also been said that the embryo has a chance to develop. I would argue that we should not deprive that life of the chance for development. Embryonic human beings must not be treated like laboratory rabbits. Research on embryos would bring about such treatment. Most important of all, embryos should have not just a chance for development. The issue is about human rights. It is about the right to live and the most important issue of human dignity. We must consider the fact that those embryos have the right to live. It is their human right to live, and we must protect that right.

For too long the law has ignored the rights of the unborn child. We will be able to protect those rights when legislation is introduced on this matter. We will be able to vote and correct the imbalance that has existed for many years.

Another argument that is put against it is what I would call the "not yet" fallacy—that the embryo is not yet a person, not yet a member of the human race, and for that reason it is quite all right to treat it as a spare, to be experimented on and frozen. These things are permissible, but I totally reject all of these arguments. I take the view —and I am sure that many of my hon. Friends will take the same view—that the embryo is a person with the potential for life and has human rights. We must respect those rights.

Everybody in the human race started as that little cluster of cells that has been much maligned. That cluster of cells has led to life for people throughout this country and the world. We must respect it. One of the problems in the attitude of those engaged in embryo research is the failure to accept that need for respect.

There are those who say that there is no alternative to embryo research. I was in the House when the former right hon. Member for South Down, Mr. Enoch Powell, who is unfortunately no longer a Member, introduced his Bill. We were told then that this was the only way. In the past few months, since introducing my Bill, I have considered some of the research that is going on. No one has come forward and said that he has made a major breakthrough with the use of fertilised embryos in research. It has been a case of saying, "Tomorrow, tomorrow." But, while we do nothing, these things march on.

It is time to deal with the problem. I think that my hon. Friend the Member for Congleton (Mrs. Winterton) put her finger on it when she said that in other areas, using different techniques, major breakthroughs are being made, especially in relation to molecular biology, in cystic fibrosis and Huntington's disease. Work is being done by Dr. John McLean at Manchester university. Let us not forget the greatest of all the researchers in this area, Professor Jerome Lejeune, who discovered the basis of Down's syndrome, and who is still working in that area. He is a tower of strength, and he says that there are alternative ways of doing this research. We must indeed follow those alternative ways.

Let us also not forget that when the Warnock committee reported a minority report was signed by Professor Marshall, professor of clinical neurology at London university, and six others. The impression given by the supporters of embryo research is that the medical profession is united and speaks with one voice. That is far from the truth, and the public ought to know that.

I welcome the opportunity to debate this matter. It is a fundamental issue that we must look at most carefully. I welcome the judgment of the Government in recognising the strength of feeling on both sides and allowing a free vote. Legislation cannot be brought forward soon enough. I look forward in the next few months to debating this most important subject yet again.

9.28 pm

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): I welcome the opportunity to make a brief contribution to the debate, especially as tribute has been made to my colleague the former Member of Parliament for South Down. When he was introducing his Bill, he said that there comes a stage where we must put up signposts and markers. In that context, I believe that when scientists are doing their job and have a task to do, which I sympathise with and understand, it is the responsibility of Parliament to put up the markers to guide them. For, even within the scientific fraternity, as they are human, they can err like the rest of us.

It is in that context that the House can legislate. It is important to remind scientists who support embryo research and experimentation that historically some of the greatest breakthroughs have come not from the majority but from the one imaginative person who went his own

[Rev. Martin Smyth]

way. The medical profession and others do no service to the community when they denigrate the work of Professor Lejeune because he is working on his own.

I pay tribute to the Minister for the way he introduced the debate. I welcome the acceptance by the Government in paragraph 63 of the White Paper that

"the sale or purchase of gametes or embryos should be controlled so as to avoid the risk of commercial exploitation."

I am sceptical about how that will be achieved. I have put down questions in the past about the commercial use of foetuses and I have got very inadequate replies. Therefore, I ask the Government to have second thoughts on how they will control such use in future.

9.30 pm

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): I welcome the fact that a broad range of views has been expressed in the debate, not because I was unclear about my position and might have been helped by listening to those views—indeed, I have a firm view on the matter—but because I might have had a sense of unease if we had not heard different views. There is something sick about a society which stops questioning itself about these issues. We have to have a creative tension. We must have constant argument, even though I might end up making a decision completely different from that of the right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine). I can see why it is tempting for some people to say, "Let us not look over the precipice. It involves very difficult issues. If we start going down this path, who knows where we may end?" I can understand the fear that that causes some people.

We cannot turn our back on the possibilities that are opened up by research on pre-embryos, for two main reasons. The first is infertility, which has been mentioned by many hon. Members. No one knows how many men and women are affected by the inability to conceive, but we know that many who want to have children, but cannot, say nothing about it. Many suffer in silence, partly because men fear that if they admit that they cannot have children somehow it casts doubt on their manliness, and for women the admission flies in the face of the traditional assumption that it is the most natural thing for a woman to do, and the most central part of a woman's life.

Because infertility is such a sensitive issue, it remains largely hidden. I have no doubt that the inability to conceive affects many people. Estimates range from one in six to one in ten. I hope that the Government will follow up Lady Warnock's proposal that we must collect statistics and carry out more research into the true level of infertility.

The research which has been done so far suggests that about 1 million people are affected. It causes great suffering. The inability to have children can sour the most loving of relationships. It can embitter the happiest of people and can cause great distress. Just as I respect the deeply held views of hon. Members who oppose the research which has led to in-vitro fertilisation and the research which could make IVF more successful, so they should recognise the blight that infertility casts over the lives of so many.

Hon. Members such as the right hon. Member for Castle Point who has three children, the hon. Member for Congleton (Mrs. Winterton) who has three children and the hon. Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) who has two children should be very careful before they argue that people should accept their fate and not go down the road of trying to ensure that research leads to greater possibilities for treatment of infertility.

Sir Bernard Braine: The hon. Lady is making a most interesting speech and I know that she would not wish to mislead the House. I have never taken that view. I am in favour of IVF and of the research that has taken place. I am not in favour of the proposal that a free hand should be given to experimentation, not on the pre-embryo—a term which is used so loosely — but on the human embryo, which has the potential of being a human being.

Ms. Harman: In response, I would remind hon. Members of the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) that one cannot have it both ways. One cannot say that one is in favour of IVF treatment as offering hope to some infertile couples and yet say that one is against the research that has led us to the situation we are in now and makes it possible to make that treatment more successful in the future.

Sir Bernard Braine: I gave examples to the House. There are leading scientists who tell us that there are alternative means of research that are delivering the goods.

Ms. Harman: I shall get to that point later in my speech.

I am also very concerned about the line of argument that emerged from the speech of the hon. Member for Congleton, which smacked rather of blaming the victim. Some infertility is caused by intra-uterine devices, some infertility is caused by sexually transmitted diseases, some infertility is caused by abortion; therefore, it is asked, have not those people somehow brought their infertility upon themselves? That adds insult to the suffering of all those who are not able to conceive.

There is also the suffering and misery caused by miscarriage. The fact that miscarriage is a relatively common occurrence in no way lessens the heartache for the woman and her partner. If some women are offered through IVF a chance of bearing a child, and if embryo research offers a chance of understanding the factors that can cause a miscarriage, we simply cannot turn our backs on it.

I also think that the Government ought to take very seriously Lady Warnock's proposal that we must have a proper review of infertility services. It is quite wrong that for a poor family that suffers infertility there is no chance of treatment, IVF or any other, because of the lack of availability of fertility treatment on the National Health Service. I hope that the Minister will assure us tonight that she regards fertility treatment as a part of the NHS, not as a luxury optional extra which is available only to people who can afford it by giving up their second holiday.

The second major reason why we must not turn away from embryo research is the continuing task of trying to prevent handicap. Work is being carried out to find ways of preventing chromosomal abnormalities and hereditary genetic illnesses. We heard in the most courageous and moving speech from the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) why this work simply has to go on. The work to control defects such as Down's syndrome, muscular dystrophy, cystic fibrosis and haemophilia is very important.

We are not absolutist about this problem. We are not saying that the only way to make breakthroughs is

through research on embryos. We are saying that we do not want to rule out one avenue which might lead to the possibility of controlling those very serious defects.

It is easy to understand why we have to take advantage of this medical advance, and it is right that we should understand also why we should control it. I do not say that we should have a statutory licensing authority because we think that we need the research and therefore are prepared to concede that point to make it somehow more acceptable. I firmly believe that we must control this, and we must ensure that it is properly monitored and supervised.

I was talking on the telephone last night to a Dr. Rothman, in California, who is the leading expert in America on a new technique called sperm harvesting. That involves taking the sperm from somebody who has died and giving it to his relatives so that they might use it in future. Doctor Rothman gave the example of an only son dying and his bereaved parents asking for his sperm to be harvested so that at some future date they could arrange for somebody to have his child. Then they could feel that somehow their child lived on, because they could have the grandchild that otherwise would have been impossible. Doctor Rothman said that in America that was regarded as completely uncontroversial and that everyone thought that it was a good idea to extend such possibilities. In Britain we would not take that view.

We must have a statutory licensing authority which, instead of waiting for such developments and then saying that they should be stopped, will constantly keep an eye on the direction in which such developments are going, and ensure that they do not go off the rails. I support the statutory licensing authority that was suggested by Lady Warnock.

If we remember what happened last year, when the Humana hospital refused to accept the ruling of the Voluntary Licensing Authority that the number of embryos implanted should be limited to four, we can understand why, although the Voluntary Licensing Authority has done a great deal of good work, it should become a statutory authority.

I should like to say a few words about the time limit in which research should take place. There have been a number of suggestions, but any time limit is arbitrary. The Warnock committee canvassed a 14-day time limit, the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists suggested 28 days, the Medical Research Council suggested two to three weeks, and some have suggested 30 days. If we are to have a statutory, fixed time limit, we should also have, if it is not a contradiction in terms, some flexibility. The Government and the House should consider the possibility of allowing the statutory licensing authority to lay down a certain maximum time limit. That would provide a legal maximum time limit of, say, 21 days, and allow the statutory licensing authority to decide where, beneath that time, the limit should be for getting a licence.

It is remarkable that there has been so little discussion of surrogacy. I am against commercial surrogacy, but the Government were right not to have chosen the option of trying to outlaw surrogacy, other than for commerical reasons. In America, where they sell sperm for 35 dollars a go and where they sell blood and other human tissues, it is not surprising that they should not jib at the idea of womb leasing. We do not want such a situation to develop here.

I should like to say something about the rights of children born to mothers who have had artificial insemination by donor. In America, a real crisis occurred when a woman had had artificial insemination by donor. Her husband knew about it and the names of the husband and wife were on the birth certificate. The child did not know that it had been conceived by a donor instead of by its father until the family broke up. In the bitterness of the divorce, the mother claimed that the father should have no access or visiting rights, because he was not the real father.

We must be cautious about situations in which the whole of family life can be built on a deceit, whether it is a deceit about which only two people know or whether all the other relatives know but the child is unaware of it. We must be very careful about that. In America there is a club of children born by artificial insemination by donor who are going around the United States looking for their donor fathers and campaigning for the right to know the identity of their natural fathers. We must look for future difficulties that have not yet occurred because the children produced by artificial insemination by donor are not yet sufficiently grown up.

Medical and scientific advances present at the same time tremendous possibilities and tremendous problems. We should not disregard the problems. A statutory licensing authority with a fixed maximum time limit of 21 days on embryo research would give me sufficient reassurance. However, for the sake of those who long to have children and cannot conceive, for the sake of those who can conceive but suffer repeated miscarriages, and for the sake of those who through genetic disorders are condemned to watch their children suffer and die, we must allow research to continue.

9.44 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mrs. Edwina Currie): Let me start by joining the hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) in paying tribute to the Warnock committee, to Lady Warnock herself, to the members of the Voluntary Licensing Authority and, indeed, to all who have contributed to producing the papers on which we base our debate today. The hon. Lady is right in saying that we should not isolate any one issue, and that the Government must legislate. This is Government business. That is also part of the answer to the point made by the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman). We do not feel that we can leave the question of the time limit to an extra-Government body; it must be decided ultimately by the House.

The hon. Member for Barking raised a number of points with which I should like to deal immediately. She asked about the composition and role of the proposed statutory licensing authority. I agree with her that it would be a pity if there were polarisation in the SLA. It would also be a pity, however, if its membership did not command public respect, and that will be our aim in appointing it.

It is also worth pointing out that, whether or not research is permitted by vote of the House, the SLA will still have a substantial role, as set out in the White Paper —among other things, in licensing the clinics where IVF and other work is to be done.

I entirely take the hon. Lady's point about women members, but I suggest that we do not put a figure on it. I do not agree with her argument that women should be

[Mrs. Edwina Currie]

included because it is they who have the babies. I think that our men are involved somewhere along the line! As for the argument that women form half the population and should therefore be adequately represented, if the hon. Lady looks at recent appointments to the Health Education Authority and the breast cancer advisory committee she will find that that is exactly what has been happening.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) and my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) asked about alternatives to embryo research in their important speeches. No one favours the unnecessary use of embryos in research for benefits which could be obtained in other ways. The White Paper proposes that, if research is permitted, the SLA should satisfy itself, in granting a licence, that adequate consideration has been given to the possibility of achieving the aims of the project by other means.

As for the question of a list of diseases, I understand that most genetically linked diseases can be studied in the embryo form. Some can be studied in non-embryonic human material, and others in non-human material. However, our view is that if Parliament permits such work at all, the SLA should look at each proposed programme and check whether there are any ways other than using human embryo material. In other words, research using human embryos, if permitted at all, should never be the first resort. We are not sure whether we should want to insist on its being the last resort, because there may be occasions when it is the best resort in terms of potential success.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): My hon. Friend has said that research should not be the last resort. Will she confirm—I speak as a supporter of the majority of the Warnock report's recommendations — that some research is essential, and that we can look forward to further research that is regarded as essential, and often as a first resort?

Mrs. Currie: I take my hon. Friend's point. It will be a matter for the House to decide whether, on occasions when research is the best resort—or, indeed, one of the possibilities — it wishes to allow that research to continue. The purpose of our debate tonight is simply to enable points of view to be offered, and no doubt they will all be taken into account in the drafting of the legislation. That is why the debate has been called in Government time.

I therefore feel that I need not answer in detail all the points that have been made, but should merely say to all hon. Members on both sides of the House that their views will be taken into account as the legislation and the regulations are prepared, as soon as parliamentary time will permit.

We have heard 20 speeches today. Most, we are glad to see, welcomed the White Paper in one form or another. In some areas the White Paper goes further than the Warnock report—for example, in proposing to prohibit some kinds of research, such as genetic engineering and the development of clones or hybrids, in imposing stricter controls on the storage of embryos and in banning the sale of embryos and gametes. In other areas, such as surrogacy, we have not gone as far as the Warnock report recommended, because we do not believe that criminal sanctions are the right approach.

The legislation, when it is introduced, will firm up or adjust points of detail in the White Paper, but today's debate suggests that we may have got the basic framework about right. Procedure, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) referred, is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House and the usual channels, but no doubt they will take note of his views.

Several hon. Members have spoken about the sanctity of life and the special nature of the human embryo. I hope that hon. Members on both sides of the House will allow me simply to use the term "human embryo" and not some of the other terms that have been suggested. Feelings about the sanctity of life and the special nature of the material about which we are talking are shared by all. The debate has shown that there are strongly-held views about whether humanity commences at contraception or some point thereafter. I refer all hon. Members to the learned speech by the Archbishop of York in the other place who took us elegantly around that subject.

For those who want embryo research to continue, I notice support for the Warnock committee's view that the appearance of the primitive streak might well be a sensible point in the continuing development at which to impose the time limit. It will be entirely for the House to decide whether research should be permitted on human embryos before that date.

However, we are firm in our view that such work should be illegal after that date. It is our respect for the particular status of the human embryo that leads us to say that we cannot go on any longer without legislation in this area, with the sort of "anything goes" approach which has sometimes been urged upon us.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North said, it is not a question of starting down the slippery slope; we are on it. We must put a stop to the slide somewhere. It will be a matter entirely for Parliament to decide where the limit should be placed. It must be Parliament, not scientists or clerics, which takes that decision. That is what we have set out to do.

Subject to that, the Government are determined to see on to the statute book legislation which clearly defines the kind of work which can and cannot be carried out with human embryos, and anything outside that definition will be banned if the legislation is accepted by the House.

Our thoughts have been guided, as indeed have those of many hon. Members, by a keen concern for the sanctity of family life. That is why we have already moved to ban commercial third-party surrogacy, and that is why we propose that surrogacy contracts of all kinds should be made non-enforceable. I am concerned, as is the hon. Member for Peckham, that we should not have any development of practices which have been seen in the United States and which have been dubbed "baby farming." That is also why we believe that the law should make it clear how the child relates to the mother who bore him and to those who bring him up. That point was strongly made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North.

We have already legislated, in the Family Law Reform Act 1987, which applies only to unmarried couples and which comes into force in April this year, to make it clear that the AID child is in law the child of the mother and

her husband and should be registered as such. Under our proposals, that will apply to IVF and GIFT children, too, where donated gametes are used. It is also important, since that legislation applies only in England and Wales, that we achieve some consistency with Scotland, and that is also proposed in the White Paper.

We shall also make it clear that the mother who carries a baby is, in the eyes of the law, that baby's mother, even if she is not genetically related. Any other line would weaken the role of the family and those whom I would call the caring parents—those who provide a home for the child and bring it up. The words in the White Paper are clear:

"the donors of the gametes or embryos will have no parental rights or duties in relation to the child."

That is the legal view. In other words, our thoughts in framing the proposals have always been, "What is best for the child? What will best ensure that he or she is brought up in a secure, loving and caring environment?"

Let me say a little more about the rights of the child. I feel rather sad that in all that we have heard today there has been too little discussion about the rights of the child after birth—except by my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North and the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mrs. Barnes)——

Ms. Harman: And me.

Mrs. Currie: My apologies. I wrote this bit of the speech before I heard the hon. Lady's speech and that of her hon. Friend the Member for Barking. I am sure that both hon. Ladies would agree that we must legislate so that the child may know his right to a name, to inherit property, and, if he wishes, to obtain some information about his origin. We will take into account the fact that attitudes on this matter may well change in time and make provision for that. Children born as a result of treatments using donated gametes should not suffer the anxiety that they may be related to a large unknown family of half brothers and half sisters especially taking into account the dangers, outlined by the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley), that may be generated when close relatives—albeit unnamed close relatives — come together to marry and have children. We may therefore need to set a limit on the number of pregnancies that may result from one donor. We shall look to the statutory licensing authority to consider that.

As has been pointed out, most of the research done on embryos is intended to promote knowledge about conception and handicap and its prevention. There are two points to make on that. First, whatever one's view of the nature of early life, strict controls are needed on the treatment of human embryos. Those who argue that the benefits that research can bring — for example, in preventing handicap—justify the use of embryos before 14 days must recognise, nevertheless, the genuine fears of those who worry that the same techniques in different hands could lead to less laudable goals. That is why we propose that all such work — to the extent that Parliament permits it—should be strictly controlled by a statutory body, that licences should be tied to specific projects—that would cover both means and ends, both methodology and intentions—and that it should be an offence to go beyond what is expressly permitted. In that we concur entirely with the Warnock committee.

Secondly, people have a right to expect us to do our utmost to prevent disease and handicap. Parents who carry defective genes have a right to expect sound information about their chances of passing them on or avoiding such transmission. A lot of misery and anguish is potentially avoidable and may be influenced by research of the kind that has been described. I hope, therefore, that those both for and against the Warnock proposals will recognise the high degree of sincerity and motivation on both sides.

Let me deal with the point about the private and the public sectors. Clearly, it is important that there should be consistency in ethical standards and good professional standards across the divide between the public and private sectors. The statutory licensing authority will be able to achieve that consistency, which Ministers regard as a major benefit of legislation. We give notice that we will not allow the ethical framework within which the treatments are provided to differ in any way as between the private sector and the National Health Service. That is especially important now that close links are developing between the two sectors, including the Barts-AMI link which has been mentioned several times. The number of women treated there will increase from 300 a year under the Health Service to about 1,000 under the joint arrangements.

I am prepared to see some differences between the opposing Front Benches, but I would resist Opposition Members' demands that we should expand activity in the Health Service to meet all the demands placed on it now or in future. On treatments involving new technologies —particularly GIFT—some may feel that, because of their ethical difficulties, because they are expensive, because as yet the success rates are poor and because some would say that they are treatments for people who are not ill in the strict sense, they should not be part of NHS provision at all. The Government do not agree with that. We see no cause to ban such treatments from the Health Service, provided that their practice is properly regulated. There is a fully funded NHS in-vitro fertilisation clinic in Manchester, as the hon. Member for Barking may know, and many of the others are partly funded. It is for the local health authorities to decide whether that work is of sufficiently high priority to put off something else.

I hope that the House will agree with me when I say that we should not forget that all the latest techniques cannot help everyone. I do not believe that people's status is determined by whether they have children. Childless people are not, in any way, lesser people. We all have our contribution to make to society. Although for many women that contribution is by bearing and bringing up their children, for others it is by other means. To be childless is not to be less of a woman, less of a man or less of a citizen. I deeply hope that that thought may offer a little consolation to some of those who are listening tonight.

It being Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.)

Overseas Development and Co-operation

That the draft Caribbean Development Bank (Further Payments) Order 1987, which was laid before this House on 10th December, be approved.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT

That the draft Unfair Dismissal (Increase of Limits of Basic and Special Awards) Order 1987, which was laid before this House on 9th December, be approved.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT

That the draft Employment Protection (Variation of Limits) Order 1987, which was laid before this House on 9th December, be approved.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

Question agreed to.

Northern Ireland Housing Executive

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

10 pm

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): May I place on record my thanks to you, Mr. Speaker, for permitting me to draw attention to the misleading information supplied to me by the director of operations—the deputy chief executive—of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive on behalf of its chairman.

On 7 December 1987 my Ulster Unionist colleagues, my hon. Friend the Member for Antrim, South (Mr. Forsythe) who is here tonight and will, I hope, catch your eye, Mr. Speaker, my hon. Friend the Member for Belfast, North (Mr. Walker), the mayor of Lisburn, Mr. Bleakes, and myself, met the chairman and senior officers of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive at the housing centre in Belfast. It was not a social call and we declined to accept any hospitality prior to a formal business meeting. It was an opportunity to raise specific matters and to have them dealt with on behalf of constituents.

At that meeting I referred particularly to problems in my constituency and to the problems being experienced at the Windmill estate, Carrickfergus, where windows larger than the original windows had been installed in some properties. I had been informed that new venetian blinds and curtains, fitted to suit the original windows, became a total loss to the tenants who could not afford to replace them after the imposed change in window size. I sought information and assistance for my constituents.

The director of operations, the deputy chief executive, replied on behalf of the chairman of the Housing Executive about the four areas of concern that I had raised at the meeting. His letter, dated 18 December, dealt with the specific issues of redevelopment proposals at Tullygarley, Larne, the Windmill estate, Carrickfergus, Green Walk, Rathcoole and Ballystrudder. He gave a detailed response and for the information of the House I should like to place on record his response to the problems at the Windmill estate, Carrickfergus:

"At present, there is an ongoing planned external maintenance scheme at Westmount Avenue, Windmill, Carrickfergus which includes for the replacement of front and rear panels and front and rear windows. However, from the date the proposals were submitted to Building Control until the contract was awarded, regulations in relation to lighting and ventilation changed with the result that the demands of our original windows did not now satisfy the current Building Regulations, and so large windows were installed in the first five dwellings and curtains and venetian blinds no longer fitted. The contractor has now come to an agreement with the tenants by way of compensation, and in view of the publicity surrounding this contract, the Building Control Officers have now agreed that we can revert to the original specification and provide windows of a smaller size to those being replaced."

I work closely with all the councillors in my constituency. Fortunately for me, in east Antrim we have no Sinn Fein councillors to work with. I, in turn, endeavour to enlist the support of councillors and undertake to keep them informed.

Early in the new year, on 8 January, I copied the relevant reply from the Housing Executive about the Windmill estate to the mayor of Carrickfergus, Alderman Jim Brown. Because of the repeated references in that reply, I copied it to the district building control officer at the town hall in Carrickfergus and asked him for his comments, which were as follows:

(1) There is no minimum size requirement regarding windows in the Building Regulations.

(2) There has been no change in the Building Regulations regarding minimum window size since Building Regulations were introduced in 1973.

(3) The Building Regulations do not require that buildings erected under former control, e.g. Bye-laws, be brought to current standards."

How can those points be reconciled with the statement I received on behalf of the chairman of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive? Is it not more than a coincidence that an application for building regulation approval arrived at the building control department in Carrickfergus borough council on 8 December 1987, a day after my visit to the Housing Executive headquarters in Belfast?

The building control officer's fourth point was this:

"Application for Building Regulation approval was not received until the 8 December 1987. This followed my becoming aware of the work which was being carried out following press reports of the controversy in early December, 1987. I then drew to the attention of the N.I.H.E. and their agents that an application was required for the work which was being carried out."

So the executive was aware that no application had been properly made. The fifth point was:

"Since there was no requirement under the Building Regulations, to change the window size in the first instance, I did not subsequently agree that windows of the original size would be satisfactory. There was no necessity for such an agreement!"

Again I was very concerned at the apparent contradiction in that statement.

I am a simple man, brought up to believe every word from my mother's lips. She often said, "Now come on, son —tell the truth and shame the devil," and I always tried to please her. I believe that even when the truth hurts it must be told. It is vitally important that hon. Members should be completely confident, and be able to place their trust in their dealings with other hon. Members and with civil servants in our various Government Departments. They should even be able to place their trust and confidence in their dealings with officers employed in quangos such as the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

Since applying for and being granted this Adjournment debate, I received the following correspondence, dated 29 January 1988, from the director of operations. I do not know whether to believe it, but here it is:

"Dear Mr. Beggs,

I wrote to you on 18th December 1987 responding to a number of matters which you had raised when representatives of your Party met with the Executive on 7th December 1987.

In that reply (paragraph 2), I referred to the external maintenance scheme for Westmount Avenue, Windmill, Carrickfergus and I gave an explanation for the change of window size in the first five dwellings of the project.

I have now been advised that my reply on this matter was inaccurate. The information was provided by the Executive's professional Consultants responsible for the project and the Executive Officer who prepared the reply had no reason to believe that the information provided to him was incorrect. It was inconceivable that the Consultant would allow the project to proceed on site without seeking formal Building Control approval.

The Executive acknowledges that neither the Building Regulations, nor Building Controls were in any way responsible for the change of windows which occurred to five dwellings in Westmount Avenue.

I am most concerned that the information given to you was incorrect and offer my sincere apologies."

I, too, am most concerned that I should have received such a response in the first instance. It should never have been necessary for that officer, at his level, to have to come back with such a response. However, if I had not asked for comment by the building control officer in Carrickfergus council, the misleading information would not have been detected. This experience has shattered the confidence of elected members of my party in the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. It makes one believe that it is necessary to look closely at every reply one receives.

It is not unreasonable for some of us to ask how many similar cover-ups have gone unchallenged. I do not think that anyone could consider that to be an unreasonable thought to harbour. I am not so ungracious as not to accept the follow-up letter of explanation and apology, dated 29 January, from the executive.

From this singularly disgraceful experience, my party colleagues believe that no expense must be spared by the Minister in providing full and detailed answers to questions raised in the House regarding activities in the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, which requires more thorough scrutiny than occurs at present. The Minister answered questions on this matter, on 3 February 1988, from my hon. Friend the Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross), whose disappointment and dissatisfaction I share. The costs likely to be incurred in making available the information sought through those written answers is well worth it.

I bring this matter to the attention of the House and of the Minister. I trust that he will agree with me that it should never have been necessary for me to bring this matter to the House or for him to be here to deal with it. It is inconceivable that such inaccurate information should have been relayed to a Member of this House. I trust that the Minister will assure the House that such action as is necessary will be taken to ensure that it can never happen again, and that the so-called professional consultants who proffered the advice in the first instance are reprimanded. Otherwise, I am sure, that some of us could legitimately feel that those who supplied the information had been apt pupils of Sir Robert Armstrong in being economical with the truth, or guilty, as another distinguished gentleman once said, of terminological inexactitude.

10.15 pm

Mr. Clifford Forsythe (Antrim, South): I am glad to have the opportunity to support my hon. Friend the Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) in this matter. My remarks will be short, and I hope to the point.

I must admit that I speak more in sorrow than in anger. Along with my colleagues on this Bench, I have endeavoured to work a system which I find undemocratic and generally unresponsive to the needs of my constituents. It is a shock to find that our efforts to iron out general housing problems by having a full and frank discussion with top officials of the body responsible for housing in Northern Ireland have been exploited by deflecting our relevant and specific questions with what has subsequently turned out to be misleading information.

It is even more surprising that that should have happened at the meeting referred to by my hon. Friend, which took place on 7 December. It was attended not only by senior officers of the Housing Executive, but by a representative number of the board members, including the board chairman.

I remind the House and the Minister that this is the second time recently that the conduct of that body has been raised in this place. It was last raised by the hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. M. Smyth). On that occasion he was concerned that Members of Parliament,

[Mr. Clifford Forsythe]

all of us from Northern Ireland, had been told that we could not raise any matter on behalf of our constituents without producing to the Housing Executive a letter of authority from the constituent concerned. I am glad that that mistaken impression was subsequently corrected and each of us received a letter of apology.

However, the matter is much more serious. If a body under the control of a Minister who is responsible to this House—we should remember that those who attended the meeting included the chairman of the board of the Housing Executive—is prepared through carelessness, laziness or, worse still, deliberate intent to mislead other Members of this House, that must call into question the rights and privileges of this House. Those rights and privileges were fought for and established over the centuries and have been jealously guarded by this illustrious House at all times.

It also unfortunately raises the question: has it happened before? Has it happened in other similar bodies in Northern Ireland, either knowingly or unknowingly? Those questions are probably impossible to answer without a great deal of investigation.

We hope that the Minister in his reply will give us a categorical assurance that he will do all in his power to see that it does not happen again. For our part, we will be extremely careful in future to see that it does not happen again. I only hope that we do not have continually to come back to the House seeking Adjournment debates to get the truth from the Housing Executive.

10.18 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Richard Needham): The information given to the hon. Member for Antrim, South (Mr. Forsythe) was, as he rightly said, incorrect. Mr. Cameron wrote to him apologising fully for having given the hon. Member wrong information. Mr. Cameron, whom Opposition Members know well, deeply regrets that, and I am absolutely convinced that there was no intention in his letter to the hon. Member to do anything other than give him the facts as they were presented to him.

As the hon. Member pointed out, a consultant employed by the Housing Executive was undertaking the work. The hon. Member raised the matter with the Housing Executive, on the basis that some of his constituents had complained that the larger windows had been placed in the buildings, which meant that their blinds and curtains did not fit. When the Housing Executive inquired of the consultants why this had happened, quite frankly, it got a cock and bull story. The Housing Executive deeply regrets that it fell for that line, and wrote to the hon. Member as it did.

The chairman of the Housing Executive is known to Opposition Members. In my dealings with him, even though I have occasionally taken hospitality from him, I have found that it has not in any way altered his strenuous defence of his right to question the Government's policies in relation to the money and back-up that the Housing Executive requires. He is a man of great personal integrity and determination and feels very strongly that hon. Members should be fully informed about what goes on in the Housing Executive.

The Housing Executive has 170,000 houses to manage, spends approximately £500 million per year and does about 400,000 repairs each year, and things do go wrong. The chairman regrets that, and I am sure that the officers of the Housing Executive regret that. If there are ways to improve the relationship between the Housing Executive and hon. Members, I am sure that the executive would be only too willing to accept that. Of course there will be occasions when hon. Members, write to the executive, as there are when we write to our local housing authorities, and sometimes receive replies which we do not find to our taste. Having said that, I am not saying that information should not be given to hon. Members promptly, politely and properly, and it should be correct in every detail.

I inquired today how many letters had been received from hon. Members for Northern Ireland since the election. Some 3,600 have been received, and some 3,400 from councillors. The executive does its best, but the best sometimes falls short of the ideal.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): Would the Minister say that it is coincidental that the letter to my hon. Friend arrived the day after the Order Paper was published? Will he acknowledge that most of those letters refer to simple items and press for cases to be considered? Does he share my concern about important matters such as a contractor being given further contracts when he was not insured? We were fobbed off with the sort of answer that had been put to the chairman, that such practice is detrimental to the public interest, to the taxpayers and to the Housing Executive.

Mr. Needham: If there are cases in which the hon. Gentleman feels that contracts may have been given without proper consideration, I should take that immensely seriously. It is crucial that that sort of construction is carefully monitored. I know that that view is fully understood by the chairman, the board and the officers of the Housing Executive. Having said that, I accept that it has not always got it right. If the hon. Gentleman presses me on whether it is a question of conspiracy on the one hand or a cock-up on the other, I think that, when mistakes were made, they were more likely to have been as a result of inadvertence rather than some deeply laid plan to avoid giving proper and sensible advice to hon. Members.

Nevertheless, I accept that hon. Members have every right to raise matters in the House if they feel that incorrect information has been given. I welcome that, because it is extremely important that the Government know exactly what is going on. Hon. Members are best able, in dealing with their constituents, to discover the facts on the ground.

I am sure that hon. Members will accept that the Housing Executive in Northern Ireland has done a remarkable job over the past few years in raising the standard of public-sector housing and in effecting repairs. However, that does not give grounds for complacency.

I accept the point that the hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) has made. We shall look, as will the chairman, at what can be done. If hon. Members think that steps could be taken to improve relationships with the Housing Executive at local, regional or central level to make communication easier and more efficient, we shall look at that.

On behalf of the Housing Executive, and Mr. Cameron, I apologise for the fact that the hon. Member for Antrim, East was given incorrect advice. I have looked into the matter carefully. I do not believe that there was any

intention to give that advice. Nevertheless, the wrong advice was given and I apologise to the hon. Gentleman and to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-seven minutes past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 5 February 1988

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITIONS

Road Transfers (Harrow)

9.35 am

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): I should like to present a petition on behalf of residents in the Heights, Gaylor road, Dabbs Hill lane, Silverdale close, Martin drive, Mallet drive, Doncaster gardens, Doncaster drive and the Link in my constituency. It is signed by nearly all the residents of those places who object to the plans being put forward to the Boundary Commission that their road should be transferred to the London borough of Ealing on the basis that the residents are to the south of the railway line. They take the view that they were there before the railway line and object to being transferred to the borough of Ealing because they do not like Ealing's policies or rates and its education is terrible. They want to stay in Conservative Harrow.

To lie upon the Table.

Rate Capping (Waltham Forest)

9.36 am

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): I should like to present a petition on behalf of the residents of Waltham Forest about rate capping there. The cuts imposed as a result of that rate capping are not acceptable to the community. The petition says:

"Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House should support local services in Waltham Forest and withdraw selective rate limitation."

The petition, which I support, contains the signatures of approximately 5,250 local people, but that is just the tip of the iceberg of local concern. The Government have treated my borough very badly, and severe cuts in social services, education and other public services are a consequence. I support my local residents who have petitioned the House.

To lie upon the Table.

Motor Vehicles (Wearing of Rear Seat Belts by Children) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

9.37 am

Mr. Stephen Day (Cheadle): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The Bill requires the compulsory restraint of children under the age of 14 in the rear of cars in which restraints are fitted. The Bill will not require retrospective fitment. It would enable the Secretary of State to introduce regulations prescribing the description of seat belts to be worn and the manner in which they are to be fixed and worn. Regulations may also exempt children of any prescribed description and vehicles of a prescribed class. A driver who fails to comply will be liable to a maximum fine of £100. In effect, the Bill adds a new section 33C to the Road Traffic Act 1972.

I should like to place before the House two basic arguments in support of the Bill. The first is the case for the restraint of children and the second is the case for legislation. The 1986 casualty figures show how much at risk is the child who is carried unrestrained in the rear of a car. In that year, 89 per cent. of child car-occupant casualties were seated in the rear—that represents 8,560 children—and 91 per cent. of fatalities were children seated in the rear of vehicles.

The largest casualty group was of children aged between five and 13 years. That group accounted for 65 per cent. of the total and only 8 per cent. of them wore restraints in accidents. Surveys conducted by the Transport and Road Research Laboratory show that only 17 per cent. of those children travelling in the rear wore a restraint.

Accident research has shown that unrestrained children are more at risk from head injury than adults and that unrestrained children suffer head injury in 80 per cent. of accidents. Swedish research carried out by Volvo, Nielsen shows that ejection from a vehicle is a common cause of injury. Everyone who has seen the video produced by the Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety which used dummies to show the horrific injuries that a child may suffer will understand how ejection from a car can cause extremely serious injuries.

Other research by the Transport and Road Research Laboratory shows that the use of child restraints can reduce the incidence of fatal injury by about 75 per cent. and that of serious injury by about 50 per cent.

The Bill's effects will be gradual as older cars without restraints are gradually taken off the road. The exact effects of the Bill are therefore likely to be small at first although it is difficult to estimate how many rear restraints are currently available in the back seats of cars. However, reductions of about 50 serious and fatal injuries might be expected in the first year, rising to reductions of about 300 as more belts are available. As time passes, that figure may improve.

I should have thought that the House would welcome any measures to reduce those injuries. It is not surprising that parents who have seen their children injured because they were not restrained are perhaps the most determined to see that the legislation succeeds as it, hopefully, proceeds through the House. That is understandable when we realise the anguish that those parents have endured, having seen their children suffer.

[Mr. Stephen Day]

It is also very important that we should understand what happens in a car accident. That would help us to understand the anguish suffered by parents who have experienced tragedies. Some hon. Members have told me in the corridors of the Palace of Westminster that an unrestrained child in traffic cannot be at much risk. I do not think that it is widely realised that in a 30 mph frontal crash, a 15 lb. baby would be thrown forward with a force of 450 lb. That is 30 times the baby's weight. We can therefore understand how such serious injuries can be inflicted.

Similar legislation to that contained in this Bill was introduced in Victoria and New South Wales in 1981 and 1982 respectively. The evidence there showed that the use of restraints increased and casualty rates were significantly reduced. The case for the restraint of children in the rear, no matter whether we agree with legislation, is unanswerable. There is a definite case and a need for children to be restrained. As Dr. Gordon Trinca of the Australian College of Surgeons said:

"In no country have desired levels of wearing been reached without enactment of legislation making such use compulsory. Where laws have excluded children, the wearing rate for children has been much lower."

I now want to consider whether we should legislate. Any law in a free society must obviously have public support. I would be the first to accept that. Laws are inoperable in a free society when they do not have that support. However, I have no doubt that there is widespread support for the aims of the Bill inside and outside the House.

A recent opinion poll carried out by Gallup in August last year, showed that 91 per cent. of drivers were in favour of compulsory restraint of children in the rear. We should not forget that drivers would be directly affected by the effects of the legislation. Interestingly, 92 per cent. of the general public—whether they drove or not—supported the principle in this legislation and welcomed the compulsory restraint of children.

While all hon. Members may have reasons to question the accuracy of various opinion polls, figures of 91 per cent. and 92 per cent. showing such a level of support show that we have the trend right. When that level of support is reflected among the driving public and the general public, the figures show that there is wide support for the legislation.

I believe that the public will willingly comply with this legislation, if it becomes law, in the way that they complied with legislation on front seat restraints. We can expect a great improvement in usage rates. At the moment we know that people take risks. Most people know that it is sensible to ensure that a child is restrained if restraints are available. However, if we are honest, those of us who are parents have been guilty of taking risks. Perhaps mother has a lot of shopping and is in a hurry. It is easy to forget to restrain children, or to think, "It is only just down the road, it doesn't matter this time." People know that they are taking risks if they do that.

However, people knew that they took a risk if they did not wear a front seat belt when legislation was introduced about the wearing of front seat belts. I believe that, once this Bill becomes law, people will comply with it. The British people are a sensible, law-abiding community. That is a fair combination which will ensure that the law would be upheld.

The Bill also has widespread support in the House. Two hundred and ten hon. Members responded to my letter asking for support today—we must recognise that that represents almost one third of all hon. Members in the House. One hundred and seventy-five hon. Members agreed with the principles in the Bill; 18 were undecided and only 17 replied that they were against it.

Equally, the Bill has all-party support. I want to thank the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman), who is in the Chamber. I hope that he will make a contribution later. I thank him for his work on my behalf on the Bill and for his work with the Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety without whose help I would not have been able to present the Bill to the House this morning.

I would particularly like to mention the co-ordinator of PACTS, Jean Breen, for her invaluable help. The hon. Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett) campaigned hard last year on this issue and asked a number of questions in the House.

I must also mention Mrs. Christine Burn and her daughter, who organised a "belt up in the back" campaign. As for outside organisations, I am pleased to say that the Bill is supported in principle by the Traffic Committee of the Association of Chief Police Officers of England, Wales and Northern Ireland; the Association of London Borough Road Safety Officers; the Automobile Association; the British Medical Association; the British Paediatric Association; the Casualty Surgeons Association; The Child Accident Prevention Trust; the County Road Safety Officers Association; the Guild of Experienced Motorists; the Institute of Advanced Motorists; the Institute of Road Safety Officers; the Institution of Mechanical Engineers; the Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety; the Royal Automobile Club; the Royal College of Nursing; the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents; and the Royal College of Surgeons. The evidence of support for the legislation is widespread, which in itself should be justification for its enactment.

The only serious opposition that I have so far heard represents an honourable but — I say this with due deference to my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) — a minority viewpoint: that such laws are an interference with the rights of the individual. How on earth can that argument apply to legislation governing children? It is a mystery to me how anyone can argue that the Bill is an interference with personal liberty. It sets no precedent; the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 established a parental duty to provide children with food, shelter and other basic requirements. Similarly, controls on the consumption by children of alcohol and tobacco have been with us for years. If it is wrong to legislate in this instance because it is an interference with personal liberty, why on earth are parents required by statute to ensure that their children are adequately educated? Is that an interference with personal liberty?

The case against the legislation—if, indeed, there is a case — cannot be substantiated on grounds of interference with personal liberty. Many of our laws seek to protect children, and to ensure that their parents fulfil their responsibilities. The Bill is no great threat to personal liberty, although it is certainly a threat to the dangers that face children who are unrestrained in the backs of cars.

I contend that the need for the legislation is proven, and that its public acceptability is undeniable. There remain, however, some practical details of which I feel that hon. Members should be aware, and on which I can give some practical assurances.

Why, it may be asked, does the Bill refer to "a child under the age of fourteen years"? The Bill aims to provide protection for children who cannot make considered judgments about their safety. The limit of 14 years mirrors exactly that used in the front seat belt legislation for children in section 28 of the Transport Act 1981, under which parents have a legal responsibility for their children's safety until they are 14.

What about school runs, on which a number of children are carried to school by their parents? The Bill requires the use of rear seat belts only when they have been fitted, and the driver must restrain only as many children as there are appropriate restraints. The Bill does not prohibit the carriage of unrestrained children in the rear where restraints are not available. It is designed—this sums it up nicely—to protect life, not to inhibit lifestyles.

Questions may be asked about enforcement. The traffic committee of the Association of Chief Police Officers supports in principle the compulsory use of restraints in the rear for children, and, as with compulsory front seat belt wearing, there is every probability that this measure will be self-enforcing. Typically, seat belt offences are detected as a result of some other traffic offence when the vehicle is stationery, so a police officer should be able to detect non-compliance relatively easily. I do not believe that it will be necessary for him to do so very often, because I agree with the Association of Chief Police Officers that the Bill will be self-enforcing.

A number of parents have told me that they support my ideas—but what if little Tommy undoes his seat belt, as he is probably wont to do frequently? My reply is that the Bill contains a reasonable excuse clause, which will allow the courts to take such circumstances into account. The Bill is not a sledgehammer; it is intended as a serious attempt to bring home to people their civic duty and, more important, their duties to their children.

It has been argued that, if a driver wishes to carry three children in the rear of a car that is fitted with only two seat belts, he will be faced with a difficult and unacceptable choice: which child should be left unrestrained? My Bill does not materially affect such circumstances, or, indeed, create that moral dilemma. It applies only to cars in which seat belts are already fitted. For parents who are running around with three children and only two belts, the obvious answer is to fit a third belt. If they feel that they cannot do that, the moral dilemma already exists. Surely it is unreasonable to argue that, because three, four or five children are carried in the back of a car with only two restraints, none of the children should be restrained.

It has also been argued that five children sitting in a row on the back seat unrestrained can all sit on the seat, but if some of them are restrained, others cannot. The idea of a family of young children, or a group of five friends, sitting neatly in a row, unrestrained, for the entire length of a journey, is unbelievable. Children sitting unrestrained in the backs of cars bob all over the place. As a motorway driver who used to do 40,000 or 50,000 miles a year, I have seen them bobbing around in the back probably more than most hon. Members.

It is sometimes suggested that the use of restraints by children will lead to their entrapment in accidents and car fires. It is important to be clear about this. The independent assessors' analysis of the effects of compulsory front seat belt wearing found no significant increase in the small number of drowning accidents; nor did they find any increase in the number of casualties involved in fire accidents. During the past five years, the Department of Transport's vehicle inspectorate division has seen only six cases of entrapment in severe accidents. No fires were involved, and no injuries due to entrapment by seat belts.

In August last year, there was widespread press coverage of a tragic accident in which a young child strapped in the back of an Austin Metro was burnt to death. Subsequent investigation by experts revealed that no child restraint had been fitted to the vehicle.

I believe that this is a sensible and practical piece of legislation. It is fair in application and sincere in intent. It is a mild Bill. It is not authoritarian and it is not a threat to personal liberty. It is not heavy-handed, but it is an encouragement to greater child safety. On that basis, I would have thought that the house should welcome it and I commend it to the House.

10 am

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): I congratulate the hon. Member for Cheadle (Mr. Day) on his speech and on the choice of subject for his private Member's Bill. It is a furrow that many people have ploughed before and it is not an easy one. Recognising the faces of hon. Members present in the Chamber today takes me back to when we considered the wearing of seat belts before. This is a subject that unites hon. Members who probably do not agree on any other subject. They come together in the belief that this area needs desperate action.

Today is Comic Relief day. Our television screens this morning were filled with sober announcers wearing red noses. Newspapers today are filled with pictures of politicians and other prominent personalities with the familiar red bulb on their nose. As I came to the House this morning I saw a large number of children on their way to school wearing them as well. People have been magnetised by today's event, not so much by the general problems of aid and relief for Africa, which will be the beneficiary of the generosity, as by the pictures of small children who are the innocent victims of famine in Africa and other parts of the world.

British people respond easily, quite justifiably and rightly, to the dilemma faced by children all over the world who suffer because of famine, pestilence, disease and war. Therefore, it is appropriate that the House of Commons should be considering a measure of this sort today. We are not considering the protection of adults or vast numbers of people who would undoubtedly benefit if they wore rear seat belts; we are considering children up to the age of 14 who are the innocent victims of their own carelessness or perhaps the inability of their parents to control them or strap them up.

I am the chairman of an organisation called the Seat Belt Survivors Club. It is organised within the umbrella of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents. It was established almost 10 years ago to draw attention to the benefits of wearing seat belts and to move beyond the technical and statistical arguments that exist for the wearing of seat belts in motor vehicles. We asked those who have been the victims of road accidents but beneficiaries of wearing seat belts to write to us with their

[Mr. George Robertson]

experience. I, the Minister, his predecessor, the leader of the Liberal party, or whatever it is called this week, and hon. Members on both sides of the House qualify for membership of the club because they are able to participate as human beings, never mind as politicians, because they were wearing a seat belt.

Some of the most effective letters I have seen have been received since front seat belts became compulsory. I have been approached by individuals, and the organisation has received letters, from people who have said, "We never wore a seat belt before the law made it obligatory. We were either too lazy, did not think that it would matter or resisted it because it confined us in the car." We all used to hear such arguments. Those letters have then gone on to say, "The law said that we should wear a seat belt and we believe that that is a sensible thing to do. We are law-abiding citizens and we wore the belt. We are able to talk today or to write this letter because, in a road accident subsequent to the legislation, we were restrained by a seat belt and are alive when we would have been dead without it."

That is one of the most effective arguments. Those of us in the House today will remember the previous long, dreary, monotonous and usually futile debates on seat belts. We remember the interminable objections raised by those who held up civil liberties and other arguments in opposition. We now realise that it is not a controversial matter. People simply get into their cars and put on their seat belts. For the vast majority it is now an uncomfortable experience to drive any distance without it.

On top of all of that, there is the enormous saving of lives and the prevention of serious injuries. We are not dealing with the cold statistics, projections or estimates that we were considering previously. We are now talking of between 200 and 400 human beings who would have been killed but who are alive because they were wearing a seat belt. We are talking about the 7,000 people who were protected from serious injury because they were wearing a seat belt, largely because they were forced by law to do so.

It is difficult to give the House a picture of what that means in human terms. One of the most effective speeches during the previous lengthy debates was made by the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths), with whom I probably disagree on everything. His views are well to the right of Genghis Khan. Before he became a Minister, his view was that compulsion was not advisable and he would not have supported it. However, his experience as a Minister, going to hospitals and talking to casualty surgeons converted him. For somebody who took such a robust view—I am sure that his view was even more robust than that of the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor)—to be converted by the facts is a salutary lesson to us all.

This measure is simple. It should be uncontroversial, uncomplicated and wholly beneficial. We are talking about 1,000 children who are killed or seriously injured in cars today because they are unrestrained.

The arguments deployed by the hon. Member for Cheadle are powerful and difficult to contradict. If one looks at the transportation of anything in something as lethal as a car one can see a comparison. If we wanted to send a valuable china object through the post or some eggs in a box we would not send them without them having been carefully and strongly packed to ensure that they would not move about. Yet we allow ourselves to carry fragile children—they are as fragile at 30 miles an hour as eggs in a wooden box—without any restraint or padding. Anybody who thinks about wrapping up a fragile birthday or Christmas present and concludes that it should be done thoroughly and effectively makes the argument for restraining children in cars.

The issue then comes to why we should make it compulsory. Is it not an obligation on parents to ensure that their children are restrained in cars? Should it not be for the children to be taught from an early age that wearing seat belts, like road safety, is the norm? Of course, the answer to that is yes. Of course, every parent should be obliged to do that. As the hon. Member for Cheadle said, we do not often allow that decision to be left to parents without the supervison and the back-up of the law.

Even those of us who are passionate supporters of seat belts—those of us who are convinced, because of direct experience, of the value of seat belts — know how difficult it is to get children to wear them in the back of cars. I confess — with rear belts in my car and even before it is made obligatory—that I find it difficult to persuade my three children, on every journey, to wear what I know to be beneficial to them. I know that my children, and 90 per cent. of other children, will obey the law if it lays down that it is the norm. The law is a back-up to parents, which is often necessary to ensure that they take their responsibilities seriously. It takes them off the hook of the inevitable problems of getting children to do what is in their best interests.

Some in this debate, as in previous debates, will deploy the civil liberties argument. It is a strong argument, and we heard it interminably in previous debates on this subject. I am not in favour of imposing unreasonable restrictions on people's personal liberties or civil rights. That is not something that Parliament should always do. However, as the hon. Member for Cheadle said, we are acting on behalf of children, not adults. Once children reach the age of 14 they can make their own decisions and take their own risks, although it must be said that those risks and responsibilities place burdens on the rest of us if they end up in hospital after a road accident. That is not the issue that we are considering; we are interested only in children in the back seats of cars and in ensuring that they are protected, at least until they are old enough to take decisions for themselves.

Even if the civil liberties argument had validity and even if it had power — we saw how quickly this argument faded away with regard to front seat belts—in the case of children under 14, where rear seat belts are available, we are not arguing that that in any way affects the civil liberties of the driver or of the parent, and certainly not those of the children.

The statistics often speak for themselves. However, the people who cannot speak for themselves are the casualties. I was one such casualty 12 years ago. I often think "serious injury" is not an adequate description. In the vast majority of cases it describes not people such as I who have recovered, but those who are permanently disabled, maimed or disfigured for the rest of their lives. Road accidents are horrifying; they often take place at high speeds and involve multiple collisions. Those multiple collisions involve nearly 960 unrestrained children under

the age of 14. Their effect can be brought to life only by seeing the individuals affected. We have an obligation to reduce that carnage.

I should like to associate myself with what the hon. Member for Cheadle said in congratulating the Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety. It, with all the other organisations involved in this matter, has done much to alert the public to the dangers involved. Not only that—scaremongering is easy, and it is easy to portray the agonies involved—but it has drawn much attention to the remedies that are available, which are simple, easy, effective and publicly acceptable. Jean Breen, who has worked assiduously on behalf of the organisation, has done a great service to those who in the past would have lost their lives but who in the future will be saved.

This is a popular measure. It was supported by over 90 per cent. of the population in a recent opinion poll. It is necessary and, on this appropriate day, it is humanitarian. If we can make a small impression on the carnage and tragedy of road accidents involving children, the House will have done a great service.

10.14 am

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): It is always pleasant and agreeable to find myself completely in accord with the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson)—whether I be left or right of Ghengis Khan matters not. I suspect that the hon. Gentleman is a few degrees to the right of Karl Marx.

I start by declaring an interest. I have the honour to be the president of the Guild of Experienced Motorists. Membership of that body is open to anyone who has driven for at least 10 years without serious conviction for driving matters. As my hon. Friend the Member for Cheadle (Mr. Day) said, it supports the Bill.

I congratulate my hon. Friend not only on bringing forward this important measure but on presenting it with great sincerity and clarity and by meeting the arguments. He has rendered a great service to road safety.

I can add a further survey to those that my hon. Friend mentioned. The Guild of Experienced Motorists carried out a survey of its members last year on rear seat belts. Surprise, surprise—the result what that 90 per cent. of its members came out in favour of the compulsory wearing of rear seat belts. It must be remembered that those people are drivers whom it might be expected would take a different point of view, but they bore in mind the incontrovertible fact that seat belts have saved lives, that they will continue to do so and that they have prevented serious and minor injuries.

The evidence is that there has been a 30 per cent. reduction in death and injuries since the seat belt legislation was passed; a 25 per cent. reduction in hospital admissions; a 39 per cent. reduction in brain injuries; a 53 per cent. reduction in facial wounds; and, for the economically minded, saving of £130 million.

Mr. Gary Waller (Keighly): Will my hon. Friend say from what source he has obtained those figures? They seem to be at odds with many others that are available.

Sir Anthony Grant: The figures are mainly derived from Government research. I obtained them from the Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety.

Some 9,000 children were killed or injured in 1986—those are Government figures. Government research has shown that child restraints have reduced fatal accidents by 15 per cent.

Apart from those bare statistics, one can see from one's own experience—if one takes the trouble to investigate them—the dangers that exist for children in motor cars. A little time ago in my constituency at the Rosie maternity hospital, we had an example of those dangers when Essex county council produced a little chute, down which we precipitated no less a person that the Under-Secretary of State for Transport. We simulated a speed of 15 mph. He was precipitated down the chute clutching a doll to his bosom. He is an athletic man, but despite his efforts, at that speed, at an impact of 15 miles an hour, without restraint, the doll came out of his hands and the head was knocked off.

If that happens at 15 miles per hour, to an energetic chap like the Minister, we should consider the risks to other passengers. Mothers often suffer from the delusion that if they are clutching their baby and cuddling it tightly it will somehow save him or her. Alas and alack, the contrary is true. The results are misery, death and injury.

Let us look at what has happened overseas, where there has been effective child restraint legislation. In Michigan, in the United States, there has been a 25 to 50 per cent. reduction in injuries. In Victoria, Australia, where the law is similar to the Bill, injuries to children have gone down by 17 per cent. In New Mexico, the fatality rate is down by 33 per cent., and in Tennessee deaths have been reduced by 15 per cent. The evidence from overseas completely supports the Bill.

Why should we not extend the seat belt law to children in rear seats? As my hon. Friend the Member for Cheadle said, the only issue is freedom. There is no greater lover of freedom than I. All my political life I have believed that there is far too much bureaucratic interference in our lives. I believe in the sanctity of the individual, I detest the nanny state and I have some sympathy with those who want the freedom to injure themselves of their own volition through idiot schemes, provided that they do not interfere with other people. However, children are different. They need a nanny. They cannot decide for themselves, and we are responsible for them.

For a long time, the law has recognised that fact. As the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) said, we are not allowed to starve children, to deny them shelter, make them drunk, or to allow them to be uneducated. Legislation has recognised those factors for many years. Therefore, why on earth should it be an infringement of freedom to ensure that children are not killed, maimed or injured in such dangerous things as motor vehicles?

Many details in the Bill need to be sorted out. My hon. Friend the Member for Cheadle mentioned some of them, but the Bill contains provisions for regulations to be made to deal with all exceptional cases. The original seat belt legislation made exceptions for people who were too fat, too small, or claustrophobic. Those matters can be dealt with by regulations and they can be sorted out, discussed and debated in Committee.

Today's debate is about a basic principle. I believe that if one child's life is spared, or one child is saved from horrific injury, the Bill is worth while. If only those who are opposed to the Bill could see the horrors of children in the hospitals in my constituency who are injured, and if only they could share the grief, misery and remorse of

[Sir Anthony Grant]

the parents whose children are suffering in that way, they would join me in giving the Bill an enthusiastic Second Reading.

10.22 am

Mr. Ronnie Fearn (Southport): I congratulate the hon. Member for Cheadle (Mr. Day) on a sensible Bill. I am delighted to give it my wholehearted support. If it becomes law it will save the lives of many young people and protect thousands more from serious injury.

We have heard some of the figures for accidents involving children, and they make very sad reading. In 1986, 70 children were killed in car accidents and more than 9,500 were injured—89 per cent. of those injured were occupying rear seats. It is undeniable that if the Bill had been in force at that time those figures would have been dramatically lower. Many of those injuries were caused by the child hitting the back of the front seat of the car. Another common cause of injury was ejection from the car. Both of those types of injury would have been much less likely if the children concerned had been restrained by seat belts.

Naturally, it is extremely difficult to estimate the effects that the Bill will have on the number of serious accidents, but the Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety has done research that shows that this legislation could result in 50 fewer serious and fatal injuries in the first year. It also shows that that figure could be expected to rise to 300 when seat belts become more widely available. Parliament cannot ignore that finding. We have a duty to take action to save lives whenever possible and we are grateful for that opportunity today.

The Bill has the support of many of the most widely respected motoring organisations, including the AA and the Guild of Experienced Motorists, which has already been mentioned. I believe that the Government also look favourably on this matter. The Department of Transport road safety review states that

"Mandatory use"

of rear seat belts

"should be kept in mind as a possibility for at least the long term—and sooner—if the general climate of opinion and the extent of voluntary use favour it."

I believe that public opinion is now in favour of taking this action.

Most people now accept that the strong rules on the wearing of seat belts in front seats have been beneficial. Although a stubborn few still refuse to wear them, most people accept that it is a wise law that has saved many lives. If we insist on seat belts for adults in the front seats of cars, it is inconsistent for us not to insist on children wearing rear seat belts when we know how many lives can be saved and how many serious injuries can be prevented by such a measure.

This is a wise Bill because it has taken account of the world as it is, not of the world as we would wish it to be. If the Bill is enacted it will be illegal to drive a car containing a child passenger who is not restrained, if that car has rear seat belts. At present, at least 2 million cars are equipped with rear seat belts, and since rear seat belts have been compulsory in new cars since 1987, that number will increase.

The Bill, sensibly, will not force undue expense on motorists but will ensure that the use of rear seat belts becomes the accepted norm. Similarly, those with large families will not be penalised because the Bill recognises that cars may have to carry more children than the number of seat belts.

My spokesmanship on health issues has taken me into many hospitals throughout the country. I have seen children with smashed faces in hospital wards. Many of those children were in the rear seats of cars that had no seat belts. If the Bill can prevent such injuries for only a small percentage of those children I, for one, will be grateful. I can see no serious practical objection to a Bill that will do so much to save the lives of young people under 14, and that has been carefully drafted to avoid serious objections and difficulties. I urge the House to support the Bill and to take a major step towards saving lives.

10.27 am

Sir Philip Goodhart (Beckenham): I entirely agree with the hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Fearn). I join him in congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Cheadle (Mr. Day) on his preparation and presentation of the Bill. I also agree with the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson), and I am delighted that he was preserved by his seat belt to be with us today.

I have no doubt that the introduction of seat belt legislation has been an important factor in the welcome decline in the number of people killed on our roads in recent years. I have absolutely no doubt that if the Bill that has been so ably prepared and presented by my hon. Friend the Member for Cheadle reaches the statute book, it will play an important role in significantly reducing the number of children killed and injured on our roads.

Why has it taken so long to bring forward the measure and to get seat belt legislation on to the statute book in the first place? From the time that a seat belt clause first appeared in Government legislation back in 1973, it took about 10 years for the wearing of seat belts to become mandatory, and a further five years before this private Member's Bill appeared. Hon. Members are anxious to press the Government of the day to take urgent action to tighten up safety laws to prevent other types of accidents — for example, railway, aircraft, tube, and ferry accidents—but we are strangely reluctant to do so in respect of road accidents. It took us 10 years to activate seat belt legislation, when we knew that its introduction would save hundreds of lives a year. We know that a small change in the law relating to breathalysers will undoubtedly save more lives.

If we could find time to deal with legislation to introduce automatic safety and speed cameras on our roads, we could, for the first time, effectively enforce our speed regulations. However, I expect that it will take another 10 years before the House gets around to the installation of automatic speed cameras.

Why are we so reluctant to deal with the problem of road safety? There are two reasons. The first is that official road safety statistics are presented in the best possible anodyne fashion. They are produced late. Indeed, they are produced months or years after they might make any great impact.

In its important report on road safety, the Select Committee on Transport made some sensible recommendations for the improvement of the presentation of road safety statistics. I know that they are sensible because I drafted them myself. Such improvements could be

brought into effect without any further action by the House or any further legislation by the Government. I hope that action will soon be taken. I fear that, so far, the recommendation made by the Select Committee on Transport has been totally ignored.

The second reason is that, sadly, many hon. Members are bad drivers. My hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant) is the president of the Guild of Advanced Motorists. I am sure that he never infringes the traffic laws. The fact that many hon. Members are dreadful drivers has imposed a parliamentary road block on the improvement of road safety. After all, it is embarrassing, if one has made a stirring speech in favour of road safety, and one is arrested for speeding a few days later. Undoubtedly, that produces in many hon. Members an ambivalent attitude to the enforcement and tightening up of traffic laws.

I remember when, many years ago, that great parliamentarian Aneurin Bevan was beginning to take an interest in road safety and made one or two interesting speeches on the topic. He was later spotted by a member of Clement Attlee's family, breaking the law as it turned out. He was taken to court and never took an interest in road safety again. I suspect that many of us are inhibited in that fashion.

Although I expect that my hon. Friend the Member for Cheadle will get unanimous support for his Bill, there are clearly many parliamentary hurdles ahead.

I make two pleas to my hon. Friend the Minister. I ask him to redouble his efforts to ensure that the presentation of road safety statistics is made more effective in the near future. I ask also for an assurance that, if my hon. Friend's Bill runs into difficulties in Committee, or if it falls at one of the many of the parliamentary hurdles that still lie ahead, he will use his best endeavours to ensure that the basic principles of the measure are introduced in Government legislation in the next Session. Of course, I realise that he cannot commit the Government in any way today, but I hope that he will assure the House that, if problems arise, he will use his best endeavours to make sure that the measure is adopted. Parliament will not be doing its duty if we fail to protect our children.

10.38 am

Mr. Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield): After having been part of campaigns for various safety measures over the years, one has the impression that a small group of eccentrics insist on having reunions in the Chamber to talk about issues about which they feel reasonably obsessive. That small group of hon. Members, many of whom have got to know each other very well, have been joined by a few new faces in this Parliament. They meet regularly.

Most of us feel proud that, at some stage, we have made a contribution not only to the making of great speeches —many great speeches are made in the Chamber—but to providing the votes that change people's lives in such a dramatic way. None of us has any reason to be ashamed of our record over the past few years. On an all-party basis, we have helped to save lives and prevent deaths and serious and disabling injuries.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) talked about what we mean by "serious" injury. I advise him that by a disabling injury, we mean never being able to walk without pain again. If one talks to surgeons and to the people who suffer such injuries, one learns that that is what they mean by serious injury.

Today is the day of Comic Relief. I make no apology for returning to that topic, which was raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton. Today we have all seen lots of happy children going to school dressed up with their red noses. It is a super day because they are raising funds for children in Africa. The most common killers of young children in Africa are disease and starvation. Our country is not like Africa. Many of the diseases that were common killers of children have disappeared from our country, thank God. However, worthy as it is, the Bill will not stop the most common killer of children in this country, which is not cancer, leukaemia, heart malformation or disease, but death on the road. It is not even the subject that we are discussing. Most of the children who die on our roads are pedestrians or are on bicycles. There are strategies and ways in which we could tackle that problem, not by law, but by much greater efforts in other ways.

However, we are debating this excellent small Bill, promoted by the hon. Member for Cheadle (Mr. Day). I add my congratulations to him on his work. It is easy to stand up in the Chamber and make a speech, but there is a lot of work involved in private Member's Bill. Like other hon. Members here, I have had a private Member's Bill on this subject and we all recognise that it takes a lot of time and effort and does not get one any Brownie points with the Whips. However, it is a good Bill which certainly deserves support.

Our children went to school today with red noses, and the tragedy is that some of their parents will not see them come home. Some of their parents will pick them up on the school run and will kill their children. Some children will not come back from that day of fun. We cannot stop that. It will happen today as it happens every day. Parents will get the news, hear the knock on the door and see the unfamiliar sight of a policeman on the doorstep and they will wonder what on earth could have happened. That is the chilling fact of the deaths that we in this House have taken so much for granted.

Last week, and on previous weeks, the House was full for private Members' legislation when we discussed important issues, such as life before birth and the freedom of information. However, sometimes on a day such as today, when we are discussing something that will help children to live—children who have personalities, who already have all their faculties, and who are dearly loved by their parents—I look round and notice that quite a few of our colleagues do not seem to think that important enough to turn up for the debate.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): I assure the hon. Gentleman that although there is only token representation from Northern Ireland on the Ulster Unionist Bench, my hon. Friends, like many other hon. Members who are absent, are fully behind the Bill and, if they were present, they would congratulate the hon. Member for Cheadle (Mr. Day) on introducing this important measure.

Mr. Sheerman: I thank the hon. Gentleman. He is right in part. I was trying to say that the amount of attention received by this issue—the greatest killer of children in our country — should have greater priority among a number of our colleagues. I say that about my party, the Conservative party and, indeed, all parties in the House. If we are seriously to tackle all the other problems of the killing of people on British roads, we must upgrade this subject in terms of its profile and priority on the parliamentary agenda.

[Mr. Sheerman]

It is seven years since I introduced the Safety of Children in Cars Bill. As we know, it did not succeed. It was not as high in the ballot as this Bill, from the hon. Member for Cheadle, which was number five. Although my Bill did not succeed, we managed to use it again in the Transport Act 1981, so it survived in an unusual and unique way. It became law, having been accepted by the Government. I give credit to the then Minister and his Under-Secretary who have moved on to greater things, for their efforts at that time. Although I should not suspect such things on an all-party occasion, I suspect that there was the belief that, by accepting the children-in-cars element, the compulsory legislation to make adults belt up in the front seats of cars might be downgraded and bought off. However, in the same piece of legislation we also managed to obtain the passage of an amendment on that subject.

We should give the general safety of children a high priority. I should like to give the House a few statistics. We shall have too many today, so I shall go through them quickly. When presenting a paper at a recent conference on the safety of children, not far from this House, the pre-eminent expert, Barbara Sabey — most hon. Members will know that she is a senior person in the Transport and Road Research Laboratory — pointed out that road accidents are a tragic and, for the most part, avoidable loss of young life. During 1986, more than 41,000 child casualties were reported to the police. Weighting that statistic dramatically, it is equivalent to over half the population of an average-size parliamentary constituency — in fact, perhaps, the constituency of Southend, East. Possibly thousands — maybe even tens of thousands — more accidents went unreported. Until the health sector improves its accident reporting systems, we shall never know exactly how many there are.

Road accidents are the biggest cause of accidental death among children. According to a paper produced by the Child Accident Prevention Trust only this week, they are the most severe type of accidents, largely because of the forces involved and because hard and heavy metal objects hit frail and small human bodies. Nearly 3,000 children suffer disability as a result of such accidents and about 10 per cent. are left permanently disabled. It is clear that we give too little priority to this problem.

However, we should not talk only about the problems because we have some solutions, such as the Bill. Other possibilities include a national pre-school traffic club. I hope that the Minister is still giving his earnest attention to that. The education and training of children is one of our deficiencies. We do not get through to the child at home or to the family and, despite all our efforts, we do not get through to the child in school.

In recent weeks I have been discussing with the Minister and other hon. Members the fact that it is about time that we went back to the example set by the Americans in the 1960s and made a British version of a programme such as "Sesame Street". It was wonderful entertainment; children loved it but they learned at the same time. We are the pre-eminent television programme-makers of the world. Why should we not make our own version of "Sesame Street"? Why not get the BBC and commercial companies to make a programme which, sugaring the pill, delivers a consciousness that could do so much to teach children about the number one hazard to survival in their lives?

There are other important issues. Manufacturers should have introduced pro-pedestrian car designs long ago. There is also today's issue of the wearing of rear restraints by children. That is important because it is the first, quickest and surest step in cutting down these dreadful casualties. It is quick, easy, acceptable and popular. Surely there cannot be many more recommendations for a piece of legislation. We can move on from today. Let us get children in cars out of the way and move on to other issues which are equally, and sometimes more, important.

The hon. Member for Cheadle said that the Bill is a natural progression of the safety of children in cars legislation, which requires all children under the age of 14 to be restrained if seated in the front seats of cars. We knew that it was the first step because we were practical people, and we knew that without that first step it would be far too idealistic to introduce restraints for children in the rear seats. However, we got anchorage points in rear seats and we then moved on to the fitting of rear seat belts. We now have a great opportunity to get this little Bill into law.

This will be a powerful piece of legislation. The original aim of our provision was to improve the safety of children in the front seats of cars, the most dangerous place to be unrestrained. Careful monitoring has shown that it has been successful. Front seat belt usage increased almost overnight from 50 per cent. to over 90 per cent. for the five to 13-year-old category. That resulted in a net casualty reduction of 15 per cent. That happened in the year following the introduction of the legislation and I have no reason to believe that it has not been maintained. As expected, the provision did not have any significant casualty reduction effect on child casualties in the rear seats, where most children sit and where most are injured.

Earlier this week, a report was published by an expert working party of the Child Accident Prevention Trust, which said that an increasing use of restraints for children in the rear is the only key to the improvement of in-car safety. The report stated:

> "As 90 per cent. of child car occupant casualties are seated in the rear where restraint usage is only about 30 per cent., it has to be concluded that the only way to reduce child casualties is to increase markedly rear restraint use."

Although the report recommends a number of complementary measures to increase usage, such as the need for the widespread introduction of child restraint loan schemes, priority is given to the need for the introduction of the Bill.

A few bouquets are in order. Thanks to the efforts of the Minister, road safety officers and other organisations, such as the "belt up in the back campaign" and the "That's Life" programme, the myth that it is safe to sit unrestrained in the rear seats of cars has been largely dispelled. All those efforts have played a crucial part in developing a positive public attitude about the value of seat belts and the need to wear them in the rear, but, just as we found when we were talking about adults in the front seats of cars, that is not enough. All our efforts got the wearing rate up to 30 per cent., but not much beyond. That is when legislation became the only step forward. The hon. Member for Cheadle was right. This is not an impetuous piece of legislation. It is not a heavy-handed piece of legislation. It follows the natural progression of events and circumstances over a long period.

I do not wish to detain the House any longer. Although only some states in the United States have legislation for adults to wear seat belts, every state has legislation for children to wear seat belts. Children under 14 are not responsible for themselves. Society and their parents are responsible for them. We must look after children who are too young to protect their own interests and to understand the consequences of jiggling around in the back seat of a car travelling at any speed. As the guardian of those young people, the House must pass the Bill.

Legislation has been introduced all over the world and it has been effective. The Bill is practical. It applies only to cars in which restraints are fitted, and it does not require additional expenditure by parents. That is important, but, ultimately, it is a matter for the Department of Transport, in consultation with other bodies.

Some hon. Members may want to know more about the important group of children aged between one and four. That is a difficult age group because adult seat belts are not ideal for young children between one and four. It is better to have a properly designed seat for children between the ages of one and four, but an adult seat belt is far better than no seat belt. In consultation, the Department of Transport can discuss the problems of the one-to-four age group properly and can get the matter right when the Bill goes into Committee, which, I believe, is a possibility.

I have tried to present some of the facts. None of us believes that the safety of children and adults is merely a matter of emotion. It is a matter of emotion when one sees people in hospital and hears of children dying unnecessarily or being maimed for life, but none of the measures that I have put forward has been based on emotion. I, PACTS and most of the organisations at the forefront of the compaign for seat belts for children believe that we should talk about effective measures based on science and technology and on the experiences of other comparable countries. This is an important issue and I hope that the hon. Member for Cheadle will have every success with his Bill.

10.57 am

Mr. Gary Waller (Keighley): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Cheadle (Mr. Day) on his good fortune in obtaining a high place in the ballot, and also on the sincerity with which he introduced his Bill.

So far in our debate, arguments have been used in an appropriate way and I welcome the fact that nobody's sincerity has been impugned, as has sometimes happened in the past. I wish to put forward a different viewpoint for that put forward so far, but I hope that those who disagree with me will accept my commitment to road safety and my sincerity in saying that I feel just as strongly about the need to reduce the number of avoidable deaths.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant) said that the only arguments against the introduction of this Bill related to freedom of the individual. I am sorry that he has had to leave us, because that is not the case. I do not intend to rely on any arguments relating to freedom of the individual. I agree with those hon. Members who said that some issues transcend the issue of freedom of the individual.

Of course it is necessary to protect children. It is sometimes necessary to protect children from the foolishness of their parents or of adults. My one concern about the Education Reform Bill is that many aspects seem to rely considerably on parental choice. We must also consider those children whose parents may not have such a commitment to education. However, that is a side issue, upon which I do not want to be drawn. I use it to illustrate the fact that I believe that the issue of freedom is not one upon which we should rely when considering the safety of children under the age of 14.

I hope that everyone will accept that probably the most important thing we can do to improve road safety is to improve driver behaviour. Of course, some accidents are caused as a result of vehicle malfunction, and others as the result of civil engineering failings on the road, but the majority of accidents are essentially attributable to failings in driver behaviour. If we could improve such behaviour, we could substantially reduce the number of accidents, casualties and fatalities.

It was rather interesting that when I mentioned to a number of people, particularly women, that I hoped to speak in this debate, they reacted with almost exactly the same words, "When I have got the children in the car I always drive carefully, as if I had a crate of eggs in the back." I am sure that that analogy sounds familiar to several hon. Members.

The individual's driving behaviour alters according to their perception of possible danger. Such risks are considered greater if a vulnerable cargo is being carried. When eggs—or children—are being carried, the brakes are applied that much earlier before the bend, overall speed is moderated and the driver stops when the lights change to amber rather than accelerating as one might when driving alone.

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): The hon. Gentleman is treading common ground because we all believe in better driving and better safety. Is the essence of the hon. Gentleman's argument that the more vulnerable the cargo the safer the driving, and that therefore children in the back should not have seat belts?

Mr. Waller: If the hon. Gentleman allows me to develop my argument, he will find out.

The assumption is that the crate of eggs or other cargo in the back is loose and may topple forward with disastrous consequences. Let us suppose that the crate was roped down and attached to the car or was prevented from moving forward in the event of de-acceleration. Is it not more than likely that one's behaviour would be modified? The driver may not revert to the style he adopts when driving alone, but, nevertheless, his perception of potential risks would be adjusted, at least subconsciously.

Mr. George Robertson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Waller: I will give way later.

In such circumstances my speed may increase by the odd mile an hour and I might round the bend with a touch more elan. Indeed, I might apply the brakes a fraction later than I would if my cargo was more vulnerable. I am sure that all drivers adjust their driving behaviour according to the cargo and the passengers they have on board. Perhaps if they are driving their elderly grannies their driving style is quite different from that when driving someone of their own age.

Sir Anthony Grant: I apologise to my hon. Friend for my absence at the beginning of his speech. Of course people drive more carefully if they have children in the

[Sir Anthony Grant]

back. However, what we must consider is the fact that, no matter how carefully people drive, they are likely to be involved in an accident where someone else is to blame. In those circumstances, a mother may be driving along carefully and slowly, but, without any fault on her part, there may still be a much greater risk to her children.

Mr. Waller: I am absolutely delighted that my hon. Friend has made that point, because it is intrinsic to my argument as it develops. Shortly, I will discuss what happens when another motorist is involved.

I accept that changes in mental attitude may vary only marginally, but marginal changes are of the essence. Serious injuries or fatal accidents only occur once in several hundred thousand vehicle miles. One of the official documents that I have seen has calculated that a fatal accident or serious injury occurs one in every 1 million vehicle miles. However, the difference between a near miss and total disaster is sometimes slight. Therefore, a driver's behaviour needs only to be modified a touch just once in all those hundred thousand miles for different consequences to ensue.

Let us take the analogy of a crate of eggs a stage further. We must not consider this issue just from the point of view of people in the car. In this connection, the argument by my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West is relevant. Apart from drivers and passengers in cars, pedestrians are especially vulnerable. They are not protected by a steel shell, and if hit by a vehicle it is flesh and bone that feel the impact.

Let us suppose that an elderly and infirm person is crossing the road slowly, step by step, and a car is bearing down fast. As a witness to that potential tragedy what would be my thoughts? If I had time to think, I might hope that the elderly person would see the car and be able to take evasive action. However, if that was a forlorn hope, I might fervently wish that the driver of the car was driving with extra caution. One reason why a driver might do so could be because a vulnerable cargo, such as a crate of eggs, was loose on the back seat. I believe that that analogy is a fair one.

One sometimes sees the sign, "Drive carefully — children on board" in the rear window of cars. The drivers of those vehicles need no such sign; they modify their behaviour because the risk is considered greater. Everyone argues that children in cars are safer if restraints are worn, and it is argued that that fact should be drilled into people. Indeed, the document "The Safety of Children in Cars" published by the Child Accident Prevention Trust states:

"A complementary intensive education and publicity effort to explain the need for their use and the provisions of the proposed law should commence immediately."

Nothing could more effectively change a motorist's assessment of risk and his subconscious approach to driving than a campaign that states, "Cut the risks: make sure your kid is belted up."

Some may doubt that behaviour is adapted according to one's perception of risk, so let us consider some examples. Every schoolboy knows that the invention of the Davy safety lamp by Sir Humphry Davy saved countless miners' lives. Sir Humphry's new lamp burned with a cool flame below the ignition point of methane. However, did it save lives? It turns our that every schoolboy is wrong. The invention of the lamp encouraged mining in methane-rich atmostpheres into which miners would not have previously ventured. After the introduction of that lamp there was an increase in the amount of coal mined, but also an increase in the number of explosions and fatalities. Miners perceived the dangers as being less and were prepared to venture into more risky situations. Unfortunately, they were sometimes lulled into a false sense of security.

Similar examples can be seen every day. Someone who stands on the top of a tall step-ladder manoeuvres with extreme care, but if a woman stands on a low stool to clean windows, that is when she topples over the breaks her leg in three places. The low stool seems much safer.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: Will the hon. Gentleman give way on that point?

Mr. Waller: I wish that the hon. Gentleman would allow me to finish my argument. I will come to the end of this stage of my argument and then I will give way with pleasure.

The rock climber who has never used ropes may decide to use them on a particularly difficult climb. When he believes that the risks are so diminished he is likely to do things that he has never done before. His chances of making a fatal error are increased. The equipment may be good, but it may not be so good as to make him invulnerable if he subconciously thinks that if he falls it will prevent him from being injured. Furthermore—this is particularly significant—if he does fall, the rope may save his life but can do nothing to help the chap 15 feet below him whom he hits as he falls down. Here, we may think of the old person crossing the road without the same protection as that of the driver and his family belted up in their fine shiny, super-safe new car.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: The logical conclusion of what the hon. Gentleman is saying is that the greater the risk, the greater the attention to safety. Applied to children in cars, that theory reduces itself to the argument that we should put the children not on the bonnet, because that would obscure visibility, but on the bumper, because then they are exposed to more risk and the driver would drive even more safely.

Mr. Waller: There is always a danger in taking any argument to its logical conclusion. I admit that many safety measures are consumed because we take greater risks. As an illustration — I would not for a moment suggest that this should happen — drivers would probably drive more safely if they had a bayonet pointing at their heart. I am not suggesting that that should happen, because if accidents occurred, they would be more serious. However, accidents would happen more rarely than they do now.

We must look not just at the casualties when accidents occur but at the number of accidents that occur. For example, statistics from insurance companies showing how insurance premiums have risen show that there has been a considerable increase in the number of accidents during the last few years. Unfortunately, these statistics are not collected in any systematic way. We have only casualty figures, and I would have liked to have accident figures.

Mr. Sheerman: The hon. Gentleman knows that there has been a great increase in cars on the roads in the period about which he is talking. Let me take him back to his risk compensation theory, which he has been propounding for

years, but relatively unsuccessfully. The most vulnerable driver on the road is the motor cyclist. He is the most likely to have an accident if he is unwary or a little bit stupid and the evidence is that, as a group, they are the most reckless drivers on the road, and get killed in their thousands. What price the hon. Gentleman's risk compensation theory there?

Mr. Waller: I do not follow the exact point that the hon. Gentleman is making. I agree that motor cyclists are vulnerable, and one reason is that a high proportion of the accidents in which they are involved are caused by other road users, although I accept that many motor cyclists are young and relatively inexperienced on the road, and that is why my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary is so anxious to introduce measures to try to reduce the toll.

In developing my analogy, I have moved a little far from what happens on the road, so I shall now move back to that point. We can illustrate the fact that driver behaviour varies, whether the risk is increased or reduced. Let us take the example of a top rally driver. Whatever the terrain, his speed is such as to give the average passenger quite a nasty shock. I do not know whether many hon. Members have driven with a rally driver, but I know that it is quite a hair-raising experience. However, that driver has a secure, full harness to hold him steady and to protect him if the car goes off the road. If one took away that full harness, I am prepared to guarantee that the average speed over any course would be reduced. That would be a good thing if one happened to be in his path.

Recently, there have been some tragic accidents to spectators alongside international rallies. In only the last few weeks, in the Paris to Dakar rally, a number of fatalities were caused. Few situations are so dangerous as to be a pedestrian in the path of a driver whose equipment leads him to believe that he and his passengers are safe.

Let us see what happened after front seat belts became compulsory, because there has been a great deal of thought about our experience over the last five or so years. Professors Durbin and Harvey were commissioned by the Department of Transport to carry out an analysis of the comparative statistics before and after. In the two years following the introduction of compulsion there was—I want hon. Members to listen carefully to this—a 40 per cent. increase in the number of cyclists killed in accidents. This increase did not take place in accidents with heavy goods vehicles, for which seat belt wearing was not made compulsory.

On page 51 of their report, Durbin and Harvey say:

"There remains strong evidence of a substantial increase in numbers of cyclists killed in accidents with cars."

There was thus clear evidence pointing in the direction that drivers were imperceptibly taking more risks, with disastrous results for other road users. Others in greater peril were those in cars who were not belted in. On page 51 of the report, Durbin and Harvey say:

"The fact remains that we find the large proportionate increase in rear seat passengers killed hard to understand . . . We must therefore leave the sharp rise in the number of rear seat passengers killed as an unexplained mystery, at least until more evidence is available."

That epitomises the problem faced by those who oppose the seemingly sensible approach of compulsion.

It is easy to detect those who are saved because of seat belts. They write letters to Transport Ministers arguing in favour of compulsion. Those who are killed because drivers take one risk too many do not write letters. They are not able, like the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson), to say what has happened to them. That is the great difficulty and the point that we must not forget.

Durbin and Harvey said that they were

"reluctant to accept driver behaviour as an explanation since this would be expected to lead to a corresponding increase in numbers seriously injured and there is evidence of no such increase."

However, there is serious doubt over the non-fatal injury statistics, because they are, as has already been said, so unreliable. Injuries are counted as serious if somebody breaks a finger or stays in hospital for one night. On the other hand, the Transport and Road Research Laboratory states that 59 per cent. of serious injuries to cyclists are never reported to the police.

The only statistics which are 100 per cent. reliable are the statistics for fatalities. Those favouring seat belt compulsion over many years conceal their feelings if they deny that the fatality statistics for motorists in the period following the introduction of compulsion in 1983 have been a serious disappointment. In 1977, the then Transport Minister, Mr. William Rodgers, forecast that 1,000 lives a year would be saved, a figure echoed for some time by Mr. David Ennals, now Lord Ennals. By 1982, the Department of Transport suggested a figure of 700 or fewer and, on the day of the debate of the renewal in regulations in January 1986, the British Medical Association was talking about 200 fewer deaths, which rather contrasts with one or two of the figures that we had heard before.

Mr. Day: My hon. Friend may be correct in saying that the results of the legislation have not been what we would have hoped for and expected. Nevertheless, they were good, and resulted in a reduction in the number of deaths and injuries.

Mr. Waller: Even organisations which were strongly in favour of seat belt compulsion, like the BMA, were, at the end of the day, able to claim the saving of only 200 lives. With such small figures, the whole process must be put in doubt.

Mr. Day: Two hundred is not small.

Mr. Waller: I am not saying that 200 is small. I am querying whether the saving of 200 exists at all or, as I shall show in a moment, can be attributed to other factors.

The Lancet ruefully admitted:

"There will be regret that the evidence on deaths is not more one-sided, and disappointment that the measure has fallen short of its promise."

I am afraid that this Bill could fall short of its promise as well.

As for savings in casualties, there is evidence that the savings following early 1983 can be attributed not to the wearing of seat belts but to the introduction of the evidential breath-testing machinery. There was a significant drop in the number of drivers killed who were found to be over the drink-driving limit. The number of drivers killed between 10 pm and 4 am—what are often described as the drink-drive hours—fell by 23 per cent. as compared with a drop of only 3 per cent. at all other times of the day. The Department's statisticians attributed all the savings to seat belts. I suggest that the evidence points in a very different direction and that the overwhelming bulk of the savings can be attributed to the introduction of the evidential breath test.

[Mr. Waller]

It is hardly surprising that, since compulsory seat belt wearing was introduced, the Cyclists Touring Club and Friends of the Earth, which originally favoured compulsion, have expressed serious doubts. Many of their leading members now express outright opposition to it, because they see what the effects on other road users can be.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Peter Bottomley): I have spent a lot of time with Friends of the Earth and the Cyclists Touring Club, and that is not a point that either has put to me. If my hon. Friend has evidence, or is in contact with them, perhaps he could arrange for me to see what they are saying.

Mr. Waller: I should be delighted to do that. I was careful to say that the organisations as a whole do not necessarily oppose the legislation. The hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) knows that those who represent the Cyclists Touring Club and Friends of the Earth on the committee which he chairs, who previously supported compulsory seat belt wearing, took a different line when the regulations were renewed recently.

In 1981, the Department of Transport evaluated the experience of compulsion in other countries. It anticipated that there could be a disadvantage for other road users arising from altered driver behaviour if they perceived the risks to be less. The paper which was produced accepted the findings of Dr. John Adams of London university, that pedestrian casualties increased in every one of the eight countries which had introduced compulsion, and described the statistical odds against achieving such results as one in 256. It warned that the increased casualty rates for pedestrians were "alarming" and noted:

"Since pedestrians account for 20 per cent. of casualties in Britain and the law effect seems positive for them"

—in other words, seat belt compulsion causes more pedestrian casualties—

"closer scrutiny is called for."

I take that latter phrase as a "Yes, Minister" warning against over-hasty legislation.

Mr. Bottomley: I hesitate to interrupt, because I want to hear what my hon. Friend has to say about the Bill, but I think that it is helpful to the House if I occasionally produce a bit of information. On page 84 of "The Casualty Report: Road Accident Great Britain, 1986", we are given pedestrian deaths in 1976 as 2,335 and in 1986 as 1,841. It gives the all-severities injuries in 1976 as 68,509 and in 1986 as 60,875. If that is a one-in-250 chance—because those 10 years bridge the introduction of compulsory front seat belt wearing and there are only 170 countries—there is something slightly curious in John Adams' calculation.

Mr. Waller: I a glad that my hon. Friend has said that. It enables me to clarify what we are talking about. We were talking about the situation in eight countries before we made seat belt wearing compulsory in Britain. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister would be the first to say that matters have changed in many respects. For example, regulations have been introduced to protect pedestrians in the event of their coming into contact with a car by making cars safer. A series of things have been happening at the same time.

Mr. Sheerman: What are they?

Mr. Waller: Campaigns have been run to warn people against drink-driving, which is the most dangerous driver behaviour. I am glad to say that they are having an effect.

The Lancet, which is a reputable publication produced by people who see the effects of accidents and who have been broadly in favour of legislation, referring to Dr. Adams' work, said it was

"unhelpful of the Department of Transport to have suppressed an evaluation supporting his doubts."

I am sure that if my hon. Friend the Minister had been in the Department at that time, he would not have suppressed the document.

What should be our conclusions? First, driver behaviour is the most likely reason for accidents. We all agree about that. Indeed, I see my hon. Friend the Minister is nodding on the Front Bench.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I am nodding in agreement.

Mr. Waller: Yes.

Secondly, motorists' behaviour may be modified by the risk that is perceived to apply to drivers and passengers. That applies especially to child passengers. Thirdly, any saving in casualties as a result of accidents is likely to be offset by an increase in accident numbers. That has been shown.

Fourthly, it is not acceptable to transfer the burden of risk from the best protected to the most vulnerable. Fifthly, it is not acceptable to legislate, even if one believes that the net effect may be positive—some have said that it is — if it means that other road users become casualties. One major motoring organisation has argued for compulsion on the grounds of this so-called net effect. It was prepared to trade off casualties among cyclists and pedestrians for savings, as it saw it, among car drivers. I hope that, when it comes to legislation, such a concept will be anathema to all hon. Members.

Mr. Day: The Bill is about restraining children in the back seat. I suggest that my hon. Friend is advancing an argument, the validity of which I do not accept, about restraining drivers. He is not advancing an argument against restraining children, who are not in control of the car.

Mr. Waller: I am sorry if my hon. Friend was not listening. I said that drivers' behaviour is affected substantially when they have passengers, especially child passengers. of course a child will be better off, in the event of an accident, if it is belted up in the back, but who is to say that there will not be more accidents and that the victims will not be other road users? That is the nub of my argument.

It is wrong if parents are unable to assess the evidence and reach their own judgment. We should not introduce legislation that can do harm, even if it is more difficult to quantify than the good which the legislation appears at first sight to do. Although I shall not obstruct the further passage of the Bill today, I shall continue to throw light on its deficiencies.

11.29 am

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): I rise primarily to congratulate the hon. Member for Cheadle (Mr. Day) on introducing this important Bill, which makes a major contribution to road safety. He could not have chosen a better subject for a private Member's Bill because it provides concrete help, will save lives and is perhaps, although it should not be, too small for the Government

to pursue. It is an ideal subject for a private Member's Bill. I shall be brief and then I shall belt up here on the back seat of the House.

We should not debate too long because Fridays tend to be hon. Members' playtime. It is the day for cause-pushers or quibblers, like the hon. Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller). It is also the day for hon. Members who are never called to speak during the week to vent their frustration by giving inordinately long speeches, as the hon. Gentleman did, and for those of us who have Front Bench responsibilities and are never called because senior spokesmen hog the time on our subject and we may not speak on any other because we are Front Bench spokesmen.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Is that why the hon. Gentleman spends all his time trying to bring television into the House of Commons? Is it so that his constituents can see that he is here, although he is not speaking?

Mr. Mitchell: That would not be an argument for television because television would only demonstrate my impotence, which I am not anxious to do publicly. On Fridays speeches tend to be long for those reasons, so I shall try to be brief.

I am a member of the Seat Belt Survivors Club. Wearing a seat belt saved my life and since then I have been a passionate advocate of seat belts. Despite all the alarms and fears of quibblers, the introduction of that legislation has made an enormous contribution to saving lives. We shall make a similar smaller contribution today by passing this Bill. There cannot be a more important objective than to save the lives of children who would be killed, maimed or seriously injured if the Bill were not passed. I do not want to be emotive about this, but saving lives is one of the highest purposes of Parliament and far more important than many of the other enormous issues such as unemployment, foreign policy and schools legislation, which we debate during the week.

There is no intellectual case against this legislation and the hon. Member for Keighley proved that at some length by his arguments. Essentially he argued that a greater feeling of safety produced greater risks. To assert that, he is trading the concrete saving of lives by the seat belt legislation because he is arguing that it makes people feel more secure, so they take risks. It is demonstrable that the compulsory wearing of seat belts has saved innumerable lives and averted an enormous number of injuries. I shall not go over the statistics again.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Tell us a few.

Mr. Mitchell: The hon. Gentleman merely wants to delay the Bill and I shall not gratify him in that way. There has been a 30 per cent. saving in deaths and injuries to front seat passengers; a 20 per cent. saving in deaths and injuries to drivers of cars and light vans; a 39 per cent. reduction in brain injuries; a 53 per cent. reduction in fatal wounds; and a 40 per cent. reduction in injuries to the lungs sustained by front seat passengers. All those are concrete gains from that legislation.

The hon. Member for Keighley is proposing that those savings be traded for his hypothetical fears and statistical quibbles about a hypothetical risk effect. That risk effect is a statistical quibble which is not borne out by significant statistics. The Department of Transport and the various independent assessors of the legislation have concluded that there is no significant rise in the number of pedestrians, pedal cyclists and rear seat passengers seriously injured since the introduction of the seat belt legislation. There is no evidence of changes in the level of reporting of serious casualties during that period.

Mr. Waller: Would the hon. Gentleman say the same about those killed?

Mr. Peter Bottomley: If the hon. Gentleman will not, may I?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. One intervention at a time.

Mr. Mitchell: I am happy to give way to the Minister.

Mr. Bottomley: From 1984 to 1986 the number of cyclists killed decreased by 20 per cent. Those are the three years following the introduction of compulsory seat belt wearing. I am prepared to accept that the level of cycling will also be an influence, but the raw death figures for cyclists have decreased by 20 per cent.

Mr. Mitchell: I am most grateful to the Minister. It is exactly that sort of statistic that refutes the quibbles of the hon. Member for Keighley. In favour of the quibbles he advocates that we discard the gains made by the seat belt legislation. That is the essence of his argument. It is paradoxical, downright wrong and certainly does not apply to this Bill.

The Bill is intended to protect children in the back seat, not drivers. To prove his argument the hon. Gentleman must be able to argue that parents driving children who are belted up in the back seat will proceed to behave wholly irresponsibly — as if there were no children or no proverbial carton of eggs in the back seat.

The hon. Gentleman would have to say that the fact that children were belted up was an incentive for parents to behave in that way. That argument is so plainly ridiculous that the hon. Gentleman did not venture to put it, but it is the logical extension of his position. It is not only wrong but — perhaps I should not say insane — crazy.

I cannot see why the hon. Gentleman is wasting the time of the House with arguments at that level of intelligence. It is much the same as the argument that has been put to me by a few individuals which is that as the Labour party represents people with large families and inferior cars, we should oppose the legislation. The argument is that if the legislation is introduced, it will put at risk anybody with three children, one of whom cannot be belted. In other words, because some people have three children we should put the lives of two children who can be belted up at risk. That is the logical extension of that particularly crazy amendment. When the hon. Gentleman put his argument he should have worn a red nose.

Once again, we are far too late with the necessary progress. We lagged behind for over a decade with the compulsory seat belt legislation and we lost innumerable lives as a result. We are now late again. This legislation has been introduced and is widely in force in Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United States. This is an important reform and once again the only opposition comes from the vast tribe of quibblers in their little reservations, arguing that the last bastion of freedom is the freedom to be catapulted into a windscreen and that it should be reserved for children.

Mr. Waller: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman has sunk to the sort of abuse which some of his colleagues would regret. At the time of the debate in 1986, the hon. Gentleman said that he was worried about the statistics on the increase in the number of casualties among cyclists. If he was worried about the statistics then, why is he not worried about them now?

Mr. Mitchell: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for carrying with him a pocket compendium of my speeches. He would need a furniture van to bring them all into the Chamber, because my speeches tend to be long, but he will not provoke me into making this one longer. The hon. Gentleman's argument is wrong and unjustified.

I would have preferred the Bill to go further and to require the fitting of rear seat belts in all cars which do not have them. That would be an important safeguard, but we delayed too long in prescribing the foundation for such legislation. We should make up for that by making the fitting of rear seat belts compulsory. That might help the Bill to say that it is a moderate, middle-of-the-road measure—halfway between the extremism of the hon. Member for Keighley and the hon. Member for Great Grimsby. I would be prepared to argue that on the same paradoxical basis as the hon. Member for Keighley has used.

I strongly support the Bill, and I hope that the House will give it an uncontested Second Reading.

11.41 am

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): The hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) said that the Bill is partly an emotional matter. I find it difficult to speak on the Bill without emotion because, just over 12 years ago, my only child—a girl aged five—was killed in a crash on the M4. Even now, after such a long time, it is difficult to speak about it.

At that time, and during the following five years, I tried to force myself to see whether some good could come from the accident. During those long five years, until about 1981, working closely with my hon. Friends the Members for Faversham (Mr. Moate), for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhard), for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant) and some others, hardly a month went by without our making some attempt to get parliamentary support for what we believed to be so necessary. Because it took five years longer than it should have done, thousands of deaths and tens of thousands of serious injuries occurred which could have been prevented. But we battled away, and in the end we achieved the legislation.

People now take it for granted that front seat passengers should wear seat belts. Had the legislation not been passed in 1981, many people would have been killed or injured since. We can argue about the precise number, but no one disputes the fact that, on balance, it would have been substantial.

Since 1981, I have shut up on the subject. My colleagues and I had done our job, and had seen the results. There seemed to be no point in reopening old wounds. But now there is. The Bill introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Cheadle (Mr. Day), on which I warmly congratulate him, could, if enacted, save more lives—this time of children. I hope that it will receive full support and not meet unnecessary obstruction.

The hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) said that there was no intellectual case against the Bill. I agree with him. The first and most obvious point to make is that in aircraft it is compulsory to wear belts on take-off and landing. It is the law under the air navigation orders. Hardly anyone objects to it. No one seems to find that law objectionable in principle. An airline chief steward who lives in my constituency told me that, in his experience of 20 years, only one passenger had refused to wear a seat belt. The plane did not take off until that passenger had been removed.

I remember the "freedom fighters" who, in 1971 and 1972, battled against the compulsory wearing of crash helmets by motor cyclists. They said that it would be a monstrous interference with the freedom of young motor cyclists if they could not rush round with the wind streaking through their hair. The motor cycling magazines ran a huge campaign urging motor cyclists to write letters to Members of Parliament. Many of us disregarded those letters because we gave greater weight to the views of the middle-aged mothers of those young motor cyclists, who wrote fewer letters but of whose views we were well aware. That law was passed 15 years ago, and it has prevented about 120 deaths and 80 serious injuries a year.

Similar arguments about freedom are used today. They are nonsense, because they do not take into account the wide range of meanings of the word "freedom". It is a big word with many shades of meaning. There are the great liberties of speech and religion and the freedom from having one's country occupied by another. As my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West said, none of us would yield on those freedoms. But the word "freedom" is also used in relation to many petty regulations. On minor matters including driving on the right side of the road and allowing a cyclist cling to a car to pull himself along, none of us would want freedom. It is worth sacrificing some "freedom" to ensure major benefits in safety. It is philosophical nonsense to apply the word freedom merely because we use the same word, to apply to lesser matters. We should have the wisdom to discern between the two in our process of legislation.

My hon. Friend the Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller) is a barrister——

Mr. Waller: No, I am not.

Mr. Jessel: I am sorry if I have offended my hon. Friend. He sounded like a barrister. Lawyers often use their forensic skills to try to secure the acquittal of guilty people by making mere possibilities sound like probabilities. But when legislating on matters involving human risk we must look at the probabilities and not the possibilities, and take the expert advice and look at the statistics. My hon. Friend the Member for Keighley talked about people standing on the top of ladders with buckets. His speech was anecdotal.

It is a curious facet of human nature that people who on most matters seem to have plenty of common sense seem totally incapable of weighing the size of one risk against the size of another. This week I had a letter against the Bill from a constituent who was concerned about the risk to a child in the back of a car if the car caught fire. She was afraid of that risk. No doubt my hon. Friend the Member for Keighley, who said that parents ought to be allowed to choose and decide, would honour her request to be allowed to assess that risk for herself. However, the number of car crashes in which the car catches fire is only one in 400. Clearly, the risk of a child in the back of a car

losing his or her life as a result of the car catching fire is much lower than the risk of being killed or severely injured as a result of being in a head-on collision while not wearing a safety device.

Are we to allow such parents to be the ones to weigh up a risk if they do not assess it in any sort of mathematical way; if such parents just go by hunch or instinct, and that is to the detriment of the chances of saving the life of a child and does not make sense. Some people are not sensible about weighing up relative risks.

In the preface to one of Dale Carnegie's books—not "How to Win Friends and Influence People", but in one of his other books—he writes about an outbreak of smallpox in New York between the wars. In a populaton of 7 or 8 million about seven or eight people died from that outbreak. There was enormous publicity and a stampede of people rushing around trying to jump the queues to get smallpox vaccine before anyone else. In the same year, 50,000 people died in New York because they had the wrong diet and suffered heart attacks that could have been avoided. Because the smallpox epidemic had a huge amount of publicity, people were not capable of weighing up the relative risk.

The same thing happens with different aspects of road safety. The House has a duty to support the Bill. I hope that no one will obstruct it.

11.53 am

Mr. Eric Martlew (Carlisle): I am sure that the whole House applauds the contribution by the hon. Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel), bearing in mind the pain that it must have caused him to speak on this subject. The hon. Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller) advanced a most bizarre argument and one which, when I was looking forward to this debate, I never thought about. At one time I was a safety officer and occasionally I met someone in industry who said that it would be much safer if guards were removed from all the machines. I suspect that it was someone like that who was in charge of safety at Chernobyl, and we know the effects of that.

Superficially, it could be argued that I have an interest in this safety legislation because I represent the constituency of Carlisle, which has the largest and the best seat belt manufacturer in Britain. That firm is, of course, Kangol. Not only is that company our largest seat belt manufacturer, but its work force belongs to the Transport and General Workers' Union of which I am a member and by which I am sponsored.

The Bill will not result in any extra work for people in the seat belt industry. That is because it is only in cases where seat belts are fitted that parents will be required to insist on their children using them. The Bill will not create an extra financial burden on families, nor will it mean that families will have to change cars or give up holidays, as has been suggested for families who want to join BUPA. It is a mild Bill and perhaps hon. Members would have supported a Bill that was a little stronger. However, we realise that it is necessary to support the Bill. My hon. Friend the Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) said that few Members were in the House and that that suggested that the House was not very concerned about the issue. I suggest that it is because hon. Members thought that nobody would be callous enough to speak against this legislation. Hon. Members have gone back to the constituencies, happy in the belief that the Bill will go to Committee.

The reason I am here today has nothing to do with the fact that there is a seat belt manufacturer in my constituency. I am here today as a result of an incident that happened to me the day after the 1987 general election was announced and before I was a Member of the House. I have a very marginal constituency and in the event I have a majority of 71. My brother agreed to come over from Canada to help me fight the election. The day after the announcement my brother arrived in this country with his two children and I drove up the A74 to Prestwick airport to collect him. I put the children in the back of the car, which was a Y-registered Cortina. It was not an old car, but it did not have rear seat belts. I was about to start off when my six-year-old neice began to complain bitterly and to cry. She said that we should not drive because she was not belted up. My brother explained that the law in Canada states that young children must be safeguarded in the rear of cars. They must be belted up.

That was the first time that the matter had been brought to my attention. I have no children and was not used to the situation. Perhaps the hon. Member for Keighley will take comfort from the fact that I drove very carefully down the A74 on my way home. I am sure that if my hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) were here he would agree that the A74 is probably one of the most dangerous roads in Britain. Indeed, perhaps the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) would agree with that. If there was ever an insult to the Scottish nation it must be the fact that the M6, which is a fine three-lane motorway, bypasses my constituency and stops at the Scottish border where it becomes that terrible road the A74.

Mr brother and his family and I got home safely. However, during the election campaign I was driving along, minding my own business, thinking of other things when someone, travelling at about 50 mph, ran into the back of my car. Fortunately, the children were not in the back at the time. As a law-abiding citizen, I was belted up. My car was written off. I shudder to think what might have happened if the children had been in the back. The accident was not caused by my careless driving, it was caused by the careless driving of the person behind me. I have no doubt that the children would have been seriously injured and would have become two more statistics to add to the thousands of children who were injured in that kind of accident last year. Indeed, matters might have been worse and they might have become part of the fatality statistics.

I discussed these matters after the election. When I said that someone should do something, I was told that I was the Member of Parliament and I should do something about it. That is why I am glad to be spending this Friday morning supporting the hon. Member for Cheadle (Mr. Day) and his private Member's Bill.

I hope that no one will oppose the Bill today. If it fails to reach the statute book this will be a sad day. We should be in no doubt that children will be killed unnecessarily if the Bill does not reach the statute book. Some people may argue that persuasion is better than legislation. Indeed, we may hear that argument later. However, the reality is that no matter how we try to persuade people, young people will not receive the necessary protection that they deserve. Prior to legislation only 30 per cent. of people used front seat belts. However, once legislation was introduced, more

[Mr. Eric Martlew]

than 95 per cent. of people used them. If we are to protect children whose parents may not be as thoughtful as they should be, we must pass this Bill.

We must give credit to organisations, including the Department of Transport, which have done all that they can to persuade people to ensure that children are secure in the back of cars. In particular I want to mention the Kwik-Fit organisation which launched a campaign last month which, with certain provisos, gives free safety seats for the rear seats in cars. That must be applauded. Unless legislation is introduced, we shall not reduce the number of accidents.

Another argument that opponents of the Bill might put forward is that it interferes with personal freedom. That could be argued if we were considering making it compulsory for adults to belt up in the rear of cars. However, that case cannot be made for children. It has already been stated that there is legislation to stop children from smoking, to stop them from drinking and to forbid sexual activity with children under the age of 16. I am sure that no one would suggest that that is only the thin end of the wedge and that the next move would be to ban smoking or drinking by adults. I even understand that there is an early-day motion about banning sexual activity, but I do not suppose that that will gain approval.

Let us examine the precedents. In 1956, as can be seen from *Hansard*, there was a big debate during consideration of the Agricultural (Safety) Bill about whether children should be allowed to drive tractors and other agricultural machinery. At that time, about five children per year were killed driving tractors. The backwoodsmen said that to legislate against children driving tractors was a denial of personal liberty, and should not be allowed. One hon. Member, who represented East Grinstead, showed a photograph of five-year-olds driving tractors, and said that any well-adjusted five-year-old was capable of doing so. Thirty years ago, the House decided that those children needed protection, and the figures show that the legislation worked. In the 1950s, we were losing five children a year who had been driving agricultural machinery. Over the past five years, only one child has been killed in such circumstances.

I ask the House to give the protection of the law to the children of my constituents, and to those of all the constituents in Britain, so that my Canadian niece will not have an advantage over British children. Other countries have put these laws into operaton. That proves that they work, and that there is no reason for the House not to accept this Bill today.

12.1 pm

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): I thank the hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew) for what he said about Southend, and about the A74. When I represented a Glasgow seat, I thought that the condition of the A74 was one of our greatest national scandals, until I moved to Southend and I found that the roads there were infinitely worse.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Cheadle (Mr. Day) on bringing forward a Bill that commands such massive support on both sides of the House. In fairness, I must say that any Bill that claims to try to stop cruelty to animals, to be kind to pensioners or to make children safer will receive considerable support. I accept that children's safety is a very emotive issue. As the father of three young children, I am well aware that ensuring their safety is a nightmare of which every parent is constantly aware. However, while there is obviously a deep-rooted desire in the House to pass Bills to stop cruelty to animals, help pensioners or make children safer, we must be very careful about the way in which we use laws, as opposed to campaigns or persuasion. There are several things that we must avoid.

First, we must avoid at all costs what I would call the Esther Rantzen disease, calling for Parliament to abandon pillar boxes and lamp posts on the basis that old age pensioners may bump into them at night. Parliament is constantly being asked to pass laws that do not make a great deal of sense.

Secondly, we must avoid doing what we were asked to do by the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) —passing a law because he was unable to persuade his unruly children to do what they were told. There is a danger of our passing laws because parents appear to be unable to persuade their children to do what they think is right.

Thirdly, we must avoid putting forward laws that may appear acceptable on the basis of statistical information, but do not necessarily stand up to examination. Several people have written to me making the point mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Cheadle, in his excellent opening speech, about 91 per cent. of child accidents affecting those sitting at the back. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister, who seems to be being flooded with statistics today, will give us some guidance on how relevant that figure is, bearing in mind the number of children who travel in the back seat.

I have considerable sympathy with the gut reaction of my hon. Friend the Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller), whose excellent and carefully argued speech was unfortunately not received with the sympathy that it deserved. A number of people feel very strongly that the concept of accident-free motoring will encourage worse driver behaviour and will create more accidents, not necessarily for drivers, but for others on the roads.

I wish to persuade the Whips immediately that neither I nor my hon. Friends have any intention of trying to talk out this Bill. Therefore, I shall put the one basic point that I hope my hon. Friend the Member for Cheadle and the Minister will bear in mind. As a Parliament, do we have a right to pass a law to force people to do something that in certain circumstances will create additional dangers for children? That has to be faced up to.

I frequently take my children to hockey practice or school or collect them from school. On such occasions, I often have four or sometimes more children on the back seat of my Rover car. If I were to select three of them and afford them the privilege of a seat belt, the two others would be sitting on top of the three belted children. Surely they would be in additional danger. In my view they would be in more danger than if they were all sitting on the same level. I hope that hon. Members will think carefully about that. If there are three belted children on the back seat it creates a plateau on which others travelling in the back have to sit. On the basis of common sense, that creates more danger.

Most of the countries that have passed laws of this sort have had different ages in mind. Will it make toddlers more careful if we put an adult seat belt on them? In my car, we used to have one of those splendid seats for

toddlers where one has virtually to put a new chair on the back seat. To pass a law forcing a toddler to put on an adult seat belt will not be a recipe for greater safety.

Is it logical to fix the age at 14? I have a youngster who is 13 who is bigger than me and I have an old mother who is certainly much smaller than both of us. If anyone deserves protection, it is someone who is smaller and more at risk.

Hearing all the statistics that are put forward reminds me of someone trying to explain the benefits of our trade figures with the EEC. I wish to make it abundantly clear that my hon. Friend the Member for Cheadle believes in the Bill passionately and presented it fairly and reasonably. However, I hope that he will bear in mind that in certain circumstances the Bill will create additional dangers for children.

It is wrong that a law should force such a situation upon us. In those circumstances, it would be infinitely better if, before passing such a law, we ran a publicity campaign in which my hon. Friend the Member for Cheadle and all his hon. Friends on both sides of the House could try to put across their views to the general public. We could see whether that led to any improvement rather than introducing a criminal law which certainly, in the views of a minority, including myself, will make things worse rather than better.

12.8 pm

Mr. Clifford Forsythe (Antrim, South): I congratulate the hon. Member for Cheadle (Mr. Day) on introducing the Bill. I assure him of my support and the support of my colleagues in his endeavours to bring it into law. However, I and my colleagues have one disagreement and disappointment with the Bill, which is that it does not apply to Northern Ireland. I have already made that point to the hon. Member for Cheadle.

I do not wish to rehearse the arguments we have already heard. However, the arguments that apply to children in Great Britain should also apply to children in Northern Ireland, which is part of the United Kingdom. I cannot understand why the law will not apply to Northern Ireland.

Mr. Day: I appreciate what the hon. Gentleman is saying. If it were possible to extend the Bill to include Northern Ireland, I would do so. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will appreciate that I am amending an existing Act that does not apply to Northern Ireland.

Mr. Forsythe: I intend to suggest how it could be extended. Perhaps the Minister will also make suggestions on the matter.

The children of Northern Ireland should receive the same treatment. Parents in Northern Ireland feel exactly the same about their offspring as hon. Members and the other citizens in Great Britain feel about theirs.

The argument about whether adults should wear seat belts is completely irrelevant; we are talking about children. The hon. Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller) lost me in his arguments. If we are considering whether children should wear rear seat belts, it is irrelevant, even though it may be a good argument, to talk about people climbing up cliffs and placing a bayonet in front of the driver to prevent crashes.

We all realise that children, under and over 14, do not pay much attention to what is going on when they are sitting in the back seat of a car. They are not terribly worried about safety. They put their trust in the adult who is driving. It would be useful if children were restrained by seat belts—it would be for their own benefit and safety.

Most sensible people will support the Bill. One must not worry only about drivers. Pedestrians, because they are more nimble than cars, can suddenly walk out into the middle of the road. If an accident occurred, it would be the fault not of the driver but of the pedestrian.

It has been mentioned that Australia has legislation about front and rear seat belts. It has been suggested to me—perhaps someone could confirm this information—that in Australia when rear seat belts are fitted it is the responsibility of the rear seat occupant to ensure that they wear the belt; it is not the responsibility of the driver. It would be better if it were the responsibility of the adult driving the car to ensure that children are restrained in the back of cars.

We shall support the Bill, but I should like to return to the fact that it will not apply to Northern Ireland. That is my only disagreement with it. I point out to the hon. Member for Cheadle that page 5 of the Farm Land and Rural Development Bill, which has just gone to Committee, says:

"An Order in Council under paragraph 1(1)*(b)* of Schedule 1 to the Northern Ireland Act 1974 (exercise of legislative functions for Northern Ireland) which states that it is made only for purposes corresponding to the purposes of section 1 above,"

which refers to the negative resolution, can be applied to Northern Ireland.

Fact sheet No. 15 from the Library says:

"From 1986, certain Acts relating to Great Britain have contained clauses providing that legislation for Northern Ireland to the whole Act (or part of it) might be issued under para. 1(1)*(b)* of the Northern Ireland Act 1974, but that such legislation should be subject to the negative resolution procedure."

That is how it can be applied to Northern Ireland. I am disappointed that it has not been done up to now. I ask the hon. Member for Cheadle to consider that point in Committee. I hope that the Minister will also examine that possibilities. I commend the hon. Member for Cheadle for presenting an excellent Bill.

12.16 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Peter Bottomley): First, I assure the hon. Member for Antrim, South (Mr. Forsythe) that the interest in the protection of children in the rear of cars that he expressed on behalf of his hon. Friends will be passed on to my ministerial colleagues. If at any stage I am moved to hold responsibility for Northern Ireland, I shall carry with me my personal interest in child restraint. I am not advertising for a job; I am simply making a declaration.

Like other hon. Members, I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Cheadle (Mr. Day) on his work in bringing the Bill before the House. The Government are keen to see how public and parliamentary opinion has moved on the subject of protection for children in the rear of cars. I also pay tribute to the work of PACTS. Its work on transport safety has helped many people to be alive today. It has also helped people avoid injury, or greater injury. It brings together Members of Parliament, people in relevant professions and car manufacturers who have facts to give.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) is interested in facts. He said, rightly, that

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legislation should be based on facts as well as on emotions. My hon. Friend the Member for Keighley, (Mr. Waller) put forward, in some cases fairly, the possibility of risk compensation. We all accept that we sometimes compensate for the degree of perceived risk. We have experience of that on roads in our constituencies. People tend to treat dangerous roads with caution but have disrespect for roads that appear to be safe. Crashes and collisions often occur where, on the face of it, they should not have happened.

The risk compensation theory or, to the real aficionados, the homeostasis is incomplete. If it worked completely, the anti-skid treatment on road surfaces at junctions would not work. Everyone would realise that they could brake later or harder and still have the same chance of a crash. However, in some cases it needs to be taken into account, and certainly we have to guard against over-confidence.

Two days ago I was launching the Government's proposals for more comprehensive testing and training for motor cyclists. Mr. Mike Read of RoSPA, who has done great work, both personally and with that organisation, in avoiding accidents on the roads, made the point that people who have one day's initial training should not regard themselves as fully trained motor cyclists. It is necessary to guard against the dangers of exuberance and inexperience.

The words of my hon. Friend the Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller) will be taken into account. It is up to those of us who have the job of presenting information and statistics and looking after the research that the Government fund to make sure that we publish information, warts and all, whether or not it happens to back up my prejudice or somebody else's prejudice.

It is not the job of a Government spokesman to sum up a debate on a private Member's Bill, but it is my responsibility to demonstrate that I have listened to the points that have been made by all hon. Members.

We have seen examples of how the number of casualties has been reduced. It is now accepted that, if it were tied to front seat belt wearing, the death rate of cyclists would have continued to rise in the years following 1983. It has not. When research is done it is important to try to repeat it, or, at least, to look for the facts that will test whether an hypothesis or an apparent piece of evidence stands up as a long-term trend.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cheadle put forward a case for the wearing of child restraints. Too high a proportion of people in the back of cars are not restrained. More people have the opportunity to put on seat belts because, following the introduction of compulsory anchorages, only new cars with the compulsory fitting of child restraints or rear seat belts can be sold in this country. Page 56, paragraph 10.7, of the "Casualty Report: Road Accidents in Great Britain 1986" states that, of the 205 unrestrained babies seen in the 1986 survey, 168 were carried on the lap of an adult.

No one who has seen the PACTS video, which was kindly financed by the General Accident Insurance company and which contains the Transport and Road Research Laboratory's demonstration of what happens to a baby in that position, and no one who has seen film showing a dummy on a parent's lap in a crash would ever again knowingly expose his or her baby to that risk. A brave and forthright speech was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel). Anyone who has heard him talk of the tragedy in his family would be foolish beyond words to leave their own child exposed to risk, now that they have the benefit—if I may call it that—of someone else's experience.

The House of Commons represents the people of this country. Hon. Members have the same experiences as those of other people in this country. It is not our responsibility to make the use of roads risk-free—we can only aim as far as reasonably practical towards that—but even if we adopt my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's relatively modest target to cut road casualties by one third by the year 2000—that gives us 11 years and 11 months—we can probably cut out 5,000 deaths of and injuries to children if they start to wear restraints in the back of cars in which they are fitted.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cheadle is not asking the Government to use the powers that they already have to propose regulations to require adults to wear seat belts in the back of cars. My hon. Friend spotted a quirk in the law whereby the Government can require adults to wear seat belts in the back of cars, but they do not have the power to require children to do so.

At no stage during the debate on the Road Traffic Act 1972, which my hon. Friend's Bill seeks to amend, did anyone say that we specifically want to exclude chidren from the regulation that requires people to be restrained or protected in the back of cars. It is a quirk. My hon. Friend's Bill will fill that gap. Exemptions have been referred to. I give a commitment. If the Bill is passed by Parliament, the Department of Transport, with the various advisory and professional bodies, and my hon. Friend the Members for Keighley and for Southend, East, will carefully look at making the regulations under the Bill as suitable as possible to meet all known cases.

Some such cases can be described now—for example, the problem of large families. It is not my hon. Friend's intention to exclude large families from travelling in small cars. Although that may not be the most sensible thing to do if one has an option, many families do not have that option. It is not the intention of the Bill, nor would it be the Government's intention in putting forward regulations, to ban school runs. We may have our individual views on whether it is sensible to take more than three, and even up to eight children, in one car, but I do not think that the regulations would interfere with that.

If the Government have the power to lay regulations, it would not be our intention to do that in such a way that people would be forced to install rear seat belts, other than those required by law at the moment. However, that is not a commitment for ever, because moods change and people's understanding of the issues varies. I do not think that anyone would sensibly consider trying to lay regulations for adults until at least half the cars have restraints fitted. As the anchorage points became compulsory only in 1981, and the legislation requiring new cars to be fitted with adult restraints or child belts came in only last year, we are probably four or five years away from repeating this debate over adults.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cheadle did not spend much time discussing the ease of fitting. To those parents who are considering the installation of child restraints, I am sure that all hon. Members would give the message, "Don't think about it: do it."

If people have any doubts, they can ring the free phone telephone number, 0800 234 888. One need not be a parent to use that number — any godparent, member of the family, or grandparent could do so. We will arrange to send any caller the leaflet "Protect Your Child in the Car", which gives illustrations of the various types of restraint that are available. Such restraints are easy to fit.

I believe that it was the hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew) — it could have been another Opposition Member — who talked about the Kwik-Fit scheme. I should correct that by saying that Kwik-Fit will sell a child seat and refund the money in full when the seat is no longer needed. I do not want to be a walking advertisement, but Kwik-Fit has may centres where people can obtain rear restraints that are capable of fitting people of all sizes and ages. The grandmother or children of my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East will all fit in the same belt. Many other places provide such belts, including Mothercare, car accessory shops such as Halfords Ltd, and garages.

The reason that there is so much more provision of these restraints is, as has been mentioned, the work of the "That's Life" programme, which has done more than the Government. "That's Life" helped to encourage parents to buy a million rear restraints in 1986 and a million rear restraints in 1987. That is probably twice or three times as many as would have been sold otherwise—if it had been left to my mouth close to this microphone.

Parents are responding, but the real question that the House must face is whether the responsibility of parents for their children goes further, and whether it is right to have the prompt of legislation so that parents will automatically use restraints. We still have to get parents to buy restraints by persuasion and campaigning. The Bill will do nothing to require parents to fit the restraints.

The hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) talked about the Seat Belt Survivors Club. Many of us are honorary members of that club and perhaps we should write to Rospa, presumably in Birmingham——

Mr. Robertson: Yes, but there is no free phone.

Mr. Bottomley: I see. There is no free phone. We must pay for our own stamp.

The hon. Gentleman also asked when obligation requires compulsion. Parents have an obligation to protect their children. Any hon. Member who is in the House late in the evening fears a phone call from his family saying that there has been a car crash. Our first thought is not whether the car is all right but whether the members of our family are all right. Nearly all of us, unless we have a car that is as old as mine, insure our cars comprehensively. There is no obligation to do so, but we do it because we are concerned, to some extent, about the car. However, most of us would happily accept the destruction of even a new car if we heard that a member of our family had not been injured in a crash. The best way of secondary protection for a child or, indeed, an adult in a car is a seat belt or a specialist restraint that is geared to the age of the child.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant), speaking both as an experienced individual and as president of the Guild of Experienced Motorists, said that restraints save lives and reduce injuries. My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East asked whether the fact that 90 per cent. of injuries involved children in the rear of cars tied in with the proportion of children in the rear of cars. The answer is yes, but, predominantly, younger children are in the rear of cars. The large 13-year-old child is more likely to be in the front beside the driver.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Will my hon. Friend say, from his long experience, whether wearing an adult seat belt makes a child under three more secure?

Mr. Bottomley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for reminding me about his second question. The answer is yes. There is little virtue in putting a child under the age of one in an adult seat belt, because a child of that age cannot sit up by himself. If an adult seat belt is the only thing available, it provides better protection than leaving a child unrestrained.

For children up to nine months, I advise parents to get an infant carrier, many of which now fit into the three-point harness. Between the ages of nine months and four years, the best solution is a specialist car safety seat. Beyond the age of four, although it depends on the size of the child rather than his exact age, it is better to use a booster seat or a specialist cushion with the seat belt.

The hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Fearn) gave us his views on behalf of the alliance. I am glad that he described the world as it is. It is full of parents who know that they ought to have child restraints and that they ought to use them. They need that extra push which will transform the wearing rate.

More demonstrations should be carried out, such as that mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West at the Rosie maternity hospital. If more of us were put on a sledge and dropped from the top of a small ramp, with a reasonably heavy doll or a dummy child in our arms, we should soon realise what was involved. I want to take this a stage further. We should be put in a sledge and sent down a 12 ft ramp without a dummy doll and without wearing a seat belt. Few people would complain afterwards because their heads would have been smashed in. That is what happens to children. What parent would deliberately hold a child head down, 5 ft above a glass table and then let go? That represents far less of an impact than a car stopping dead at 25 miles per hour.

Eighty per cent. of the crashes and collisions that produce injury in this country occur in built-up areas, even though they contain only 40 per cent. of the traffic. If I were given a choice between driving with a child unrestrained on a motorway or in a built-up area, I should prefer to have the child unrestrained on the motorway and belted up in the built-up area. The real dangers are in the built-up areas. Low-speed crashes can kill and injure children.

My hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart), a long-term member and supporter of PACTS, asked me to represent the statistics and information in a more effective way. I shall accept his encouragement. I am doing my best, but I need to do better. Often, we underestimate the power of commissioning research, the results of that research and the annual digest of statistics, which tend to come out in an indigestible lump, although there are many good articles. I recommend hon. Members to read the "Casualty Report: Road Accidents in Great Britain 1986". It is subtitled "The Casualty Report" but I have subtitled it "Accidents happen to vehicles, casualties

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happen to people". Perhaps my hon. Friend might be willing to discuss how we can present this information in an effective way.

The hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) deserves tribute for his co-leadership of PACTS and for the way in which he puts the arguments across, both inside and outside the House. The hon. Member for Huddersfield was right to state that we are trying to save people's lives by protecting their lives. The allusion he made to the happy children involved with Comic Relief is important because road deaths are the biggest killer of young people. It is overtaken by various other things such as smoking, later on, but between the ages of 15 to 25 roads pose the greatest threat to young people.

Effective measures put forward by Government will cut the road casualty toll. A total of 5,382 people died on our roads last year—enough to put a dead body on every seat at the festival of remembrance at the Royal Albert hall each November. Every one of the 100,000 places available at Wembley for a cup final could be filled at least three times over by those who are injured. Among those deaths and injuries are children in the backs of cars. There are some 9,000 injuries and hundreds of deaths each year.

The House must consider whether the Bill provides sensible and effective powers for the Government to lay regulations. Those regulations would be loose and there would be plenty of opportunity, if it came to that, to argue that the Government were being too slow or too unambitious—I suspect that that is the truth. We must consider whether the Government should have those powers now.

My hon. Friends the Member for Keighley and for Southend, East rightly cautioned the Government about saying, "There is a problem, here is the legislation. No matter what the cost, bring in the manny state." However, I repeat what my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West said: children need nannies. For children's protection I believe that there can be no doubt that belting up is effective and that legislation would get many more parents to do what makes sense for their children.

I do not believe that a great deal more can be said on behalf of the Government. If it had come to a vote, I certainly would have voted in favour of the Bill. I believe that it is a pity that, when the Government were given powers to legislate for adults in the rear of cars, those powers were not used. Therefore, people should not be worried about the Government being over-anxious to use every opportunity to take such powers. Indeed, perhaps the Government stand to far back I believe that the powers, if given to Government, would be used sensibly and there would be full consultation so that people would not be harmed and the result would be that many children would be saved.

Let me illustrate the rate of danger to children. In each of the years since 1980, between 37 and 58 children have been murdered. In the years since 1980, between 60 and 81 children have died, unrestrained in the backs of cars. That puts the issue into perspective.

12.37 pm

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): I add my congratulations to the hon. Member for Cheadle (Mr. Day) on introducing this important Bill. The Under-Secretary said that there was an unintentional gap in previous legislation and that it should not have been necessary to introduce the Bill as primary legislation. The hon. Member for Cheadle has chosen to bring forward this sensible, overdue legislation and that redounds greatly to his credit because this is his first stint in Parliament. I hope that his contribution to safety on our roads is recognised by the House.

The roads are less safe than they should be. On a different occasion we will have a debate on the Government's responsibilities and the pace at which we should be moving. As a mark of compliment to the Minister, perhaps it is almost uncharitable, I always get the feeling that there is a road safety Minister trying to get free of the shackles of a Government who wish to underfund the infrastructure. Perhaps that feeling will guarantee, ultimately that he will find himself in Northern Ireland and will then be able to help the hon. Member for Antrim, South (Mr. Forsythe). Perhaps I should not push too hard on that today.

This legislation is extremely important. We are talking not just about a significant number of deaths over a year but about a huge number of serious and less serious injuries. Any parent who sees their child in hospital, or even just hurt, knows the anguish and agony that we all go through in such situations, not to mention the obvious suffering of the children concerned. We can have nothing but sympathy for the hon. Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) who lost his child in this way.

As a parent, I have contemplated the possibility of one of my children dying—under any circumstances—and know how difficult it would be to come to terms with that, particularly if one had a sense of responsibility for what had happened. That would be compounded if one felt that one could have taken actions that would have prevented the accident. It would produce a guilt that only those who have been through such an experience could understand and appreciate. For those reasons, the House has an obligation and a responsibility, not just to parents but to all in society, to offer a legal framework which will allow the safe use of our roads.

I do not want to spend a great deal of time on the remarks of the hon. Members for Keighley (Mr. Waller) and for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor). Their views are nonsense. There is an old saying, used by statisticians, that some people use statistics as a drunk would use a lamp post—to prop up an otherwise disreputable situation.

Mr. Waller: The statistics that I used were official statistics, and I used few of those. I developed my argument fairly carefully. I accept that the hon. Gentleman has a viewpoint, and he should accept that I have a viewpoint and an equally valid right to put it.

Mr. Lloyd: I have to disappoint the hon. Gentleman. No, I do not accept that. If the hon. Gentleman were consistent in his theory, he would believe that the introduction of any safety measures, such as those rightly pointed out by the Minister — skid resistance, better braking systems and more adequate steering — would lead to riskier driving and the acceptance of a higher risk on the road. I reject that view, not only because it does not conform with my view of driving, which I agree is only at the level of personal experience and anecdote, but because I do not believe that people take a measured, calculated view which allows them to assess risk in the way that would be necessary for them to come up with the results

that the hon. Gentleman has suggested. The case is rather the opposite. If people took a rational viewpoint, they would realise that driving a motorcar, even with children restrained by seat belts, is risky. Deaths and serious injuries occur even when children are restrained in the backs of cars. The argument that we can afford to take great risks and drive like hooligans or grand prix drivers is not borne out by a rational decision. The truth is different.

Most of us get into our cars without thinking about whether we shall have an accident that day. I got into my car at 6 o'clock this morning to drive to Manchester airport. No doubt I drove as I always drive—not as well as I ought to. I did not think that I might have an accident. Over the weekend, when I drive my children, I will not think, "This is the time when I will have an accident."Virtually every one of us has had that thought from time to time—it conditions our behaviour. I am afraid we mostly have it when we pass an accident on the motorway or read about a particularly dreadful accident in our area. That is when our behaviour begins to approximate to a rational model of assessing risk, but for the most part, sadly, that is not the model of human behaviour.

If the hon. Member for Keighley followed through the logic of his argument, he should be arguing passionately against the Bill. He should oppose rear seat restraints in any circumstances because in his view they are for the greater disbenefit. The fact that he does not oppose the Bill so passionately leads me to question his motivation. I am not casting aspersions about his views—I am sure that he is as keen as the rest of us to ensure that our roads are safer — but the logic of his argument is patently ridiculous.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The logic of my argument is that everyone should be belted up and no car should do more than 10 mph in a built up area or more than 30 mph outside. My hon. Friend the Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller) fairly said that there is some risk compensation. He did not say that people should not be belted up, although he may have given that impression, and it will not help the causes that I and the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) support if we drive my hon. Friend too far.

Mr. Lloyd: I have no strong views on how far the hon. Gentleman can be driven.

The Bill is basically sound and I hope that what the hon. Member for Antrim, South said will be heeded. I see no reason why the Bill should not be amended to take account of Northern Ireland. The Minister has not said that he would oppose such a move, although he may wish to reconsider if amendments are tabled.

It is right to legislate, but information is critical. That is the experience of every country that has introduced rear restraints. It is only when a legislative framework is backed up by information campaigns that the public realise the significance of an issue.

The use of rear restraints in Sweden has gone up from less than one quarter to about three quarters of the population on the basis of three lines of action — a legislative framework, public information, and local authorities providing loans for child seats. I fear to throw in that latter remark because I am sure that Conservative Members will say that I am representing loony Left Labour councils who want to use public money for mischievious purposes. There is, however, a strong argument in favour of such public sector action.

Most of us are ignorant of the dangers. I was intrigued by what the Minister and the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant) said about what happens at relatively low speeds. Most of us have held a young child in a car and assumed that we were capable of keeping it out of danger. It seems that the reality is very different. The House has an obligation to get that message over.

I have been able this week to examine what is available for young children. I have children of almost all sizes. I have fewer rear restraints than children—I have three restraints and four children. I have to make the unenviable choice which may be called the Southend question. I must tell the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) that I would far sooner have three of my children properly restrained than have none of them restrained, on the basis of some dubious concept of fairness.

The hon. Member for Cheadle does the House a great service by introducing the Bill, but it is a shame that the Bill is not Government legislation. Dr. D. J. Williams, president of the Casualty Surgeons Association said in his letter to the hon. Gentleman:

> "We find it very disturbing that it should be necessary for you to introduce a Private Members Bill in order to achieve a reduction in the number of serious and fatal injuries to children but we are unanimous in our support for your endeavour."

That is high credit to the hon. Gentleman. It is less credit to the Government that private Member's legislation is required on an issue of primary safety. I hope that the Minister has listened to the House which, apart from one or two dissenting voices, is overwhelmingly in favour of the introduction of the measure. I hope that he will recognise that safety commands support across the House and is not the province of one party or another.

We must be assured that the Department of Transport and its Ministers take safety seriously. While it is easy to say the words that show how worried we all are, it is more difficult to get the Government to act. The Government should have introduced legislation, but I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on introducing it. I hope that the Minister will enthusiastically adopt the measure and ensure that it is put into practice.

12.51 pm

Mr. Roger Moate (Faversham): Those of us who strongly support the Bill should at least thank my hon. Friends the Members for Keighley (Mr. Waller) and for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) for their important statement that they do not propose to delay the Bill today and for enlivening the debate, as my hon. Friend the Member for Keighley undoubtedly did. It is most important that they have stated that they will not delay the Bill as it gives us great heart and hope that the legislation will find its way to the statute book. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Cheadle (Mr. Day) will have the great honour of carrying it to the statute book. Whatever happens to him in his future distinguished political career, if he gets this on the statute book, he will be able to look back on one of the most worthwhile achievements of his career. I say that as one who laboured with great difficulty in the early 1970s with many other hon. Members who are

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present today to persuade the Government and Parliament —we were swimming against the tide—to accept seat belt legislation.

Having thanked my hon. Friend the Member for Keighley for what he said, I must disagree fundamentally with him. He is fighting a rearguard action, having lost the original argument on seat belts. His fundamental belief that somehow better driver behaviour can be produced by education or exhortation is wrong and has been proved wrong by our seat belt experience.

We know that seat-belt wearing increased dramatically as a result of the legislation. To suggest as he does that we should not have compulsory restraints for children in rear seats, but that we should leave the decision to drivers and parents, is flying in the face of experience. We know full well that the low wearing rate would continue. That is what he wants to see happen because, he argues, the more we belt up, the more careless we become as drivers and the greater the hazard we are to other road users, such as pedestrians and cyclists. He is suggesting that seat belts make us careless and that we should not wear them too often. It follows that he is sceptical about restraint for anyone in a car. That is not carrying his argument to an illogical conclusion——

Mr. Waller: If I was driving a car and had small children in it, I would ensure that they were belted in because I would be thinking about them. But it is wrong to introduce changes in law which might have the effect of transferring the risk from children belted into a car to others who were using the road at the same time.

Mr. Moate: My hon. Friend's logic is flawed. He makes a judgment for himself that children should be restrained, but he is taking a calculated risk that that action could cause injury to others. We as a Parliament must make that calculated judgment about whether, if my hon. Friend is right about the increased hazard to pedestrians or cyclists, that risk is offset by the greater saving of life that would accrue from seat belt wearing. The overwhelming evidence is that substantial savings of life and a reduction in serious injury could be achieved by adults wearing seat belts in the front and rear seats and by children wearing the harness described by my hon. Friend the Minister.

The House is entitled to consider some of the arguments that were deployed by my hon. Friend and others on the Bill, which made it compulsory to wear seat belts. Many of the premises upon which they argued have been proved decisively to be wrong. It is remarkable how the motoring public accepted seat belts. I make a point of looking at other cars to see how many drivers are unrestrained, and almost every driver wears a seat belt. We were told that the motoring public would be hostile to wearing seat belts and that there would be difficulties of enforcement. There has been none. We were told that the police would be overwhelmed with work, but they have not been. We were told that the legislation would not reduce casualties, but it has.

All that happened not through a miracle but because the British public accepted the logic of wearing seat belts. It has become an automatic feature of their lives. That is exactly what would happen with child restraints in rear seats.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East said that it would be wrong for parents to use the law to back them up in enforcing better behaviour on their children. I understand his point exactly. It is a duty of parents to make their children behave. But many parents would welcome the assistance of the law in persuading their children to belt up and be restrained in rear seats. Any parent could tell us how difficult it is to get children to sit still at all, or to sit in the back of the car. Every child wants to sit in the front and they do not want to be restrained. The legislation would encourage the use of children's seat belts far beyond what it might prescribe. It will become commonplace for all children to expect to be restrained from an early age.

I was intrigued by the evidence of a survey conducted in Kansas which would gladden the hearts of most parents. It said that the use of child restraints can reduce disruptive behaviour during car journeys. So there would be a wonderful secondary benefit apart from the improvement in road safety. A group of children riding in car seats exhibited very high levels of appropriate or safe behaviour, whereas children not riding in car seats exhibited very low levels of appropriate behaviour. As a parent — all parents would echo this—I believe that the legislation could help in encouraging better behaviour by children in cars. That would have an tremendous effect on road safety, because there is nothing more hazardous than a youngster crawling round a car. Apart from the danger to the unrestrained child, general behaviour is a factor in road safety.

My hon. Friend the Member for Keighley suggested that when children were restrained it made the driver slightly more careless. I think he also suggested that when they were unrestrained the driver would be more careful. I am sure that, like other hon. Members, my hon. Friend would be horrified if he were to drive alongside another car and see unrestrained children crawling around the car and leaning over the back of the driver. The slightest impact would cause massive damage to such children. That happens now, and the evidence of our own eyes refutes the rather intellectual points that were made by my hon. Friend.

The evidence of our eyes and our instincts show that the Bill is right and must be placed on the statute book. We hope that the forecast about life-saving and injury reduction is right. However, if the forecast is only one half or one quarter right the Bill is still needed because, essentially, we are talking about avoidable accidents. We know that every family faces hazards that can deprive it of children and that many handicaps arise. Many unavoidable things in life can cause tragedy to families but we are talking about avoidable tragedies and Parliament can contribute towards eliminating those.

The fact that my hon. Friend the Minister has spoken so strongly in favour of the Bill gives us great hope. I do not share the criticism of the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) about the Bill being private and not Government legislation. The Minister knows that I am not uncritical of some aspects of the work of his Department, but in recent years no Minister has done more to improve road safety, and it is commendable that he has encouraged the Bill. That is vital if we are to have a good Committee stage and get the regulations right. I welcome the Minister's positive attitude.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Cheadle. His Bill is superb and my hon. Friend, who is in his early years in Parliament, presented it magnificently. The Bill will make a major contribution to road safety.

1.2 pm

Mr. James Cran (Beverley): I add my congratulations to those that have been expressed to my hon. Friend the Member for Cheadle (Mr. Day). I have seen him nurture the Bill from an idea to what it is today. His presentation and marshalling of the facts were admirable.

The Bill is long overdue because of the statistics about which the House has heard and which I shall not rehearse. My hon. Friend the Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller) gave us a forensic demonstration of what he considers the facts to be. I start from the premise of having checked the facts of the 1986 debate. The annual saving of about 200 deaths and about 7,000 serious injuries and a 25 per cent. reduction in the admission of car accident victims to hospital leads me to believe that the original experiment of putting seat belts in the front of cars was right.

My hon. Friend the Member for Keighley said that there was a 27 per cent. increase in deaths caused by other road users. I, too, have read the report by Dr. John Adams about which he spoke and the question that arises is what is cause and what is effect. The report does not make that absolutely clear. We must, however, consider this study and I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Cheadle will consider it if the Bill reaches Committee. I repeat that the findings are not conclusive.

I have taken my decisions from statistics and from experience. I had an experience with my daughter Alexandra, who is now six years old, which I will never forget. My hon. Friend the Member for Keighley reminded me of it. He said that many road accidents are caused by driver error and I would not dissent from that. However, I think that I can claim that I was not driving abnormally on the occasion that I am describing. I was driving on to the M6 in Birmingham when another driver approached me from the main carriageway. In response, I braked slightly, not violently. Unbeknown to me, my daughter had stood up. She was not too old for her baby restraint and as I braked very gently she was propelled between the two front seats. Fortunately she was not injured by hitting the dashboard or, even worse, by the gear stick. That was an experience that I would not care to repeat. I have profited and learned from it because that incident could have proved fatal.

I have now become far more careful, not just as a result of the statistics, but because of that incident. I take great care to ensure that my daughter is sitting correctly and that she is restrained. However, there was an uneasy period before she accepted the restraint. I am delighted to say that the position now is that if she is not restrained before the car begins to move, she shouts out to tell me that she is not restrained. She now understands, as I understand, and as my hon. Friend the Member for Cheadle understands, that restraining a child, as much as anyone else in a car, must be the correct course of action. I wonder whether I would have taken this action without having experienced my near-accident. Therefore whenever my car now moves I ensure, that my daughter is restrained in the back.

I am however, worried about others who may not have experienced the kind of shock that I had. Other people appear to be unintentionally lackadaisical, as I was before my unfortunate experience. Before that, I took the view that it could never happen to me or mine. I did not think my daughter could be propelled into the front of the car and perhaps be fatally injured.

Many hon. Members have referred to the 8,560 accidents that affect rear seat passengers. That figure is proof that accidents happen to other people. Moreover, I cringe, like many other hon. Members, when I travel along motorways and ordinary roads and see children standing between the seats. I have seen children leaning from the rear seat to the front seat. On one occasion I even saw a child moving from the rear seat to the front seat while the car in question was moving. The public seem to believe that accidents will not happen. I believe that the actions that I have described are accidents waiting to happen.

If the Bill does not make progress, those accidents waiting to happen will happen. They might affect my children or anyone's children. If people do not believe me, they should visit their local police station. I visited my local police station before I made up my mind about this Bill and used a crash simulator. It is a very crude instrument, but it simulates an accident occurring at 15 mph. I believe that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State has also used a simulator.

I was not carrying a child — merely a bundle of papers. I had expected the experience to be a bit of a cakewalk, but, my goodness, when I reached the end of it, not only did I nearly catapult out of my seat—happily I was restrained—but my papers went in all directions. I wish that more people would go along to their local police stations to test the equipment and experience its stunning effects. I hope that the police, in response to the Bill, will go out into the community with that equipment, and with all the other means that they have to hand to explain to people about the effects of accidents at speed.

Hon. Members who cite the complications in the Bill are right to do so. In particular, I have been moderately troubled by the examples of three or four children sitting in the back of a car with only two restraints, and the school-run phenomenon. I like clean solutions to difficult problems. However, I have been convinced that there is no quick solution to this problem. It is surely not acceptable to suggest that, if all the children cannot be restrained, none should be. That is a nonsensical argument. If there are two restraints and three children, those two restraints should be used, because that will contribute towards preventing deaths or serious injuries that might otherwise occur.

Another point that has persuaded me to support the Bill was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Cheadle: that what is important is not only the Bill itself, but making parents think about their children's safety when they are in cars. I relate that to my horrific experience on the motorway outside Birmingham.

Speaking as I do from the Conservative Benches, my heart is with my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor). If a voluntary solution were possible, I would be the first to espouse it. But, alas, I do not think that it is possible. Consequently, I have been pulled, intellectually kicking and screaming, to support the Bill. I do not believe that publicity campaigns would have other than a temporary effect, or that we should be discussing temporary palliatives for such difficult problems.

My next question is, what is the best form of restraint? I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Cheadle will consider that point carefully. I started from the premise that all that was needed was for small children to be harnessed in adult restraints. In my own experience, with my daughter, that is better than nothing. However, it is not the best solution, for the simple reason that—although

[Mr. James Cran]

such restraints are adaptable, and the angle at which they are fitted can be changed—they do not always fit a small child well. I hope that my hon. Friend will go beyond suggesting the use of adult restraints to consider the other restraints that can be fitted for small children.

I shall support the Bill enthusiastically, and vote for its Second Reading. Normally, as I have said, I live in hope that voluntary action will work, and that the publicity generated by a Bill such as this will provide the solution that we want. However, neither would succeed entirely. I wish that we could make the legislation retrospective, and achieve the complete solution that I should like to see. However, I accept that that is not a practical course of action.

This is a moderate Bill. It will protect children who cannot make their own judgments, and we ought to remind ourselves of that. More importantly, it will safeguard children against, perhaps me, or others who might become complacent after the end of a publicity campaign. We may come to feel that we do not really need to use the seat belts or may simply forget about them. Then, as sure as night follows day, there would be an accident or a near accident such as that I had on the motorway. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Cheadle and enthusiastically support his Bill.

1.16 pm

Mr. David Amess (Basildon): I join hon. Members in congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Cheadle (Mr. Day) on his success in the ballot. I also congratulate him on his choice of subject for legislation. I understand that he is a relatively new Member and that this idea is his own and has not necessarily come about through the inspiration of the excellent "That's Life" programme.

I should tell the House that I am a convert to the cause of seat belts. I was not a Member when the previous Bill was discussed and I had doubts about the benefits of the compulsory wearing of seat belts. However, I have completely changed my view.

I often get the impression that my wife does not entirely rate my ability as a driver. However, that does not stop her ensuring that I do most of the driving in our family. When we started our family she made sure that we immediately purchased what my hon. Friend the Minister described as safety seats. I thought that she was rather going over the top. However, from the excellent examples we saw on "That's Life" a few years ago, I now recognise how right she was. But then women are often so right on many matters.

I am often appalled by the way in which people transport their children in cars. When we put our two children in the restrainers for the first time I cannot pretend that they enjoyed the sensation of being restrained. As we all know, children like to have a free rein. As we drive along we see young children sitting on the laps of mothers or standing between the two front seats. It is appalling. An even worse practice is that of piling three, four, five or six children and a dog into the back of an estate car. If such a car were to be involved in a shunt, there would be great danger for all the people in the car.

We have already heard about the 77 children who were killed in 1986 and the 10,000 who were injured. Those statistics are extremely telling. The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents claims that nearly 500 lives are saved each year through the wearing of seat belts. It also claims that 7,000 serious injuries and 13,000 slight injuries are prevented. The society also claims that since the introduction of the compulsory wearing of seat belts in 1981, there has been a 15 per cent. reduction in car accidents and, significantly, a 25 per cent. drop in hospital bed occupancy.

There is a large amount of international evidence that is overwhelming in its support for measures such as this. Research in America has shown that restraints can reduce fatalities by 71 per cent. and serious injuries by 67 per cent. In Britain, the Transport and Road Research Laboratory estimates that the use of rear restraints could reduce deaths by up to 75 per cent.

International evidence shows that the use of rear restraints has increased dramatically following educational and promotional campaigns, in some cases by as much as 50 per cent.

That begs the question, what price safety? Are we to be faced with the possibility of restraints being compulsory in cars for children under 14 while little or no public education is undertaken to promote and instil in people the need for the use of such restraints? I hope that, hand in hand with the Bill, there will be a suitable publicity campaign to help to reinforce the principle in the minds of the general public. My hon. Friend the Minister earlier spoke about a particular leaflet, but I hope that we shall go much further in publicising the excellent measure of my hon. Friend the Member for Cheadle. Such a step will be important to ensure the proper working of the Bill. That need not necessarily be done by the Government. The multi-million pound motor industry could consider undertaking that task.

Monitoring is plainly a matter for the police. I am delighted that the Association of Chief Police Officers is satisfied that the monitoring of restraints would not be a problem. The measure would be self-enforcing, as was that for front seat belts. The usage rate of front seat belts rose from 30 per cent. before legislation to 90 per cent. following it. That shows that, contrary to many police officers' fears about lack of compliance with the law, the public generally respect and abide by a relatively unmonitorable law.

I have a number of hobby horses on road safety, and one is the ever-increasing practice of people using telephones in cars. When I have raised this matter on other occasions, I have been told by Ministers that existing legislation covers the subject. I am not satisfied that that is the case, and I hope that the excellent committee referred to by the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) will examine the increasing use of telephones in cars.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cheadle has done the country a great service by seizing the initiative and introducing this legislation. I hope that it will go through all its stages in both Houses speedily and that it will quickly become law.

1.23 pm

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): Some years ago, I was sent some instructions to draft pleadings in a case relating to a car accident. They have stuck in my mind ever since. I shall briefly relate them to the House.

A father was driving his two sons home from school. The older child, who was aged seven, was sitting in the front seat and the younger one, who was aged four, was sitting in the back. The older child and the father were

wearing seat belts. The car was one-year old, and as it drove along the A64 in Yorkshire, which is a dual carriageway, another car came out of a side turning and, without stopping, proceeded on to the carriageway, almost catching the car in which they were travelling along the fast lane. The father, seeing that, was understandably shocked and pulled the wheel over to avoid just clipping the car that was coming out of the side turning. As a result of that sudden action by the driver, the car careered at 70 mph across the middle of the road, through a hedge and into a tree. As it hit the tree with such great force, it began to turn over and skid further along the hedge.

Someone in a car following that car had seen everything that had happened. As a result, we knew the identity of the driver of the car that came out of the side turning and could sue the driver. He was a 19-year-old who was drunk. He had bet his three companions that he could get across the dual carriageway without stopping, indicating or looking where he was going. He had won his bet and went on to have a further three pints in another public house.

The car containing the father and the two children ended up on its side. The driver, in his seat belt, immediately turned round to see what had happened to his sons. He released his seat belt and began to climb out of the car. I do not recall the make of the car, but I have a feeling that it was a Ford Sierra. As he climbed out, the car rocked and turned over on its side. To his horror he discovered that the four-year-old child sitting on the back seat had been ejected through one of the side windows of the car. The car had rolled over, half on to the child, and had crushed his head and the upper parts of his body. It was a truly horrific accident. I had the grave duty of meeting the parents and the little boy, who was then aged 11, and explaining the law relating to car accidents. It was a tragedy.

I experienced another case, this time concerning a man in Lincolnshire who was driving with a baby and its mother on the back seat. As they went round a sharp bend, they suddenly met a tractor in the middle of the road. The car came to a sudden halt, because it slewed straight into the front wheel of the tractor which stopped it dead. The mother hit the back of the driver's seat, the driver in his seat belt stayed exactly where he was, but the baby, aged one year, was ejected from the car through the front windscreen and was scattered in several pieces into the engine of the tractor.

Both of those cases convinced me wholeheartedly of the need urgently to bring forward legislation such as the Bill that my hon. Friend the Member for Cheadle (Mr. Day) has brought before the House today to ensure that such accidents never happen again.

It is a tragedy that in the first case, the Yorkshire case, the child in the front sear was totally unharmed while his brother was killed. The father was wearing a seat belt and although the car had hit a tree at 70 mph he was completely unharmed. He suffered a slipped disc or some minor injury, but to all intents and purposes he got out of the car and walked away from the accident while the child in the back seat was crushed to death. That was a tragedy.

If a 15 lb baby is thrown forward at a 30 mph frontal impact, the force is equivalent to 450 lbs—30 times its weight. We must remember, when discussing children in car accidents, that the biggest and most vulnerable part of a baby, the part that suffers most damage, is the head. Children's heads are proportionately larger in comparison to their bodies than those of adults. Adults' heads are considerably harder than those of children, and in this House we all learn to be very hard-headed. *[Interruption.]* Some hon. Members would say thick-headed. However, the fact remains that children's young bones are supple and are not joined. Children under five have a space at the top of the cranium that is not yet sealed up and their heads are extremely easily damaged.

Any of us who have been to ski resorts and have skied down quite dangerous precipices will often have seen children aged two or three ski past us at alarming rates. It is a marvellous experience. When I look at them whiz past me, I notice that they wear crash helmets and I do not. That is because a child's head is not only the most vulnerable part, but the most critical part of his body.

I remind the House that 38 per cent. of accidents result in ejection from a car. I do not have the figures relating to back seats, but I suspect that a far higher proportion of ejections are from back seats. If that is the case, we must examine some legislation that will deal with that problem.

The result of an accident to a child whose head is damaged can be wide-ranging, permanent and distressing. Children have been put in intensive care for years on end as a result of car accidents in which they suffered comparatively minor accidents to their heads. We have seen children who are unable to walk for the rest of their lives, not because their legs or backs have been damaged but because they have suffered injuries to their heads. We have quadriplegic children in our hospitals. Their disabilities have not been brought about by congenital defects or disease in early childhood but because of what has happened to them in car accidents. It is within the power of the House to make sure that children are properly restrained. For that purpose, I commend the Bill.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) said, there are cases in which there will be more damage to children through their being restrained. Such cases are far too remote for us to worry about. Two important things are brought about by the restraint of children in the back of cars. First, in many cases, it prevents ejection and, secondly, it curbs inappropriate behaviour. Many statistics have been quoted, and I do not wish to quote too many more.

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): The hon. Gentleman was not here.

Mr. Devlin: With respect, I have been present for a substantial part of the debate. I had to leave the House briefly to deal with some constituents who are visiting today. The matter is of great interest to my constituents who are sitting in the Strangers' Gallery and are listening to what is said in the House.

In 1977, there was a United States study of 25,000 children involved in accidents. It demonstrated a rank order of safety of children in cars. It showed that the safest children are seat-belted in the rear of cars, the next safest children are seat-belted in the front, more unsafe children are unbelted in the rear of cars, and the least safe children are unbelted in the front of a car. It has already been mentioned that it is important to legislate to prevent train and aircraft accidents happening again. I look forward to the end of the King's Cross fire inquiry, which may bring useful legislation before the House so that we may be able to prevent tragedies of that kind. Each year, more children are killed in cars or on the road than are killed in aircraft, ship or train accidents. For that reason, the legislation is important.

[Mr. Devlin]

I listened to my hon. Friend the Minister tell the House that he did not want to be a walking advertisement because he mentioned the firm of Kwik-Fit-Euro. I commend to him the role of walking advertisement on every occasion if more manufacturers and shop owners are prepared to present a similar scheme to the public. Giving parents the opportunity to buy child restraint chairs and straps from a reputable manufacturer and to have that cost fully reimbursed when the child has outgrown their use is highly commendable. If another 50 companies were to come forward with similar schemes, I would have no hesitation in standing up in the House to act as the most blatant walking advertisement in mentioning every single one of their names and in commending them individually. Here and now, I should like to thank the chairman of Kwik-Fit-Euro for his recent and kind letter to me, in which he pointed out the value of the scheme. Lest I advertise his name too much, it is Mr. Tom Farmer who is the chairman and chief executive. I commend his action and his company.

Turning to other countries, we should have a brief look at the position in the United States. There is legislation in five states to restrain children in cars who are under five years. In 15 states there is legislation relating to children of the age of four years and below. In 25 states there is legislation restricting the carriage of children under three years. There is legislation relating to children under two years in one state, and in four states there is legislation relating to children or babies, under the age of one. Yet in this country, with its many counties and districts, we have no law relating to the carriage of children in cars.

I advise my hon. Friend the Member for Cheadle that I would go further than he has done. The wearing of seat belts should be compulsory in any part of a car. I have had my bellyful of drafting pleadings in respect of cases where people have been thrown out of cars and crushed by large pieces of machinery grinding together in the middle of the night. I have had my bellyful of looking at photographs of people, parts of whose limbs and bodies have been scattered all over the engine and the machinery of the vehicles into which they have crashed, or who have been pushed across trees or thrown into ditches. I am sick to my stomach at looking at pictures of children who have been involved in accidents—that is the most chronic area. At Question Time we often hear shouts from odd corners of the House of, "Babies are dying." When my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is sitting where my hon. Friend the Minister for Roads and Traffic is sitting now, some Opposition Member will shout out, "Babies are dying," and a great roar goes up in the House that something must be done. I agree that something must be done. Today we are dealing with one reason why babies die. Indeed, it is greater cause of their deaths than any other, but where are our hon. Friends? They are not here. Next time we hear those hon. Members shout, "Babies are dying," we should say, "Where were you on the day we brought legislation before the House to stop some of those babies dying?"

Again, I would go further than my hon. Friend. We should consider the cost to the National Health Service of dealing with all those horribly distorted children and the costs of the casualty departments in bringing out staff in the middle of the night; of calling in surgeons to piece together those children; of bringing people together in emergency teams to bring blood from one end of the country to another; of assembling emergency teams to bring parts of bodies from one end of the country to another; and of assembling emergency teams of specialist doctors, paediatricians and other carers who come together suddenly and without warning. That is an enormous cost. However, there is also the enormous cost of treating a quadriplegic child for 20 years. A child has been in intensive care in my local hospital at north Tees for six years. The cost to the state of having that child in intensive care is about £1,500 per week. That has been going on for six years. That child was not brought in because she was injured in a car accident. She was born like that, but other children in other parts of the country, particularly in Birmingham, have been brought in as quadriplegic patients as a result of road traffic accidents.

I wish to raise with my hon. Friend the Minister the question of children who indulge in inappropriate behaviour in the back of cars. Too often, I have been driving in London and seen children playing and screaming and shouting on the back seats of cars, and disturbing the driver. I do not have any statistics to show how many accidents result from such behaviour, but my common sense tells me—and the House's common sense should tell it—that this must be a major contributory factor to accidents on our roads. If we restrain that, we shall do the House and the country a great service.

Finally, I do not believe that it is the object of the Bill to penalise the caring parent. Some caring parents will already be fitting good child restraint straps and seats in the backs of cars which are not manufactured with seat belt anchorage points. If they do not use those seat belts, which they have fitted on the back seats, I should not wish to penalise them. We should try to encourage good practice so that parents who care enough about their children will install those straps and seats. I hope that the Bill will not penalise those people.

I have considered those issues in the Bill which my hon. Friend the Member for Cheadle leaves free from regulations. These matters can be considered in Committee. It is a good and widely drawn Bill with a fundamentally sound principle which will cut out many thousands of deaths on our roads of those most vulnerable in our society. I therefore commend it to the House.

1.43 pm

Mr. Day: I shall be brief. I thank everyone who has contributed. I shall not respond individually to each hon. Member because the tone of the debate has been very much in favour of the Bill. I am grateful to the House and to all hon. Members who have spoken so eloquently in favour of the Bill.

The hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) left me a note because he has had to leave the debate. He did not wish to be rude, but he had a speaking engagement in Leicestershire, in the constituency of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. I said that I would make that clear, as he did not wish to insult either me or the House.

I wish to clarify one important point. Several hon. Members, particularly the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) asked why I have not extended the provisions of the Bill to all vehicles. I subscribe to that as a principle, but there are practical reasons why I do not believe that it is possible to do that. Hon. Members, particularly the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman), will probably be aware that all cars

manufactured since 1 October 1986 have been subject to the mandatory fitting of rear seat belts or child restraints. Obviously, those vehicles are covered by the Bill because rear restraints have been fitted. Cars manufactured since April 1982 have had anchorage points fitted. Vehicles in which seat belts or child restaints have been fitted voluntarily will be covered by the Bill, but there are many cars on the road, dating from before April 1982, in which it is physically impossible to fit restraints. From a practical point of view, therefore, it is not possible to fit them in every vehicle on the road. The passage of time will deal with that aspect.

I thank the Minister for his kind comments and his support in the debate. I take on board his comments about the need to consider the regulations closely and for appropriate consultations to take place. My Bill is drafted as it is to empower the Minister to do that and to fill the gap that currently exists in the legislation.

I have every sympathy with the view expressed by the hon. Member for Antrim, South (Mr. Forsythe) and I recognise that the people of Northern Ireland feel the same as the rest of the United Kingdom. I will do all that I can to try to ensure that the hon. Gentleman's comments are taken into account as long as I do not believe that that would, at any stage, jeopardise the progress of my Bill.

Finally, I should like to refer to a letter that I believe will be of interest to the House. It was addressed to the Minister, but I also received a copy. It is from Lynn James, who is the mother of the child in question. Mrs. James says:

"I have heard on the radio and seen on television that you are having a campaign on the use of child restraints in cars. I thought you may be interested in a rhyme that my son Henry came out with after watching a film showing dummies going through a windscreen. He was only four then, he is now five. This is the rhyme,

'Humpty Dumpty sat in a car,
Humpty Dumpty didn't go far,
Over the seat and in the air,
Over the road and everywhere.'"

Such a rhyme from a child of five is amazingly perceptive. Apparently that child now calls children who bounce around in the backs of cars Humpty Dumpties. That rhyme would be worth remembering by parents who are trying to restrain their children in the backs of cars. It is a light, but serious note on which to end this debate.

I thank hon. Members for the way in which they have discussed and conducted themselves in this debate. I am extremely grateful to the House for listening to me so carefully, and I trust that we will now give approval to the measure.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 16 (Commital of Bills).

Environment and Safety Information Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

1.47 pm

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): I beg to move, That the Bill now be read a Second time.

In the extremely brief time that is left to debate the Bill I hope that the House will agree that it is a sensible, helpful measure and that it deserves a Second Reading.

The Bill is based on two simple principles. First, the importance of freedom of information opening up the processes of government and administration and, secondly, the need to take any steps that can improve public safety provision. The Bill requires all monitoring agencies responsible for public or environmental safety to keep a register of the notices that they issue, available at reasonable hours for public inspection, with copies available at modest cost. The agencies covered include the factory inspectorate, the agricultural inspectorate, the nuclear installations inspectorate, the railways inspectorate, the industrial air pollution inspectorate, fire authorities, and local authority environmental health officers.

The notices covered would be those issued under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985, which covers pesticides, and the Fire Safety and Safety of Places of Sport Act 1987. Among the events that may be covered by the provisions of the Bill include the spreading of dangerous asbestos dust, chemical spillages in factories, fire risk in places of public resort and the dangers posed by the particular usage of pesticides.

There are a number of provisions in the Bill for firms or organisations affected by a notice to place their account and explanation alongside the notice in the register. There is also a provision for any notice of appeal to be included in the register. There are provisions for a record of compliance to be placed in the register at the appropriate stage. In respect of any trade secret information which might be included in the original notice, there is provision, on application by the firm or organisation affected, for possible exclusion.

In addition, I have made a deliberate effort, in drawing up the Bill, to keep costs of implementation to an absolute minimum in an endeavour to remove any resource implications. The Bill has the strong support of the Institution of Environmental Health Officers, the Consumers Association and the Freedom of Information Campaign. I pay tribute to the work of Maurice Frankel, the director of the campaign, for the assistance he has given in drawing up the Bill. The Health and Safety Executive has formally informed the Employment Select Committee in open evidence session on 20 January that it has no objection to my Bill.

Why is the Bill needed? First, because there is always an advantage to be gained from greater openness in the routine administration of public affairs. Greater public awareness will increase, and it will improve the standing of the monitoring agencies responsible for public safety. Secondly, many of the notices issued under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act are already made available to trade union representatives to the work force at the place affected. Why should the public not know, too, when there is a wider hazard to them?

[Mr. Chris Smith]

Thirdly, the industrial air pollution inspectorate already lists notices that it has served in its annual report, but that list, by its very nature, is retrospective and out of date, and no explanations or details are given.

Fourthly, it is important that persistent offenders under safety regulations are brought to public attention. The "unfair picture of a firm's record" argument, which has been made in the past about publication of details of notices, is partly covered by the provision placed in the Bill for the firm's own account to be put in the register. It would frequently lead to an entirely correct impression being given to the public about the performance and safety record of the firm if information is publicly available about breaches of safety and environmental provisions.

Fifthly, the prospect of publication will assist inspectors in ensuring compliance with legislation. A large amount of the work of inspectors is done by a process of informal warnings, discussions and letters. When those informal procedures are ignored, formal notices are served. The threat of publication will be an added weapon in the hands of inspectors, ensuring speedy compliance.

Let me give an example which relates to an event that is still very much on the minds of hon. Members—the tragic fire at King's Cross last November. We know from unpublished documents which have never officially come into the public domain that there was an inspection of King's Cross along with Paddington, Marylebone and Baker Street tube stations, on 24 March last year, which was carried out by the railways inspectorate. It found a series of problems relating to the possibility of fire risk. No prohibition notice was issued until 10 December 1987, after the King's Cross fire occurred. That notice had to be issued because, dating back from March last year, items of safety work which had been required at the original inspection had not been carried out.

Several questions about the lapse of time between those two events must be asked, but the key point is that if a notice became public knowledge when it was issued, it would be much easier for inspectors to secure speedy compliance with requirements that they have put on organisations such as London Underground. I say that with some feeling because four of my constituents died in the fire. Any step, however small or tentative, which would help to prevent such tragedies should be welcomed

What might the objections to my Bill be? There might be an argument about resource implications. I am anxious to make the process of publication in register form as simple and cheap as possible. I hope that we can discuss that in Committee if the Government are unhappy with my proposals.

The second argument—which has been raised—is that publication might encourage more appeals. That is partly taken care of by the provision for compensating statements by the affected firm. It is important to remember, however, that the appeals procedure is itself public, so appealing to a tribunal to avoid unfair and unfavourable publicity is not necessarily effective.

I believe that, under my Bill, fewer notices would be served and that the informal pre-notice procedure would be strengthened. That would be a very good thing.

Thirdly, the Department of the Environment has some vague proposals afoot for a package of information measures relating to pollution. They are to be brought in at some stage in the future. I sincerely hope that nobody will advance the classic "Sir Humphrey" argument that, because further proposals might be made at some stage in the future, we should not take this small step now. I am reminded of the famous doctrine advanced by Cornford in "Microcosmographica Academica" where he says that the principle of the wedge is that we should not do something good now for fear of having to do something better in the future.

The Bill takes a small but useful step forward. I should like to give just one example drawn from the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay), who has taken an interest in the matter. It relates to a firm called the Stalite Battery Manufacturing Company Ltd. Two years ago, it was, as it had been for a decade, in Barnsley. It had 50 employees and made heavy-duty and car batteries. Nobody noticed that anything was amiss until one of it workers was admitted to the Barnsley general infirmary in April 1985 with acute lead poisoning.

Acute lead poisoning is extremely rare, so the worker was the centre of considerable medical interest. The local council employment adviser was informed, and he began to ask questions. It transpired that the local factory inspectors had issued improvement and even prohibition notices on the firm for years, but the managing director, a certain Albert Smith, had taken no notice of any of them.

The battery site was of interest to the workers and to local residents because it was near a housing estate. Tests showed that the level of lead pollution in the air and in the effluent from the factory was well above any safety limit.

The key point is that it was only once the information came into the public domain after the case of acute lead poisoning, which is still affecting the individual, that action was taken and real, effective, pressure was brought on the firm to mend its ways. In the end the firm has moved its site of operations and there is now considerable concern in its new location a few miles from Barnsley about its present activities.

The message should be clear. Where the public get to know about occurrences of that type effective pressure can be brought to bear on employers and public organisations that are ultimately responsible for the public safety implications of what they do. My Bill will help in such circumstances. It will not miraculously guarantee improvements in public safety, but it will take us along the right road. In the aftermath of King's Cross I hope that the House will agree.

2 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Patrick Nicholls): First, I compliment the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) on the way in which he opened this debate. He set out the issues with which the House must deal with both clarity and eloquence, and I am sure that the House must be grateful to him for that.

I am personally grateful to the hon. Gentleman for coming to see me with his advisers early on to tell me what he had in mind. It is probably common ground between us that if I was unable immediately to go as far as he would have liked, nevertheless we could help each other explore at an early stage some of the issues with which we would be coping. Obviously, today is the culmination of that process. The hon. Gentleman took the trouble to come

and see me and explain, again with great clarity, what he had in mind and he will appreciate that today to some extent we are both singing the same song.

The Government's response is to welcome any proposal which is intended to improve health and safety. Naturally, we must consider the costs and ensure that they are compensated by the benefits which accrue directly or indirectly. Indeed, the hon. Gentleman made that point. Our starting point on any safety suggestion is to be favourably disposed. Ultimately it does not simply come down to cost alone.

We recognise and, indeed, understand the genuine wish of the public to know what is safe and unsafe, and what the enforcement agencies are doing about dangers which may affect them. That is the public's right, both as taxpayers and the people most directly affected. The House must ask itself whether this particular Bill takes us forward in achieving those two objectives of improved safety and of making useful information available.

It may be helpful if I address some of the statements made in the public debates surrounding the Bill. We both know that we cannot be responsible for the comments on a Bill that is being introduced to the House. There have been several contributions on television and in the press which to some extent have exaggerated what the Bill is setting out to do.

The Bill would require a register of formal notices issued under statute. It does not require that all letters from enforcement bodies be made public. I do not criticise the hon. Gentleman for that, but it is an important distinction which certainly has not escaped public comment. Thus, for example, the advice given to Bradford football club before the fire would not have been disclosed under the terms of the Bill.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned King's Cross and I am sure that he will appreciate my reticence in saying much about it. However, it is right for me to acknowledge that the House knows how deeply he feels about it, bearing in mind that some of his constituents were killed. In asking the hon. Gentleman to respect my reticence, I understand from my knowledge, and it flows from what he said, that notices were not issued in that case, so would not have been revealed under the terms of the Bill. But I agree with the hon. Gentleman that the background to the debate encompasses the incident at King's Cross.

The Bill does not state that internal memoranda and similar letters must be registered; therefore, internal company memoranda would not be made public. For instance, that would mean that comments made by ships' captains about the doors on cross-channel ferries would not have been disclosed before Zeebrugge. I mention those points because it is important that the Bill should be seen for what the hon. Gentleman intends it to be, and that it should not be extended.

Some of the comments made on the Bill have been misleading. I do not advocate such proposals, because they would restrict the mass of advice and discussion on health and safety issues, much of which is heeded without it going any further. If every letter or note on safety had to be disclosed, far fewer would be written. The result would be that much of the good that is achieved would no longer be achieved.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): I do not oppose the principle of the Bill, whose broad thrust is fairly sensible, but the Minister may be able to help me on one aspect. I have in my constituency several highly sophisticated agrochemical works. They are operated under conditions of great safety, and are scrutinised keenly by the Health and Safety Executive. Indeed, the companies are extremely cautious, and small explosions cause tremendous excitement. Perhaps I should have asked this question of the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith). If a notice was served on one of those firms for a minor matter, which had nothing to do with general safety or the risk of blowing up the entire community, and the full background was not published, would there not be a risk of much local hysteria and the circulation of misleading information?

Mr. Nicholls: My hon. Friend makes a fair point. There could be such a risk, and the impression could be given that that company's safety record was worse than it was. There must also be the possibility that instead of saying, "We will comply with the notice" — despite what the hon. Gentleman said, fairly, about notoriety cutting both ways—the company might decide to defend its position. I suspect that, in practice, in many cases health and safety inspectors take a fairly rigorous view of the requirements, knowing that they will be complied with quickly. Perhaps I need say no more about that. The points made by my hon. Friend could be argued both ways, and I suspect that the weight of the argument lies more with him than with the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury.

In considering those issues, I have had special regard to the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, which is included in the schedule. I do so because the Health and Safety Commission is responsible to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and because the executive's inspectors issued about 9,500 notices in the year April 1986 to March 1987.

It may be helpful for me to say something about the commission and the executive which I hope will put the Bill in context. The proposals are not the first foray into what might be called uncharted territory. Health and safety is not the domain of dark secrets. On the contrary, the Health and Safety Commission is a tripartite body which is rare in having a stated policy of openness and which is exhaustive in its efforts to consult widely on all its activities and proposals. When a notice is issued at a workplace, the employees who work there are informed by inspectors and a copy is made available to them.

Regulations developed by the commission and enforced by its inspectors concerning major hazards such as chemical works require local neighbourhoods to be informed of possible dangers and of what would happen in an emergency. Health and safety inspectors are trained to be helpful to the public, working through advice and trying to work through consensus where they can achieve it.

None the less, the commission was not content. In 1985, it issued a discussion document seeking public comment on access to health and safety information. On the basis of the many responses that it received from people who are interested in this area, the commission issued a policy statement in 1986 setting out its aims and how they should be implemented. I do not intend to quote from that at any great length, but the central theme is worth addressing.

The commission's main concern is that the public should be safeguarded from the health and safety consequences of industrial activity and should be in a position to understand the nature and extent of important

[Mr. Nicholls]

industrial hazards. It says that where the public's immediate safety or health could be at risk, they should be in possession of information that will enable them to understand their position and to know what action to take in the event of some emergency. All hon. Members will thoroughly support that standpoint.

One specific change resulting from that exercise is relevant to the Bill. It is to make available at Health and Safety Executive offices a series of registers listing, for example, all premises that have been notified to the executive and all licences, certificates and orders. Of specific relevance to the debate is that the executive established a register of all successful prosecutions under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.

I return to my question whether the Bill will achieve its objectives. Whatever else one may say, a list of convictions, done and dusted, that put the matter beyond doubt because it had been dealt with by a court, will be of great interest to those who take an interest in these matters. Those registers including the register of convictions, attract very little public interest.

In its discussion document the commission considered whether to include improvement and prohibition notices on the register and sought views upon that. It decided not to do so on the grounds that many more notices are issued than prosecutions mounted, so that administration would be a real burden. It is worth stressing that it is not a question of saying that because it would produce administrative burdens it should not be done. It is more a question of saying that if, in an imperfect world, resources are limited, we must concentrate on making the best use of them.

Whether or not a company is served with a notice is not necessarily a reflection of its overall health and safety standards. Therefore, a misleading picture might be given. I concede to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury that that argument applies both ways. The way in which my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant) advanced the point shows that it is a matter with which we must come to grips.

When looking at these issues, I found that the overwhelming majority of improvement notices are complied with. That is an extremely surprising statistic. Only a tiny minority are challenged at an industrial tribunal or are subsequently the subject of prosecutions in the magistrates' court. It is a matter for concern if those who receive the notices say, "If I am to be pilloried, I might as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb". Far better that he should say, "The Health and Safety Executive inspector was a bit over-rigorous, but I have built up a good working relationship with him and, therefore, I shall comply." If a person feels that the mere service of a notice will put him in the dock, there must be a substantial risk that notices will be defended.

I understand that the average time taken to prepare an improvement notice is about half an hour and that sometimes it is done on the spot. However, to prepare a case for an industrial tribunal will take up a great deal of an inspector's time during which he could have been out issuing improvement notices, the vast majority of which would have been complied with. It is a question of how one achieves what one sets out to do.

If the Bill goes to Committee we shall have to study it closely to see whether these and other handicaps can be minimised. For example, the arrangements for recording and dealing with appeals require consideration, and the present proposal that a record of compliance be entered immediately in the register would be administratively difficult. Despite its reservations, the Health and Safety Commission has said in a letter to me, and through its chairman to the Select Committee on Employment, that it has no objection in principle to the Bill's proposals. We shall have to return time and again to that theme. There are so many things that disunite us in the House that it is important to identify the ends on which we agree, even though we differ on the means.

Mr. Sydney Chapman (Chipping Barnet): I have been listening with great interest to my hon. Friend. As a sponsor of the Bill may I ask, in view of what he has said about the commission's recommendation, whether he would advise the House that the Bill should go into Committee so that these matters may be explored, especially the pre-notice provisions, to which I attach great importance? It would be a great help if my hon. Friend can give us that assurance. That would relieve the anxieties of my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant).

Mr. Nicholls: I should not try to assess whether all the concerns expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West will be addressed in Committee. The line that I have taken and the theme that I will develop is that we welcome what the Bill sets out to achieve. However, we must ask ourselves whether this approach can be developed to achieve that end. If the Bill reaches Committee, we shall have to explore that. For all the reasons that I have set out and which I covered to some extent in the exchange with my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West, we have our doubts whether the Bill will achieve that end. However, the aim of the Bill is wholly laudable. There will be other occasions when I shall claim that hon. Members' concerns are not entirely laudable. They will probably disagree with me, but of course they will always be wrong and we will always be right. However, this case is different.

Mr. Chris Smith: I fear that the Minister is coming dangerously close to saying that he approves of the intention, but, unfortunately, the Bill will not take us very far. Will he confirm that he wrote to his right hon. Friend the Lord President of the Council about my Bill stating:

"Even if it becomes law, it will do little damage and perhaps some good."

Mr. Nicholls: I am sure that I have many vices and some virtues, but the idea that I can recall every statement or letter that I write to colleagues or the idea that I would discuss correspondence with my right hon. Friend the Lord President of the Council is going too far. However, I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his optimism.

The Government's most important reservation about the measure does not concern health and safety. It concerns sections 7(1) and 9(1) of the Fire Safety and Safety of Places of Sport Act 1987 which are listed in the schedule to the Bill. The House assented to the 1987 Act on the basis of clear affirmations by Ministers that notices would be restricted to enforcing authorities and that any extension of the right of disclosure would be undesirable, as likely to compromise the working relationship between

fire authorities and occupiers. The Government must therefore hold a reserve on that element in the proposals and will look to changes in Committee.

None the less, the problems to which I have referred are comparative details when set against the principles at stake. The public are concerned about health and safety and how it affects them. They want to know, and feel, that their knowledge may help lead to improvements. Perhaps that is an over-optimistic view. As I have said, the Government have some doubts that the Bill will achieve its objectives or provide useful information. However, we acknowledge that the Bill is laudable in its concept and we do not oppose its principles or aims. Therefore, although we shall have to exercise considerable care in Committee, we do not oppose the Bill today.

2.18 pm

Mr. Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield): If I were to use the parlance of the second-hand car trade, I would describe this Bill as "a nice little runner". It is in the best traditions of a private Member's Bill. It is laudable and covers a very important area of concern. It has been presented by my colleague the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith), who is known for his thoroughness, care and concern about these issues. I congratulate him on introducing the Bill.

This is not the day of the week for Opposition Members to speak at length and I will be brief. I do not want to make a very political speech. We are very concerned about the broad trends in health and safety in British industry and the level of the inspectorate. We are also worried about the increasing number of incidents and accidents that are becoming, to quote Paul Simon, "very disturbing". There are more accidents, less supervision and fewer return visits. There is a whole area of concern that we need not debate today.

This little Bill takes a step towards giving the public more information. I can recount a constituency example. My constituency contains one of the largest chemical works in the country, ICI's organic dyestuffs works at Dalton, which also works in agrochemicals. European legislation made the substances produced there notifiable. The process that that necessitated, such as consultation with the community, only added to the plus side of relationships between the company and those living in the surrounding environment. It was a very positive step. People knew much more about what went on in the plant, and about its products. That process did not cause hysteria; it made for a greater effort on the company's side, and a positive perception on the part of the residents.

I believe that this Bill will take us in the same direction. Let us get rid of some of the secrecy. People should know about what is going on in establishments close to where they live. Life is becoming more sophisticated in industry, and the industrial and chemical processes involved are becoming more complex.

Opposition Members believe that there is nothing wrong with the Bill slipping quietly into Committee for serious consideration. It could be improved and modified, but most normal, reasonable people would not want it to founder at such an early stage. We wish it godspeed through Committee.

2.21 pm

Mr. David Gilroy Bevan (Birmingham, Yardley): First, I pay tribute to the way in which the Bill was presented by the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith). If we are to adopt car parlance to evaluate it, I shall differ from the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman): it may be a starter, but it is probably unlikely to pass its MOT fitness test. I say that because of an experience which age alone ensured that I had—before coming to the House in 1979 — on local authority statutory bodies—consultancy committees, and the like —in and around Birmingham. I served on bodies that were essential in evaluating health and safety necessities, and I took a special interest in the administration needed to ensure that the regulations were complied with.

In that context, I bear in mind the tragedies referred to by the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury, including the horrendous fire at King's Cross. Councillor Geoffrey Marks, who was a colleague of mine on the city of Birmingham council in 1959, died in that holocaust. It would do less than justice to his memory if I did not support ideals which might help to alleviate problems, but I do not believe that these proposals would do so.

Experience has shown us that the extension of administration and bureaucracy, and the necessity of increasing staff numbers, do not necessarily bring about the desired direct results of increased safety or protection. In such instances as the disaster at Ronan Point, there would have been no opportunity to know of the existence of the latent faults beforehand, and therefore no entries on any registers would have helped. There are other circumstances, in which the information is already known and the facts are listed, and legislation exists to deal with them. We must also ask whether, if a register is produced, it will be of any use. Are the penalties sufficiently draconian to ensure that the register would be complied with—or would it be just another unnecessary overlay?

We have all the continued minutes of the planning authorities, the fire committees, the transport committees, and health committees and other bodies that deal with the existing situation. It is necessary to show as continued minutes those items that have not been dealt with by the inspectors. The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury referred to King's Cross. He knew about the work that needed to be done. He was aware of it, because he spoke about it. If a register had existed, it would not have increased the awareness of the fact that the work needed to be done.

If one looks at the workings of a decent authority or statutory body, one can see that the inspector tables his requirements so that they are shown in the minutes. Those requirements should be on the agendas of everyone who needs to consider them and the appropriate legislation should be used in the event of a failure to observe them. These eyes of mine have, over the years, grown tired and my glasses have to be worn in pursuance of the studying of such items on agandas and minutes well into the midnight hours. Therefore, I plead that I have an interest as well.

Although the intention of the Bill might be good, I am sure that its aims would not be achieved. There is a lack of teeth and a lack of back-up, which would ensure that the intention would not be served. The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury said that he intended to see that the cost of the Bill would be small. We have a duty to see that the costs are not over-burdensome in the provision of local legislation. We have a duty to ensure

[Mr. David Gilroy Bevan]

that the bureaucracy of government is reduced. We have a duty to see that we do not duplicate any register or record that already exists.

Let us look at the efficacy of existing registers, some of which even I have helped to bring into existence during my membership of this House. One of those registers dealt with land in the ownership of statutory bodies. When we introduced that register we believed that there would be an ability to reduce dramatically the amount of land in public ownership because that land had been brought to the attention of the public and because the public had a right to examine the register. However, no such thing happened. There was a slight reduction but no suggestion that the total amount owned by statutory authorities would have been any different if the register had not existed. Indeed, that register had no teeth. We introduced a mechanism that did not have the desired effect; it merely increased bureaucracy.

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): The hon. Gentleman should have the courage of his convictions. Put it to the vote.

Mr. Bevan: I have the courage of my convictions. The Bill could not have the desired effect.

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): Does my hon. Friend agree that those late-night Charlies who have just walked into the Chamber should keep quiet and let him get on with his speech?

It being half-past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Debate to be resumed, what day?

Mr. Chris Smith: As there has been a deliberate attempt to talk out my Bill, I nominate Friday 15 April.

Debate to be resumed upon Friday 15 April.

Private Members' Bills

UNFAIR REPORTING AND RIGHT OF REPLY BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 22 February.

SCOTLAND BILL

Order for Second Reading read.—[Queen's consent, on behalf of the Crown, signified.]

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Second Reading what day? No day named.

ELIMINATION OF POVERTY IN OLD AGE ETC. BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second reading what day?

Mr. Corbyn: I have moved, That the Bill be now read a Second time. I was quite distinct——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. An objection, whenever it is made, stands. Objection has been taken; I am inviting the hon. Gentleman to nominate a day for Second Reading.

Mr. Corbyn: I am prepared to name a day for Second Reading, but my question to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman, if he so wishes, must name a day for Second Reading.

Mr. Corbyn: I will name a day—next Friday.

Second reading deferred till Friday next.

Mr. Corbyn: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I wish to ask you two questions. First, I rose to move Second Reading of the Bill immediately after the Clerk read out the name of the Bill. My hon. Friends can attest to that fact. I did so before any person made any objection to the Bill from a sedentary position. At that point, we were into a Second Reading debate on the Bill—no objection had been made. Is it in order for an unnamed Member to mumble, at a later stage, "Object," to prevent this important matter, which will improve the living standards of 9 million pensioners, being debated in the House? Many people outside the House find it unbelievable and a disgrace that it is not prepared to spend time debating the plight of pensioners in our society.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is it on the same point of order?

Mr. Skinner: Yes. These Fridays — this has been happening on a scale that I have not known since I have been here over the past 17 years—the Government send in some of their Whips to object to Bills that will increase the happiness and standard of life of 9 million pensioners

in this country. They spent 20 minutes the other day in this House of Commons — the so-called mother of Parliaments — discussing the Moonies and just about every other subject under the sun. But when it comes to fighting on behalf of pensioners and passing Bills that will make their lives a lot easier, those whippersnappers from the Tory Benches object. They have not got the guts to stand up and be named. It is time that we had some rules.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The procedure that is being followed is well established in the House. It might be convenient if I were to remind the House that the Select Committee on Procedure reported on the matter as recently as 5 May 1987, in its second report. The Committee set out the arguments for and against identifying hon. Members who object to Bills being read a Second time without debate. It unanimously recommended no change in the present procedure. Such a change certainly could not be introduced without a formal decision of the House.

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South) *rose*——

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Islington, North would be well advised to read in *Hansard* what I have just said. It will be clear to him when he reads it that no possible additional point of order can arise.

Mr. Corbyn: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have listened carefully to your statement that the Committee's report recommends no change to the existing procedure. I have discussed that procedure with many people who regularly come to the House to listen to debates. They can never believe that Members of Parliament are allowed to block legislation without identifying themselves. I put it to you formally, Mr. Deputy Speaker: will you please report the objection of a number of hon. Members, all of whom are prepared to identify themselves, to that procedure, and refer it back to the Committee so that it can be examined once again? We can then end the scandal of unnamed Tory Members blocking Bills concerning pensioners.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is a matter for the hon. Member. It is clear from what I have just told the House that the Select Committee considered this matter fairly recently and that it came to a unanimous recommendation that the procedure should not be altered. It is perfectly open to the hon. Member to persuade the Select Committee on Procedure otherwise, but that is his job, and not mine.

Mr. Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Did not the report from which you have just quoted make a distinction between the right of an individual hon. Member to shout objection without being identified and a Government Whip doing that but still keeping his anonymity?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Select Committee went into that matter fully. I have read the report, and I strongly recommend those hon. Members who have not done so to read the extremely recent report of that Select Committee.

Mr. Cohen: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It is clear that no further points of order can arise on this matter. Does the hon. Member have a point of order on another matter?

Mr. Cohen: You, Mr. Deputy Speaker, were quite right to read out that passage about the right of any hon. Member to object under the existing rules, but, as far as I can see, these are not normal circumstances. My hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) moved the Second Reading and the Government Whip who wished to object was, in my view, rather slow-witted and did not object until my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) and other hon. Members had shouted, "Agreed." The House had agreed to that——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. An objection applies at any stage after 2.30 pm. If the hon. Member reads the Select Committee report, he will find that the report and recommendations deal with this fully.

Mr. Boateng: On a different point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I seek information. Is it in order for any hon. Member wearing a red nose to raise any point of order? If it is, may I raise a point of order in favour of the Second Reading of the Elimination of Poverty in Old Age Etc. Bill?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: We must proceed.

UNBORN CHILDREN (PROTECTION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 4 March.

SLAUGHTER OF DEER BILL

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Second Reading [11 December].

Hon. Members: Object.

Debate further adjourned till Friday next.

Mr. Corbyn: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I should like my name to be recorded as objecting to the Slaughter of Deer Bill. I am not ashamed.

SUNDAY SPORTS (No. 2) BILL

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Second Reading [29 January].

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Debate to be resumed what day? No day named.

NORTHERN REGION ASSEMBLY BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday next.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Motion made, and Question put,

That, at the sitting on Tuesday 9th February, notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph (1)(b) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business), Mr. Speaker shall put the Questions on the Motions in the name of Mr. Secretary Channon relating to Local Government not later than one and a half hours after the first of them has been entered upon.—*[Mr. Alan Howarth].*

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Objection taken.

Road Safety (Rutland and Melton)

Motion made, and question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Alan Howarth.]*

2.39 pm

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): I am grateful for the opportunity to raise four local transport safety matters, and I thank my hon. Friend the Minister for his attendance today. I shall refer to the matters in the order of the daily movement of the sun—from east to west—rather than attempt to put them in any rank order of priority. To the local people concerned, they all have absolute priority.

I begin with the A6121 road through the pleasant village of Essendine on the Rutland-Lincolnshire border. The first request for a speed limit—any speed limit at all—that I can trace was made by the clerk to the parish meeting in 1976. It was rejected by Leicestershire county council. Six further approaches were made between 1977 and 1985.

I became involved in the matter in 1986. I have made site visits, and I first wrote to my hon. Friend asking for a 40 mph speed limit on 18 December 1986. I had seen heavy traffic go through the village, much of it at high speed. Although the road has houses on both sides of it, and there are several large industrial premises in the village attracting hundreds of vehicles every day, there are no speed limits other than, of course, the 60 mph speed limit that applies to every single carriageway. The Leicestershire police have confirmed to me that they have no objection to a 40 mph speed limit through the village.

To my disappointment, my hon. Friend refused my request by letter on 13 January 1987. I then tabled some parliamentary questions. To my surprise, in an answer to me on 28 January 1987, my hon. Friend confirmed that the vehicle speeds were just within the recommended criterion for a 40 mph speed limit. He still refused to agree to the limit because there had been no recorded injury or accident since 1983. The gloomy conclusion from his reply seems to be that if there had been any accidents the village would have a better case for a speed limit.

My hon. Friend again wrote to me in February 1987, once more saying no. I had another go at him after the general election, when I pointed out by letter that there had been two recent accidents on the road because of excessive vehicle speed through the village, which was accentuated by the difficult camber of the road and the sharp bend near the post office. Yet, again, my hon. Friend refused a 40 mph speed limit, and a further parliamentary question of 10 November was equally unsuccessful.

I ask my hon. Friend to think again about the request. It has the support of the county council, and the police have no objection. I should not have thought that a request for a 40 mph speed limit is unreasonable.

Next, we move to the historic market town of Oakham and the need for a new pedestrian footbridge across the railway line above the Braumton road crossing. Tragically, the matter arose from the sad death of five-year-old Richard Banner, who was killed by a train on the crossing on 26 October 1985. The community was shocked by that dreadful tragedy. I shall not worry my hon. Friend with all the comings and goings of that awful day, which have involved a quite daunting series of meetings, letters, site visits and much heart-searching by British Rail, Leicestershire county council, Rutland district council and myself.

Some of the delays that have taken place in getting anything done since then have been avoidable and deplorable. I simply record that, in absolute desperation, in 1986, I had to write to the chairman of British Rail, and I have had to deliver to Leicester county council one of the strongest protests that I have ever made regarding serious administrative delays in submitting the necessary forms to my hon. Friend's regional office in Nottingham.

Just before Christmas last year, we had a nasty shock at the suggestion that parliamentary legislation will be necessary. From my files, I see that British Rail first mentioned that possibility in a letter dated 29 May 1986. It talked about including the necessary legislative powers in the annual British Railways Bill in November of that year. I am sorry that it did not do so. I hope that my hon. Friend will confirm my understanding of my recent correspondence with him. Leicestershire county council has now complied with the necessary legal requirements to enable the Department of Transport to make an order closing the highway adjacent to the present level crossing and providing a pedestrian footbridge. At one stage, there was an objection, but it has been withdrawn, so there is no need for a public inquiry. Nothing now legally prevents the bridge being built. While private legislation is needed to extinguish highway rights over the railway itself, British Rail can use existing powers to block access to the railway line on each side of the crossing.

I hope that my hon. Friend will confirm that that is so and assure me that his Department will take any steps that are open to it to expedite any necessary parliamentary legislation. There have been too many bureaucratic hiccups over such a much-needed scheme. I trust that it can be seen through to completion over the next few months.

I refer next to the edge of the Vale of Belvoir and the A607 road from Melton Mowbray to Grantham. Once again, we are nearly on the Leicestershire-Lincolnshire border, specifically in the attractive village of Croxton Kerrial.

My file on the speed limit problem dates back to 1978 when the Croxton Kerrial and Branston parish council first asked me to press for a reduction in the speed limit from the existing 40 mph to 30 mph. Since then I have made many protests to Leicestershire county council, the Leicestershire constabulary and the Department of Transport. After some years of pressure, site meetings and discussions, in July 1982 Leicestershire county council decided to support that reduction in the speed limit. Alas, we did not manage to persuade my hon. Friend's predecessor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey (Mrs. Chalker), who wrote to me on 8 November and 29 December 1982 rejecting the application. We made a further attempt in 1984. My right hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey wrote to me on 30 April 1984 once again rejecting the application.

In fairness, I should say that the police have never supported the speed limit reduction. Therefore, when I next returned to the issue in September 1987 and held a further site meeting with the parish council, I decided to do a motoring test of my own. I drove from Waltham on the Wolds through Croxton Kerrial, right on to Grantham and back again towards the turn towards Branston, between Croxton Kerrial and Waltham. I did so without

exceeding the lawful speed limit of 60 mph in non-built-up areas and I asked myself, as a driver of 20 years' experience, what would be the natural speed for a motorist in such circumstances. There is no doubt in my mind that the natural speed approaching Croxton Kerrial from Waltham on the Wolds, as one comes into the village, ought to be 30 mph. By the time a driver is even a few yards into the village within the 40 mph speed limit, it seems excessive and the hill requires third gear.

I then drove on to Grantham. As soon as one goes under the A1 and comes to the outskirts of Grantham, one immediately enters a 40 mph speed limit, although the road is much wider and the houses are set well back from it. If a 40 mph speed limit is suitable there, it is far too high a speed for the centre of Croxton Kerrial, which is extremely narrow, with virtually no pavement.

I then drove back to Croxton and certainly felt the need to slow down sharply as I entered the village. While 40 mph might seem a natural speed for the first 50 to 100 yards, it was certainly too fast long before the junction with Middle street. I had no difficulty in coming down naturally to 30 mph, and told the police so. However, I am sorry to say that they remain of the view that the accident record does not justify the reduction.

I must advise my hon. Friend that I do not want any accidents there, which is why I favour reducing the speed limit. That would also help to reduce the danger to pedestrians, for whom the present situation in the centre of the village is quite deplorable. At one point, the footpath outside Hillside farmhouse is as narrow as 2 ft and the suction from passing lorries is most disconcerting, to say the least. I hope that my hon. Friend will review that sympathetically.

Finally, I move north north-west to a large village with a magnificent church, which is also on the edge of the Vale of Belvoir and at the border of three counties, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire. Bottesford, on the A52 trunk road, has long needed a bypass. I have been pressing for one ever since I was first elected to this House in 1974. Everyone was delighted when it was finally decided that the bypass could go ahead, although there was significant local dispute over the actual route and whether it should go north or south of the village. That issue was decided at a public inquiry and I am glad that construction is now proceeding.

However, an issue has arisen that is causing further local concern and on which I must seek the help of my hon. Friend. He knows the problem because I have written to him about it. Indeed, I have sent him my whole file with large numbers of local complaints from the neighbouring village of Muston, and I have asked to see him. Briefly, it concerns the wish of the villagers of Muston for an underpass at the junction with the new bypass and for similar provision at Barkestone lane, especially for the driving of sheep or cattle under the road. I am told that 19 of the 44 pensioners in Muston have no transport, and if the sub post office were to be closed when the lady who runs it retires, they would have to go to Bottesford to get their pensions. Children cycling to school would also be able to use that facility, if it were provided.

When I asked my hon. Friend the cost of such underpasses or cattle creeps, he gave two enormous figures — £260,000 for Barkestone lane and £220,000 for Easthorpe — Muston lane. That was if they had been included in the original design. They would cost considerably more now. I find this hard to believe. It is essential that the bypass proceeds to schedule and no one wants to delay it. Certainly, they would get no support from me, if I thought that anyone wanted to create delay. My hon. Friend the Minister was most helpful in sorting out some difficulties with British Rail, which delayed the announcement of his decision by some months.

I must question these very high cost estimates. I am told by local people that when the Billesdon bypass, which is not in my constituency, was built in 1984, the cost of an underpass was between £18,000 and £20,000. The estimator for a local contractor has suggested this week that the proposed underpasses on the A52 could be constructed for about £125,000 to £150,000. I wish to read a couple of sentences from a letter which I have received from a local parish councillor who is also a builder. His letter, dated 2 February 1988, states:

> "I have been able to have an appointment with Mr. O'Connell, the Engineer for Messrs. Husband & Co. He informs me that the road will be built up approximately one metre the full length of the bypass. Obviously this considerably helps the fall to the Devon on the Bottesford side of the Mill Dam.
>
> As he was not aware of the Mill Dam and the difference in the level of the Devon, I took him along and showed him the route that I thought best to obtain the fall and also to the Barkestone Lane crossing, explaining to him that the Winter Beck over the last two or three years has been considerably deepened to take the storm water from the new housing site on Barkestone Lane.
>
> On our return to the office, he informed me that he would go further into same as far as levels were concerned and contact me in the near future.
>
> . . . As we see it, it would not be necessary for the purchasing of any more land."

As for Barkestone lane, if the Minister still rules out an underpass, I hope that he will consider the question of a 6ft diameter Armco sleeve cattle creep to be used solely for animals. I am told that this could be laid without any necessity to raise the embankment or carry out any drainage work. If it were built during the construction of the road, it might be cheaper than the compensation to which the farmers are entitled.

I know that my hon. Friend the Minister has written to me today about this and I hope that he will reconsider his letter in the light of my remarks this afternoon. We are so near to completing a project which is years overdue and desperately needed. There is still time for my hon. Friend to intervene and get this easement for my constituents without in any way delaying the scheme itself.

I have raised four matters of traffic and safety concern to my constituents, all of which are familiar to my hon. Friend the Minister. I could, of course, have chosen several others, equally important to the communities involved. I await his reply with interest and hope.

2.52 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Peter Bottomley): My hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) has rightly secured this debate on transport safety matters in his constituency. They are important subjects. I know that he is concerned about road safety and we are frequently in correspondence about it. I congratulate him on his tireless efforts on behalf of his constituents.

Transport safety is the priority of the Department. The issues raised by my hon. Friend relate to road safety on both trunk roads and local authority roads, with a particular emphasis on pedestrian safety. Road safety does not stop there. The recent, successful drink-driving

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campaign has brought home to drivers, passengers and pedestrians the dangers that they face when drivers use their cars under the influence of alcohol. We are also doing what we can to ensure that the number of accidents is reduced.

The programme for the installation of central reserve safety fencing on dual carriageways will play an important part, as will the closure of motorway emergency crossing points. The recently issued standard for surface skidding resistance introduces a system for monitoring and evaluating the skidding resistance of the trunk road network. Our objective is to maintain skidding resistance at levels appropriate to the accident risk characteristics of various categories of site.

We are also giving a high priority, and encouraging local highway authorities to do the same, to accident investigation and prevention schemes. Such schemes offer considerable potential, usually at relatively low cost, to reduce accidents and improve road safety. The recently published inter-departmental review of road safety underlined the importance of road and vehicle safety research in helping to achieve the Government's target of reducing casualties by one third by the year 2000. In 1987-88, we spent £6 million on research specifically directed to all aspects of road safety. The review proposes that this figure should be further increased in future years.

The work done by the researchers and the pressure from hon. Members, such as my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton, is driving down the British accident rate. Even though, at present, we have the safest roads in the European Community, it requires attention to detail and research. I do the best I can to see how we compare with other countries. In the rural communities, the accident rate is often the same. I find it interesting that Selby in North Yorkshire and Pierre, the capital of South Dakota, which have roughly the same population, also have roughly the same accident rate. The differences tend to exist in the big cities.

Much of the Department's expenditure is on trunk road bypasses and improvements to relieve communities of through traffic and reduce accidents. When it is possible to get a bypass, the accident rate usually drops by 25 per cent. overnight, because there is a reduction in conflict. Over the past six years the Department has made considerable investment in my hon. Friend's constituency. We have seen the completion of major schemes on the A47 at Uppingham, Wardley Hill and Tixover Hill. On the A52, the Muston bends improvement and the recently started Bottesford bypass have also made a contribution. Major repairs have also been completed on the A46 and central reserve safety fencing has also been installed. Other smaller schemes have also been completed. The total cost of all that work is £8·6 million.

My predecessors and I are grateful to my hon. Friend for his long-standing support for the Bottesford bypass on the A52. I pay tribute to his interest, persistence and help in the latter stages in getting the scheme to the construction stage. Work started in November last year and is due to be completed mid-1989. However, the contractor may achieve an early completion date. The 5.5 km bypass will provide great relief to the village of Bottesford. Conditions in the village will be considerably improved and residents will be relieved of the noise and congestion caused by the large numbers of heavy goods vehicles that still run through the centre. The bypass will make the village a safer place in which to live. The reduction in the volume of traffic and traffic delays will reduce the risk of accident for local residents and make it much safer for pedestrians and school children to cross the road.

I appreciate my hon. Friend's concern about the safety of pedestrians crossing the new bypass when it is complete. He has supported the parish council in its request for the provision of underpasses under the new road at Easthorpe-Muston lane, and Barkestone lane. We have given careful consideration to the needs of pedestrians.

My hon. Friend has suggested what the costs might be for the various things he has in mind, but I will, if I may, reply as though he had not said that. However, I will pass on his comments to the staff of the Department. There is no guarantee of success, but I believe that my hon. Friend would like us to take every opportunity to examine whether anything more is possible.

In April 1986, at the public inquiry, the Department gave evidence to show that, over a 10-hour period between 8 am and 6 pm in September 1983, 15 cyclists and 12 pedestrians used Easthorpe/Muston Lane. Since then the numbers may have changed slightly, but the volume of use is considered too low to warrant the provision of an underpass. Barkestone Lane has become a dead end. Although no counts were taken, we would now expect the number of people involved to be even less. However, I note that my hon. Friend referred to sheep as well as to human beings. Nevertheless, few residents are served by Barkestone lane. The inspector found that, on balance, there was little justification for underpasses or footbridges across the bypass.

It is clear that the bypass embankment would have to be raised significantly to cross any underpasses, whether for pedestrian and livestock use or for a cattle creep. however, my hon. Friend has said that that is a matter of opinion and judgment. We believe that the cost would be considerable. To provide the two underpasses within the current bypass contract would cost about £500,000. A single footbridge suitable for pedestrians and cyclists would cost about £170,000. That would not include claims for disruption that the contractor would be entitled to submit.

The parish council has suggested the completion of underpasses within the present contract period. It should be recognised that raising the bypass would require more land. Further land would also be required for the approaches to underpasses or bridges. Compulsory purchase orders would probably be necessary to ensure that the land was available at the proper time. The bypass is due to be completed by mid-1989. It would probably not be possible to complete all the necessary statutory arrangements, the design of the structures and their erection, before that date.

Obviously, providing underpasses once the bypass was complete would significantly increase costs. We do not believe that we can justify the considerable expenditure. The need for crossings at both locations was fully discussed at the public inquiry. The inspector did not recommend a bridge or underpass in either case. The Secretaries of State accepted his recommendation.

Agriculture needs have been met by providing accesses and tracks. The number of pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders using or crossing the bypass is low. Gates will be provided on each side of the bypass, so that people may cross. Visibility in both directions will be good, and that

will allow people to cross safely. Having said that, I repeat that I will make sure that my hon. Friend's suggestions are looked at again.

The Secretary of State for Transport is responsible for speed limits on trunk roads and his consent is required for all principal road speed limit orders proposed by local highways authorities. It is essential that uniform criteria are applied in all cases, to ensure that speed limits command the respect of motorists nationwide. In the last 30 years, there has been a far greater consistency in speed limit signing. We try to match the speed limit to the condition of the road and, as my hon. Friend said, motorists get an idea of what is a safe speed by the conditions in the village, town or area through which they are driving.

Experience shows that residents sometimes expect too much of speed limits. Simply to make an order and then erect speed limit signs does not automatically ensure that speeds or accident rates are reduced. Similar research on pedestrian crossings shows that, if they are put in with the wrong characteristics, accidents can increase rather than be reduced. The same can apply to speed limits.

To be effective, speed limits have to be set at levels which the average motorist accepts as sensible. Unfortunately, "unreasonably" low speed limits are not respected by all motorists, and their enforcement sets a difficult, if not impossible, task for the police. This engenders distrust of the speed limit system as a whole. Such speed limits can create hazardous conditions for other road users, particularly pedestrians, by lulling them into a false sense of security, seemingly offered by the speed limits sign.

The criteria that are used to decide speed limits include the accident rate, the speed of traffic and the nature of the surrounding development. Speed limits which are imposed because of local concern and unsupported by evidence of accidents do not serve the cause of road safety. Nor is it axiomatic that a speed limit is the best cure when an accident record does exist. Speed limits cannot solve the problem of isolated hazards such as single road junctions or bends.

Speed limits should be lowered only when a positive contribution to road safety can be reasonably expected. A study of types of accidents, their severity, cause and frequency can show whether an existing speed limit suits present conditions or whether it needs to be changed. A survey of traffic speeds will show whether a lower limit will, in the absence of regular enforcement, be likely to be observed sufficiently well for any benefit to result. The degree of a manifest police presence in the area will be a particularly important element in villages.

The A6121 principal road through the village of Essendine is the responsibility of Leicestershire county council as highway authority. The county council submitted a draft proposal requesting approval to carry out consultations on a proposed 40 mph limit. Speed measurements at five locations showed an 85 percentile speed of 46·6 mph, which, as my hon. Friend said, is just within the recommended criterion of 47 mph. At that time, there had been three injury accidents during the previous three years. This was below the recommended criterion. The Department advised the county council that a 40 mph limit would not be appropriate

Although, before I came to this job, I thought that it was crazy to wait until the accident had taken place before considering action, in practice, because of the research work, which shows that there is not an invariable relationship between accidents records and risk, it is better to be guided by them. It may sound harsh, but it is the best general guidance that the Department can adopt.

When Leicestershire county council resubmitted a draft proposal in January 1986, there had been no change in the character of the village or recorded vehicle speeds. Traffic volumes had risen slightly but there had been no recorded injury accidents between January 1983 and January 1986. The county council was again advised against proceeding with a speed limit. Although there had been three accidents since then, only one, I am advised, was inside the length of the proposed speed limit. The accident rate is still well below the recommended criterion. I understand that no further accidents have occurred. I have heard what my hon. Friend has said about being keen to secure further action before there are further accidents, but I need to report the facts as I understand them. We have given careful thought to the need for a speed limit through Essendine. It is clear from the record in recent years that a speed limit would not contribute to road safety. I know that this will be a disappointment, but it really is important for speed limits to be applied only where they are really needed. That way they will remain an effective accident prevention measure.

Similar considerations apply to Croxton Kerrial on the A607 principal road. The 40 mph speed limit was imposed on the built-up length of the village in 1969. Following my hon. Friend's approach in 1984, we promised to consider a proposed reduction to 30 mph. As a result, Leicestershire county council submitted a proposal, which we examined very carefully. It was concluded that conditions on this stretch of road did not justify the lowering of the speed limit. At that time, the facts showed the existing 40 mph speed limit to be realistic and largely self-enforcing. In essence that is a repeat in a slightly different way of the point I made about Essendine.

Vehicle speeds through Croxton Kerrial are generally less than 40 mph, and for the six years before 1984 there had been no accidents resulting in personal injury. At that time the police considered the present limit to be realistic and enforceable but they feared the proposed reduction could give rise to very real difficulties, resulting in the limit being generally disregarded.

I have to tell my hon. Friend that the position has not changed. There have been no reported accidents within the existing speed limit since 1985. We believe that the lowering of the existing speed limit to 30 mph would be inappropriate.

My hon. Friend also mentioned the railway crossing at Braunston road in Oakham. Leicestershire county council's plan to construct a footbridge to carry pedestrians across the British Rail line at Braunston road South street, Oakham, will meet an urgent need to ensure pedestrian safety. I share his concern. This follows the tragic death of a five-year-old boy in 1985 which my hon. Friend described. I understand there have been other potential accidents which could also have ended in tragedy. The county council, as highway authority responsible, has rightly decided to replace this dangerous crossing with a footbridge.

This is a complicated issue because different powers are required for different needs. The crossing is already subject to a road traffic regulation order made in 1979, which prohibits vehicular traffic. Leicestershire county council applied to the Department in September 1987 to stop up

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the road, using powers under section 209 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971. The council has the necessary planning permission for the footbridge. The highway will have to be closed to construct it because its footings are in the centre of the carriagway. The order, which is the responsibility of the Secretary of State, was published in draft on 18 December. Earlier publication was not possible because details of the proposed footbridge were not received from the highway authority until 9 December.

There is a statutory four-week objection period. Two objections have been received. One, from a private individual, has subsequently been withdrawn. The other is from the East Midlands electricity board which has apparatus in the vicinity. The county council is in discussion with the electricity board. Let us hope that the objection will be withdrawn soon. Only when it is can the order be made. This will take about three weeks from the date of formal notification by the county council that the objection has been withdrawn. Its making — it comes into effect on the same day — will provide the appropriate powers necessary to construct the bridge.

In recent correspondence with my hon. Friend, I mentioned that highway rights may still exist over the level crossing. It is this issue which may have led to some confusion. It may require primary legislation to close the crossing to traffic and pedestrians, which is the responsibility of British Rail. It is for Leicestershire county council to make the appropriate arrangements with British Rail before the scheme is complete.

I should like to draw attention to the considerable investment in new roads that the Government have made since 1979. It aids the economy and moves traffic away from towns and villages. Separating people from traffic is one of the most effective methods of improving road safety. We are achieving this in my hon. Friend's constituency and elsewhere.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at eight minutes past Three o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 25 January 1988

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prisoners (Mental Illness)

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has on diagnoses of mental illness among the prison population *(a)* before and *(b)* after entering prison; what percentage included schizophrenic psychoses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Information available is as follows.

A census taken by prison medical officers on 1 October 1986 of sentenced inmates serving six months and over showed that there were 329 who were considered to require specialist therapeutic facilities by reason of mental illness.

Figures from the latest returns of the number of inmates considered to be suffering from mental disorder of a type or degree such that they would be detainable under the Mental Health Act 1983 are included in the medical statistics on page 69 of the report on the work of the prison service 1986/87 (Cm. 246), a copy of which is in the Library. They show that on 31 March 1987 there were 240 (95 sentenced, 145 unsentenced) diagnosed as mentally ill.

Prison Population (Psychiatric Profile)

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to receive the planned psychiatric profile of the prison population from the institute of psychiatry, university of London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: On 31 October 1990. This important study is intended to produce over a three-year period a definitive statement of the dimensions of the problem of mentally disordered offenders in the prison system. It will provide a sound basis on which the Department is able to consider the further development of its policies.

Mrs. J. V. N. Ball

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he received correspondence dated 26 November 1987 regarding Mrs. J. V. N. Ball of Nottingham; and when he expects to reply.

Mr. Renton: The correspondence was received on 30 November. I replied to the hon. Member on 19 January.

Incest

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many cases of incest have been reported to the police for each of the last five years; and if he will provide a breakdown of the family relationship involved.

Mr. John Patten: The number of offences of incest recorded by the police is published annually in the Command Paper "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales", copies of which are in the Library. The most recent issue (Cm. 233) gives annual figures for 1976 to 1986 (table 2.15). Details of the relationships involved are not collected centrally.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* convictions and *(b)* prosecutions there have been for incest for each of the last five years.

Mr. John Patten: Information on the numbers proceeded against and found guilty of incest is published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales", supplementary tables, vols. 1 and 2, copies of which are in the Library, in tables S1.1(A) and S2.1(A) under offence classification 23.

Michael Ryan (Firearms Certificate)

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the Thames Valley police as to when the perpetrator of the Hungerford massacre applied for and received his firearms certificates; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to a question from the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) on 22 January at columns *869-870*.

Game Licences

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many convictions there have been in each of the past five years for breaches of the game licence legislation.

Mr. John Patten: The information available centrally, which may be incomplete, is given in the following table:

Defendants convicted under the Game Licences Act 1860 England and Wales

Year	*Total found guilty*
1982	141
1983	170
1984	146
1985	135
1986	90

Fox Hunting

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimates he has made as to the cost of policing fox hunting recreational activities, broken down by police authority areas.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: None. Information on this matter is not held centrally and could not be obtained without disproportionate cost.

Mr. John Porter

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will call for a report from the chief constable for South Wales into the circumstances surrounding the original disappearance of Mr. John Porter.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the chief constable of South Wales police that inquiries are still

continuing into why Mr. Porter, who is no longer registered as a missing person, originally disappeared from his house.

Prisons

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the female prison population for England and Wales for the latest date available.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: On Friday 22 January the female prison population in England and Wales stood at 1,810, including 21 held in police cells.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average female prison population in England and Wales during *(a)* 1984, *(b)* 1985, *(c)* 1986 and *(d)* 1987.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The average female population of prison department establishments in each of the years 1984 to 1986 was published in table 1.4 of "Prison Statistics England and Wales 1986" (Cm. 210), a copy of which is in the Library. The provisional average population for 1987 was about 1,700. The average number of females held in police cells in 1984, 1985, 1986 and 1987 was 13, 8, 41 and (provisional) 68 respectively.

Sentencing

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons in England and Wales were committed to Crown court for sentence by magistrates' courts during 1986; and how many of those persons received a custodial sentence.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested is published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales", supplementary tables volumes 1 and 3, (tables S1.1(A) and S3.6(B) of the issue of 1986) copies of which are in the Library. In 1986 6,450 offenders were sentenced by the Crown court after summary conviction by magistrates, 4,550 of whom were given a custodial sentence.

CIVIL SERVICE

Effectiveness, Rewards and Morale

64. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what new proposals he has to improve the effectiveness, rewards and morale of the Civil Service.

Mr. Luce: I am constantly seeking new ways in which to increase the effectiveness of our already highly professional Civil Service. The Government's policies of moving towards flexible pay and merit pay will reward high achievement and help to improve morale.

Departmental Forms

68. **Mr. John Browne:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what steps he has taken to improve the clarity and presentation of Government forms, to make them more easy to use and to eliminate those which are unnecessary.

Mr. Luce: Government forms are now easier to understand, simpler to complete and more attractive than ever before. In December 1987 Government Departments won two of the eight annual awards presented by the Plain English Campaign. Since 1985, 20,000 forms have been improved and a further 11,000 have been scrapped. A copy of the latest progress report on this work has been placed in the Libraries of Parliament.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Assisted Places Scheme

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many places are available under the assisted places scheme in each local authority area for 1988-89; and how many applications have been received in each area.

Mr. Dunn: The present number of assisted places available by reference to local authority area for take-up in September 1988 is as listed. We are currently considering how the assisted places scheme will be expanded in line with our manifesto commitment. Information regarding applications for assisted places is not collected centrally.

Assisted places available for take-up in 1988-89

	11-13	*VI form*	*Total*
Barking	14	5	19
Barnet	—	—	—
Bexley	—	—	—
Brent	—	—	—
Bromley	37	10	47
Croydon	89	20	109
Ealing	28	10	38
Enfield	—	—	—
Haringey	7	5	12
Harrow	31	6	37
Havering	—	—	—
Hillingdon	7	3	10
Hounslow	—	—	—
Kingston-upon-Thames	25	5	30
Merton	26	10	36
Newham	—	—	—
Redbridge	30	10	40
Richmond-upon-Thames	61	15	76
Sutton	12	5	17
Waltham Forest	21	5	26
Inner London	468	90	558
Birmingham	67	10	77
Coventry	35	5	40
Dudley	—	—	—
Sandwell	—	—	—
Solihull	—	—	—
Walsall	—	—	—
Wolverhampton	45	5	50
Knowsley	—	—	—
Liverpool	105	15	120
St. Helens	—	—	—
Sefton	101	15	116
Wirral	140	20	160
Bolton	76	10	86
Bury	65	10	75
Manchester	140	23	163
Oldham	60	10	70
Rochdale	—	—	—
Salford	—	—	—
Stockport	60	10	70
Tameside	—	—	—
Trafford	28	10	38
Wigan	—	—	—
Barnsley	—	—	—
Doncaster	—	—	—
Rotherham	—	—	—
Sheffield	16	5	21
Bradford	40	—	40
Calderdale	—	—	—

	11-13	VI form	Total
Kirklees	40	5	45
Leeds	78	15	93
Wakefield	47	10	57
Gateshead	—	—	—
Newcastle upon Tyne	145	25	170
North Tyneside	—	—	—
South Tyneside	—	—	—
Sunderland	—	—	—
Isles of Scilly	—	—	—
Avon	218	57	275
Bedfordshire	80	12	92
Berkshire	48	20	68
Buckinghamshire	—	3	3
Cambridgeshire	97	22	119
Cheshire	58	15	73
Cleveland	—	—	—
Cornwall	25	10	35
Cumbria	25	14	39
Derbyshire	36	15	51
Devon	113	19	132
Dorset	30	10	40
Durham	—	—	—
East Sussex	55	15	70
Essex	56	20	76
Gloucestershire	5	5	10
Hampshire	216	40	256
Hereford and Worcester	119	21	140
Hertfordshire	143	46	189
Humberside	48	8	56
Isle of Wight	—	—	—
Kent	51	27	78
Lancashire	143	31	174
Leicestershire	44	12	56
Lincolnshire	35	10	45
Norfolk	48	12	60
North Yorkshire	30	7	37
Northamptonshire	45	10	55
Northumberland	—	—	—
Nottinghamshire	50	10	60
Oxfordshire	86	23	109
Salop	14	5	19
Somerset	82	23	105
Staffordshire	86	9	95
Suffolk	68	22	90
Surrey	123	55	178
Warwickshire	55	10	65
West Sussex	—	—	—
Wiltshire	10	—	10
ENGLAND	4,486	1,020	5,506

Student Grants

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to change the student grant regulations with regard to parental contributions in cases where students are estranged from their parents.

Mr. Jackson: No.

Instrumental Music Schemes

Mr. Nicholas Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received in favour of permitting instrumental music schemes of local education authorities to opt out of local authority control, as provided for maintained schools in the Education Reform Bill; and what response he has made.

Mr. Dunn: None. The Bill now before Parliament provides only for county or voluntary schools to apply to become grant-maintained. However, my right hon. Friend will today meet the national executive of the Schools Music Association to discuss the implications for school music provision of our proposals for education reform.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he plans to make available to schools in the maintained sector that have opted out under the provisions of the Education Reform Bill, the services of the instrumental music scheme and other support services provided by local authorities.

Mr. Dunn: Governing bodies of grant-maintained schools will be free, if they wish, to negotiate with any local education authority for the purchase of goods and services. Some may prefer to look elsewhere.

School Playgrounds (Accidents)

Mr. Nicholas Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what estimate he has of the number of accidents in 1987 in school playgrounds; and if he will introduce measures to improve the safety of school playground surfaces.

Mr. Dunn: My Department does not collect detailed statistics of accidents in school playgrounds but monitors the general situation.

My Department has recently consulted a sample of local education authorities on their experiences with climbing equipment and various types of surface used beneath it. We shall consider whether any sufficiently clear lessons can be drawn to offer general guidance.

Black Report

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his oral answer of 19 January, *Official Report*, column *807*, on what evidence the recommendations of the Black report relating to cultural bias in tests were based.

Mrs. Rumbold: The report of the task group on assessment and testing recommends that assessment tasks be reviewed regularly to seek to detect and eliminate any bias, particularly in respect of gender and race. I understand that the conclusions and recommendations of the task group were based on evidence from and discussion with a variety of individuals and organisations, including schools, local authorities and bodies responsible for existing assessment schemes, in addition to the collective experience of task group members. We have welcomed the broad framework of the report and will be considering its detailed recommendations, together with any comments received on them.

East Anglia

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the implications for his Department's *(a)* planning and *(b)* spending on education of recent projections published by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys that East Anglia will have in the next 13 years the greatest proportionate population increase of both people moving in and of new births of any English region.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Department's plans take account of projected changes in the population at national level; these projections are the aggregate of projections for

individual regions. Most education in East Anglia is provided by the local education authorities for the area; these authorities will wish to take account of the recent projections in their planning. My right hon. Friend takes account of the particular circumstances of each local authority area when making decisions affecting individual authorities.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

EC Affairs

Mr. George Robertson: To ask the Lord President of the Council when he expects to bring forward proposals for greater parliamentary scrutiny of European Community affairs following the implementation of the Single European Act and in line with the resolution of the House of 5 March 1986, *Official Report*, column 402.

Mr. Wakeham: The resolution of the House of 5 March 1986 related to the recommendations of the First Report of the Select Committee on European Legislation (Session 1985-86). Those recommendations which were addressed to the Government have already been accepted. My right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office reported this to the House on 23 April 1986 at column 393. Guidance has been given to Departments on the necessary changes in scrutiny arrangements, which came into operation when the Single European Act came into force on 1 July 1987. The Government will continue to keep the scrutiny process under review, particularly as the impact of the Single European Act becomes clearer.

PRIME MINISTER

Glorious Revolution

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list the special events being organised in the current year in the United Kingdom and elsewhere to celebrate the 300th anniversary of the Glorious Revolution.

The Prime Minister: Comprehensive information is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost; but I am placing in the Library a copy of a provisional programme of events compiled by the William and Mary Tercentenary Trust.

State Security

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the present definition of national security adopted by Ministers in Her Majesty's Government.

The Prime Minister: This term is generally understood to refer to the safeguarding of the state and the community against threats to their survival or well-being. I am not aware that any previous Administration has thought it appropriate to adopt a specific definition of the term.

Crown Prerogative

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Prime Minister (1) whether the public interest criteria of the code for Crown prosecutors, issued pursuant to section 10 of the Prosecution of Offences Act 1985, are exempt from consideration of alleged offences committed under the auspices of the prerogative right of the Crown;

(2) whether, pursuant to her answer of 18 January, *Official Report*, column 492, any alleged criminal actions in exercise of a prerogative right of the Crown have, since 1979, not been subject to prosecution as a result of the exercise of the public interest criteria in the code for Crown prosecutors.

The Prime Minister: Prosecutions are a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General, and the other prosecuting authorities.

Cruelty to Animals (Hong Kong)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister if she has yet replied to the letter sent to her by Mr. Ian MacPhail on 13 January regarding cruelty to animals in Hong Kong; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I have recently received a letter from Ian MacPhail, European co-ordinator of the International Fund for Animal Welfare, enclosing one he has written to my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary. My noble Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office will be replying as soon as possible.

Trawsfynydd (Test)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to her oral reply to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy on the Central Electricity Generating Board's test experiment on the Trawsfynydd nuclear plant, 19 January, *Official Report*, column 819, whether Her Majesty's Government have informed the European Community Commission of the test under the requirement of Euratom treaty, article 34, prior to her reply of 19 January.

The Prime Minister: The test proposed at Trawsfynydd will take place only if the Health and Safety Executive's Nuclear Installations Inspectorate is totally satisfied that it will be safe. Article 34 is not therefore relevant.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Diplomatic Passports

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the joint Home Office/Foreign and Commonwealth Office working group was set up to study the question of the introduction of diplomatic passports; what is the membership of that committee; when it expects to report and to whom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The joint Home Office/Foreign and Commonwealth Office working group was set up in September 1987 and consisted of officials from the passport department of the Home Office and nationality and treaty department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Its report will be submitted to Home Office and Foreign and Commonwealth Office Ministers shortly.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received from diplomats or their representatives concerning the issue of diplomatic passports by the United Kingdom to its diplomatic staff overseas.

Mr. Eggar: There have been representations from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office trade union side from time to time on this question. It has been a subject of discussion within the Diplomatic Service generally for a number of years.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs why, in view of there being to his knowledge no country other than the United Kingdom which does not issue diplomatic passports to its diplomatic staff overseas, the United Kingdom Government do not issue such passports for the protection and convenience of United Kingdom diplomats.

Mr. Eggar: In the past it has not been considered necessary to issue United Kingdom diplomatic passports to assist diplomats in carrying out their duties. In view of changed conditions in the world it was decided to review the position.

Mr. and Mrs. E. P. Wright

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contact has been made by his Department with Mrs. E. P. Wright and her husband, who is currently in a diabetic coma in Cyprus and about whom the hon. Member for Macclesfield has written to him; what steps have been taken by his Department to assist Mrs. E. P. Wright with the health care of her husband in Cyprus; and if he will arrange for the husband of Mrs. E. P. Wright to be flown to the United Kingdom from Cyprus to receive medical care.

Mr. Eggar: The British high commission, Nicosia, was aware of Mr. Wright's illness and was in touch with his wife. Mr. Wright was due to be admitted to the Royal Military hospital at RAF Akrotiri for assessment on 18 January 1988 with a view to possible medical repatriation by the RAF at his own expense. Mr. Wright, sadly, died shortly before admission.

Zimbabwe

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Government of Zimbabwe concerning the freezing of the savings of Mrs. E. P. Wright; what progress has been made in negotiations with the Government of Zimbabwe concerning the releasing of the savings of former Rhodesian nationals; and if he will make it his policy to suspend all overseas aid payments to Zimbabwe until such time as it relaxes its freeze on the savings of former Rhodesian nationals.

Mrs. Chalker: We are not in negotiations with the Zimbabwe Government over the release of savings of former Rhodesian nationals. In their exchange control regulations the Zimbabwe authorities have made provision for special consideration of individual cases on hardship grounds. Her Majesty's high commission in Harare continues to make representations on individual cases when this is thought to be appropriate and helpful. It remains ready to consider doing so for Mrs. Wright, with whom my officials have been in correspondence. I do not accept that there is a case for imposing a suspension of all overseas aid payments as suggested. The chief purpose of our aid to Zimbabwe is to strengthen the Zimbabwe economy so that the conditions leading to the predicament of such persons as Mrs. Wright may be resolved.

Hong Kong (Rare and Endangered Species)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has yet replied to the letter sent to him on 13 January by Mr. Ian MacPhail regarding cruelty to animals in Hong Kong; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: My noble Friend the Minister of State replied on 22 January.

Nuclear Materials

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he possesses on the commission of inquiry recently established in the European Parliament to examine the accountability and control of nuclear materials in the European Community under Euratom regulations.

Mr. Mellor: A European Parliament committee of inquiry is to investigate the movement of radioactive waste from the treatment plant at Mol in Belgium and to report within four months. It is composed of 15 members representing all groups and includes three British members.

Terms of reference include consideration of the handling and transport of material, the existing Community regime for handling radioactive waste and the Commission's obligations covering the safeguards aspects of the nuclear material involved (including the question of plutonium in barrels supposedly containing radioactive waste), Euratom treaty obligations and application of the existing requirements for the cross-border transport of nuclear waste.

Black Rhino

Mr. Tony Banks: to ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if any funds are made available by the British Government directly or indirectly for conservation of the black rhino.

Mr. Eggar: The black rhino is a protected species under the convention in international trade in endangered species of fauna and flora. The United Kingdom plays a full and active part in encouraging the implementation of this convention. Our 1987 contribution to the CITES secretariat was US$37,863 (£26,478).

The Overseas Development Administration also provide a contribution in the form of an adviser working with the Zimbabwe Department of National Parks on schemes to encourage wildlife conservation. One of the principal beneficiaries of such schemes should be the black rhino. The ODA is also in contact with "Rhino Rescue" about the possibility of co-funding a project in Kenya, the principal aim of which is the preservation there of the black rhino population.

NORTHERN IRELAND

School Buildings (Repairs)

Mr. Jim Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make additional funding

available to the Northern Ireland educational boards to enable them to tackle the backlog of repairs to school buildings.

Dr. Mawhinney: In December I announced that I was allocating £250 million for the recurrent expenditure, including maintenance of buildings, of the five education and library boards for the next financial year. This represents an overall increase of 5 per cent. over estimated expenditure for this year. I have also recently announced that I will provide an additional £0·5 million for the current financial year to supplement the boards' schools buildings maintenance budgets.

Kilroot Power Station

Mr. Jim Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the future of Kilroot phase II in the light of his recent statement supporting a new private-sector lignite-fired power station in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Viggers: The press statement issued on 22 December 1987 re-affirmed the Government's belief in the merits of a private sector power station provided that it is in the interests of the consumer and the economy of Northern Ireland as a whole. Kilroot II is one of the options under consideration in the competition for new generating capacity and I will not be in a position to comment on its future until all proposals have been evaluated and the competition drawn to a conclusion.

Lecturers

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will ensure that appropriate financial estimates be made for 1988-89 to enable any salary award for further education lecturers eventually agreed to be made retrospective to 1 April 1987.

Dr. Mawhinney: Estimates provision will be sought in this financial year to take account of the likely salary award which may be made with effect from 1 April 1987.

Lignite

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what safety precautions his Department recommends relating to the use of lignite in power stations.

Mr. Viggers: All commercial power stations in Northern Ireland are required to comply with the safety provisions contained in the Health and Safety at Work (Northern Ireland) Order 1978 and the Factories Act (Northern Ireland) 1965. These provisions would apply to a lignite-fired power station.

Power Stations

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what studies his Department has conducted into the case for additional power stations in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers: Northern Ireland Electricity carried out a review of future requirements for new generating capacity in 1982 and this was revised and updated in 1986. The Government have accepted the conclusions of these studies which show that there is an unavoidable requirement for new capacity in 1995-96. The studies also showed that further capacity will be needed around the turn of the century.

Economic Strategy

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what approaches he has had from trade unions in Northern Ireland for discussions on the Government's economic strategy.

Mr. Viggers: Over the past two years there have been 12 occasions on which Ministers have met trade union delegations to discuss a range of industrial and economic issues.

Labour Statistics

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many new jobs were created during 1987 in the constituency of Strangford.

Mr. Viggers: Figures are not available on a constituency basis. However, in the Ards and Castlereagh borough council areas in the financial year 1986-87, 655 jobs were promoted by the Industrial Development Board and the Local Enterprise Development Unit. In addition some 200 ACE and Enterprise Ulster jobs were also created.

Mr. John D.Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many new jobs were promoted during 1987 by *(a)* the Industrial Development Board and *(b)* the Local Enterprise Development Unit.

Mr. Viggers: Job promotion figures are compiled on a financial year basis. The figures for 1986-87, were 4,187 and 4,244 respectively.

Anti-poverty Programmes

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what sums have been expended in Northern Ireland by the European Economic Community and by Her Majesty's Government under the current anti-poverty programmes under European Economic Community directive 85/8; what sums remain; when the programmes will end; and if he will seek an extension of funding for those programmes.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 22 January 1988]:* Two four-year action research projects have received funding as follows:

EC	*DHSS(NI)*
£211,743	£173,246

Assuming satisfactory progress, it is expected that the following sums will be spent over the next two years:

EC	*DHSS(NI)*
£220,609	£180,500

The anti-poverty programme will end on 30 November 1989.

It is for the European Commission to decide whether funding should be extended beyond that date.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the vehicles purchased and

used in Northern Ireland and the cost of each of them under EEC directive 85/8 dealing with anti-poverty programmes.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 22 January 1988]:* The rural action project has purchased and is using two mobile advice and information units. They cost £20,196 and £21,908. The Belfast and Derry unemployment project does not own any vehicles.

EMPLOYMENT

Interviews (Travelling Expenses)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the practice of the Health and Safety Executive in respect of reimbursement of travelling expenses to candidates called for interview.

Mr. Nicholls: Candidates interviewed at open competition run by the Civil Service Commission for recruitment to the Health and Safety Executive are required to contribute £4 towards their travelling expenses. Their net claim is reimbursed by the Civil Service Commission.

Candidates recruited to HSE locally for administrative posts are reimbursed travelling costs where these exceed £4 to the limit of the second class rail fare.

Candidates called for interview by Health and Safety Executive promotion boards are reimbursed all appropriate travelling expenses.

Factory Inspectors

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many class 1B factory inspectors have been promoted in each year since 1978.

Mr. Nicholls: The numbers of 1B factory inspectors promoted in each year since 1978 are as follows:

	Number
1978	10
1979	9
1980	2
1981	4
1982	14
1983	7
1984	7
1985	15
1986	12
1987	12

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many factory inspectors class 1B have five or less years of experience of inspection in that grade.

Mr. Nicholls: Forty-two.

Health and Safety Executive

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many staff of the Health and Safety Executive hold formal qualifications in personnel management.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Executive's records show that eight of its staff hold formal qualifications in personnel management.

Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give a regional breakdown of employment in manufacturing industry in August, September and October of 1987.

Mr. Lee: Estimates of employment in regions are made only for quarter months. The latest information on net changes to September 1987 is as follows:

Employees in employment in manufacturing industry: net changes between June and September 1987

	Change
South East	16,000
East Anglia	5,000
South West	−1,000
West Midlands	1,000
East Midlands	4,000
Yorkshire and Humberside	6,000
North West	−2,000
North	−1,000
Wales	5,000
Scotland	−3,000

Some of the decreases in the figures will be the result of the reclassification of jobs such as industrial cleaning, computer services and road haulage, previously done by manufacturers' own employees and now done by subcontractors. This developing feature of our economy has the effect of exaggerating the extent of the move from manufacturing to service sector employment.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current rate of youth unemployment in the Peterlee and Seaham areas of his Department.

Mr. Lee: Unemployment rates by age are not calculated below national level. However, on 8 October 1987 the numbers of unemployed claimants aged under 18 in the local authority wards[1] which most closely correspond to the Peterlee and Seaham areas were 200 and 110 respectively.

[1] The wards which cover Peterlee are Shadforth, Acre Rigg, Blackhalls, Dene House, Easington Colliery, Easington Village, Eden Hill, Haswell, Horden North, Horden, South, Howletch, Passfield, Shotton, South Hetton.

The wards which cover Seaham are Dawdon, Deneside, High Colliery, Murton East, Murton West, Park, Seaham, South.

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many job vacancies were registered in the Peterlee and Seaham jobcentres in November and December 1987.

Mr. Lee: The following information is in the Library. The numbers of vacancies notified to Peterlee, Seaham and Wingate jobcentres between 8 November and 4 December 1987 was 364. Separate figures for Seaham and Peterlee jobcentres are not collected. Figures are not yet available for the period 5 December 1987 to 8 January 1988.

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what was the number of people employed *(a)* full-time and *(b)* part-time in (i) Vale Royal district and (ii) Winsford in each of the last five years;

(2) what proportion of the employed population in Winsford were employed in *(a)* manufacturing and *(b)* service industries in each of the last five years.

Mr. Lee: Information about employment in local areas is available only for years in which censuses of employment are conducted. The available employee estimates for the Vale Royal local authority district, and for the area comprising the five local authority wards approximating most closely to the Winsford area, taken from the September 1981 and September 1984 censuses of employment, are as follows. An industry breakdown for the Winsford area is not available for the earlier year, but in 1984 the proportion of employees working in manufacturing and service industries was 53·6 per cent. and 43·7 per cent. respectively.

Employees in employment[1]

(thousands)

	Vale Royal local authority district[2]		*Winsford area*[3]	
	September		*September*	
	1981	*1984*	*1981*	*1984*
All industries and services				
Male and female	35·6	35·7	7·6	7·5
Full-time	28·0	27·9	6·5	6·3
Part-time[4]	7·6	7·8	1·1	1·2

[1] The figures exclude the self-employed and members of Her Majesty's forces.
[2] The district is defined in terms of ward boundaries as at 1981.
[3] Defined as the area comprising the five local authority wards of Wharton, Gravel, Swanlow, Over One and Over Two: ward boundaries as at 1981.
[4] Part-time workers are defined as those not working more than 30 hours a week.

Job Release Scheme

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people in the Peterlee and Seaham areas of his Department have retired under the job release scheme in the years 1985-86, 1986-87 and 1987 to date.

Mr. Lee: I am afraid that the information is not available in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Tourism

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will take steps to encourage the American tourist and travel agencies to make more use of northern airports, hotels and travel facilities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: I am keen to spread the benefits of tourism more widely around the country. I welcome the work done by northern regional tourist boards to promote their regions both at home and abroad.

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will grant aid to more tourist information centres on the A19 from Dishforth to the Tyne tunnel and the A1 from Dishforth to Newcastle.

Mr. Lee: I understand that both the Nurthumbria and Yorkshire and Humberside tourist boards are considering the provision of tourist information on the main routes north. The English tourist board is prepared to consider applications for assistance from the section 4 scheme towards the costs of developing tourist information facilities in appropriate locations.

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what measures he is taking to ensure that, upon completion of the Channel tunnel, tourist traffic will have good access to the north-east.

Mr. Lee: My Department, as well as the Department of Transport, is represented on the British tourist authority's Channel tunnel tourism working party which is studying the impact of the tunnel on the tourist industry and identifying how best to exploit its tourism potential to the benefit of the whole country.

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made of the implications for the development of the tourism industry of the introduction of a general certificate of secondary education examination in travel and tourism.

Mr. Lee: I understand that there are developments taking place in this area. While I welcome initiatives which help to make education more relevant to the needs of industry and commerce including tourism, it is too early as yet to assess the full implication for the industry of this particular development.

Deaths and Accidents

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the percentage increase between 1981 and 1986 of deaths and serious accidents *(a)* in manufacturing industry and *(b)* the construction industry.

Mr. Nicholls: The percentage increases for the number of reported deaths and major injuries to employees at work are given in the table.

Percentage increase

	(a) Manufacturing	*(b) Construction*
Number of reported deaths 1981 to 1986-87[1]	−8	−14
Number of reported major injuries 1981 to 1985	+17	+32

Minus represents a percentage decrease.
[1] Provisional data for the year commencing 1 April 1986.

The increase in reported major injuries relates to the years 1981 and 1985. Figures for 1986 are not comparable, since they involve a widened definition of major injury.

Dock Workers

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total amount of Government funding in the years 1972 to 1986 for the severance of registered dock workers from the ports covered by the dock labour scheme; and how many permanent registered dock workers left the industry in this period under severance arrangements.

Mr. Nicholls: *[holding answer 18 January 1988]:* In the period 1 April 1972 to 31 March 1987 the Government provided grants of £80 million and loans of £162 million to the National Dock Labour Board towards the cost of severances of registered dockworkers. In the same period 34,361 registered dockworkers left the industry under the national employers' release arrangements.

ENERGY

Electricity Prices

12. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has received from firms in north-east Derbyshire on the proposed increase in electricity prices; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My Department has received two representations from north-east Derbyshire about the proposed increase in electricity prices.

My right hon. Friend made a statement to the House on this matter on 3 November last year.

32. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what recent representations he has received regarding electricity prices.

Mr. Parkinson: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given today to the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes).

Coal Industry

13. **Mr. Eadie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what discussions he has had with the chairman of British Coal about the future plans for the coal industry in 1988.

16. **Mr. Patnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what discussions he has had with the chairman of British Coal regarding flexible working in the coal mining industry in the various areas.

Mr. Parkinson: I have regular meetings with the chairman of British Coal to discuss all aspects of the coal industry.

20. **Mr. Douglas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will detail the number of job losses in deep mining in Scotland since March 1985, up to the latest date available.

Mr. Michael Spicer: British Coal advises that 4,236 men were employed in Scottish deep-mining on 26 December 1987. The corresponding figure for 30 March 1985 was 11,263.

Electricity Industry (Cost Savings)

14. **Mr. Watts:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what cost savings have been achieved in the electricity industry since 1979; and what are the cost saving targets for 1987-88 and 1988-89.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Electricity Council estimates that operating costs of electricity supply per unit sold fell in real terms by 10·3 per cent. between 1979-80 and 1986-87. The present performance aim for the industry is a reduction of 6·1 per cent. in controllable costs between 1983-84 and 1987-88. The performance aim for the next financial year is under discussion between my Department and the industry.

Electricity Generation

15. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what plans he has to support research and development into water-generated electricity in the immediate and in the longer term.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My Department will continue to support any renewable energy electricity generation scheme which shows promise of economic viability in the commercial market.

19. **Mr. Mans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what proportions of the anticipated electricity generation for the next 10 years will be met by *(a)* nuclear, *(b)* coal-fired, *(c)* oil-fired, *(d)* hydro, and *(e)* other, power stations.

Mr. Michael Spicer: At present the industry estimates that in 1998 the proportions of electricity generating capacity in England and Wales would be:

	per cent.
(a) nuclear	14
(b) coal fired	60
(c) oil fired	17
(d) hydro	3
(e) others	5

It will, of course, be for the privatised industry to make its own investment plans.

21. **Mr. Stern:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has any plans to encourage the casual production of electricity as a by-product of other industrial processes.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The production of electricity associated with heat for industrial use is already widespread. I hope to see expansion in this field.

Electricity (Economy Tariffs)

17. **Mr. Moss:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has on measures to improve the take-up of electricity economy tariffs by customers of area boards.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Area boards have extensive publicity programmes aimed at making sure that their customers are able to choose the most economic tariff appropriate to their needs.

Gas and Electricity (VAT)

18. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will raise at his next meeting with the consumer bodies of the electricity and gas industries the implications for the industry and consumers of the levying of value added tax on gas and electricity, in view of the imminent decision of the European Court of Justice on the case initiated by the Commission on 15 September; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: As my hon. Friend will understand, it would be inappropriate to enter into such discussions in advance of a judgment by the court.

Power Stations and Overhead Lines (Public Inquiries)

22. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what consultations he undertook and what representations he has received regarding the statutory instrument on the conduct of public inquiries into power stations and overhead lines laid before the House on 18 December 1987.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The new rules governing public inquiries into power stations and overhead lines, on which

the Council on Tribunals was consulted, implement changes envisaged by the consultation paper on inquiries procedure issued in December 1986 by the Department of the Environment and the Welsh Office. A number of representations were received in response to that consultation paper.

Energy Efficiency

23. **Mr. John Garrett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what initiatives he proposes to take in the field of domestic energy efficiency.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My energy efficiency office continues to promote energy efficiency in the domestic sector through information, advice, and its support for the community insulation projects.

24. **Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what measures he intends to take to encourage energy efficiency in *(a)* industry, *(b)* Government Departments and *(c)* domestic households over the next three years.

Mr. Peter Morrison: In my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Berkshire, East (Mr. MacKay) on 22 January at columns 885-86, I announced the Government's decision on the way forward for the energy efficiency office in the light of an assessment of the office's programmes. There will be a continuing role for the EEO to fulfil. Initiatives in the domestic sector and in the Government estate will continue to be pursued vigorously. In industry and commerce, programmes are being examined to see how the contribution from those who benefit can be increased.

27. **Mr. Forth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he is yet in a position to announce the outcome of the review of the energy efficiency office.

Mr. Parkinson: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Berkshire, East (Mr. MacKay) on 22 January 1988, at columns 885-86.

28. **Mr. Burt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what plans he has for the future of the energy efficiency survey scheme.

Mr. Peter Morrison: In order to improve value for money the short survey category of the scheme will be discontinued with effect from 31 January 1988. Other aspects of the scheme will be considered as part of the further work on energy efficiency programmes which I announced on 22 January 1988.

Offshore Supplies Industry

25. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement regarding the health of the offshore supplies industry following the oil price slump of 1986.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The health of the offshore supplies industry has recovered significantly from the oil price slump of 1986. Drilling activity has risen to 1983 levels, the third highest level recorded, with a consequent upturn in the workload of orders for the service sector in general. However, I am conscious of the difficulties currently being experienced by the fabrication industry. Nevertheless, my Department approved 13 projects in 1987 and these should provide considerable work opportunities for the fabrication industry in the future.

Oil Reserves

26. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what are the implications of the changes in known United Kingdom oil reserves since 1979.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Since 1979 estimates of initially recoverable reserves have risen by over 13 per cent. from 2,009 million tonnes to 2,280 million tonnes. This reflects the high level of appraisal and development activity in the United Kingdom continental shelf. On current estimates, the United Kingdom is likely to remain self-sufficient in oil well into the 1990s.

Electricity Industry (Desulphurisation Programme)

29. **Mr. O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has discussed the desulphurisation programme with the chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have discussed the Central Electricity Generating Board's flue gas desulphurisation (FGD) programme with Lord Marshall. The board's plans to retrofit 6,000 MW of existing generating capacity at Drax and Fiddlers Ferry power stations were announced in October last year. In addition, all future coal-fired power stations will be required to be fitted with FGD.

Electricity Industry (Privatisation)

30. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he will next meet the chairmen of the area electricity boards to discuss privatisation of the electricity supply industry.

Mr. Parkinson: I last met the area board chairmen as a group on 13 January. No arrangements for further meetings have yet been made.

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has examined suggestions for divesting the electricity area boards of their high-street showrooms, when electricity privatisation takes place; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I am examining a number of suggestions for the future structure of the area electricity boards.

Energy Management Conferences

31. **Mr. Gregory:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what plans he has for future energy management conferences.

Mr. Peter Morrison: In the past my Department has organised national energy management conferences. Increasingly, however, the private sector is showing interest in arranging events of this sort and I am glad to say that the Energy Systems Trade Association is planning to hold a national conference in Birmingham in December this year.

Power Stations

33. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many existing power stations are expected to come to the end of their useful life in the next *(a)* five years, *(b)* 10 years and *(c)* 15 years; and what is their total electricity output.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is an operational matter for the CEGB. I have asked the chairman to reply direct to my hon. Friend.

Trawsfynydd Power Station

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many representations his Department received against the experiment proposed by the Central Electricity Generating Board at Trawsfynydd nuclear power station.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have received a number of representations. Most sought clarification.

Fast Breeder Reactor Programme

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on recent progress in the fast breeder reactor programme.

Mr. Parkinson: The United Kingdom's fast reactor programme has made some impressive advances in recent years. The R and D has led to significant design improvements. From the current financial year the CEGB has become a co-funder of the programme.

TRANSPORT

Section 8 Grants

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he is satisfied with the operation of the section 8 grants system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: Yes, the scheme is a major Government/industry partnership to help the environment and the results are impressive.

London Underground

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the chairman of London Regional Transport to discuss the future development of the London Underground system.

Mr. David Mitchell: My right hon. Friend last met Sir Keith Bright on 14 December 1987, when a number of matters concerning London Regional Transport and the prospects for its main businesses were discussed.

Ferry Boarding Passes

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress he has made in his discussions with ferry operators on the use of boarding passes.

Mr. David Mitchell: The Government issued draft proposals on 4 November 1987 to require the use of boarding cards and a meeting was held with ferry operators on 21 December to discuss these proposals. I now expect orders to be laid before Parliament during February.

Radioactive Materials (Transportation)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, further to his answer to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby on 14 January, *Official Report*, column *358*, whether radioactive materials from Sellafield are flown by air under international regulations; where they go to outside the United Kingdom; and what representations he has made to the International Atomic Energy Agency in the light of its current review.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department does not collect detailed information on individual consignments but I understand that radioactive materials from Sellafield are transported by air to France and in very small sample quantities to one or two other European countries. The United Kingdom will play a full part in the IAEA review. We have expressed no initial views.

Buses (Concessionary Fare Schemes)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what provision he intends to make, in his plans for deregulation of London buses, for maintaining on all buses concessionary fares and passes for retirement old-age pensioners; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: Detailed plans for deregulation of buses in London have not yet been made. We shall be giving close attention to the arrangements for concessionary travel.

Trams

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to encourage the reintroduction of tramways into any cities or towns in Great Britain.

Mr. David Mitchell: Outside London it is for local authorities to consider any passenger transport needs in their areas and, if they judge it appropriate, to work up proposals for the reintroduction of tramways or the provision of light rail systems. My Department is already in touch with a number of local authorities and others who are formulating proposals for tramways and light rail systems. Where an application for Government funding for a particular scheme is made, this is considered on its merits. It is also open to the private sector to promote schemes and there may often be useful scope for private sector participation in schemes promoted by local authorities, such as the Greater Manchester light rail system on which I made an announcement on 18 January at column 533 in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt) and the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris).

Within London, the private sector is contributing some £68 million to the Bank extension of the Docklands Light Railway. The eastern extension to Beckton, subject to parliamentary approval, will be funded by the private sector out of the increased land values in the Royal Docks, attributable directly to the extension. My Department is involved in studies of the feasibility of further light rail developments, which will be considered on their economic merits.

Thames (Tunnel)

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he intends to promote a tunnel under the River Thames instead of a bridge as part of the proposed extension of the A406 to the A2; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: The Department's proposals for a bridge across the Thames and counter-proposals for a tunnel

were examined at the public inquiry into the East London river crossing. I have recently received the inspector's report, which is at present being considered.

London-Sheffield Railway Line

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the future planned investment for the British Rail main line between London St. Pancras and Sheffield midland station.

Mr. David Mitchell: The future planned investment for a particular line is a matter for the board. BR operates an HST service on this line and I understand that BR has just completed a £25 million programme to modernise the signalling on the Midland main line.

Roads

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the implications for his Department's *(a)* planning and *(b)* spending on roads of recent projections published by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys that East Anglia will have in the next 13 years the greatest proportionate population increase of both people moving in and of new births of any English region.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Projections by OPCS are taken into account along with other factors in the Department's forecasts of local traffic growth. The forecasts play an important part in the assessment of need and priority when determining how best to use the resources available for providing new and improved roads. They are revised regularly as more up-to-date information, such as the recently published figures, becomes available. The forecasts are taken into account when the Department is considering additions to the national programme of trunk and motorway improvements.

M2/A2 Roads

Mr. Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give urgent consideration to the capacity of the M2/A2 roads between the M25 motorway and Dover, and what recent studies have been undertaken on those routes.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Following a study, a scheme to widen the present dual two-lane section of the M2 between junctions 1 and 3 was added to the programme last year. Work to provide hard shoulders on the A2 from the London boundary to the M2, phased over a six-year period to 1991, will continue. No other major improvements to the A2/M2 route are planned at present. The position will be kept under review.

Heavy Goods Vehicles

Mr. Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many heavy goods vehicles from abroad are currently checkweighed each month; what proportion of the total number this represents; and what proportion are found to be overweight.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Monthly statistics are not available. The Department expects to weigh some 8,800 foreign vehicles during the current financial year. This represents nearly 3 per cent. of the incoming foreign vehicle movements. Many vehicles are regular visitors, which increases the probability of being weighed at some time during the year. About 24 per cent. of the vehicles weighed are found to be overloaded. Checking is targeted on vehicles likely to be overweight.

Pilotage

Mr. David Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will now announce the appointed day under the Pilotage Act 1987.

Mr. David Mitchell: My right hon. Friend will announce the appointed day as soon as possible; it seems certain to be in the second half of this year. In setting a date it is necessary to take account of progress made with the preparation of schemes for the winding-up of the existing pilotage authorities, as well as to the need to avoid delay to the implementation of the Act.

Cross-London Rail Link

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what response he made to the proposals of the British Railways Board contained in the booklet "Cross-London Rail Link", published in November 1980; and what study he has made of these proposals as a means of resolving current problems of congestion on London rail services.

Mr. David Mitchell: The Department did not comment formally on the BR document in 1980. No proposals were submitted by the board, and it was clear that considerably more work was required to establish the costs and benefits of the project. It would be for it to consider reviving this work in the first instance if it believed it was a cost-effective way of relieving congestion on rail services.

Air Agreements

Mr. Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about the bilateral liberalised air agreements he has made in 1987, and on the agreements he expects to make in the current year.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 22 January 1988]:* The major air services achievements in 1987 have been the adoption of the European Community liberalisation measures and the negotiation of a liberal air services agreement with Canada; further liberalisation was also agreed with the Scandinavian countries. Our objectives for 1988 include building on the European Community measures with our bilateral partners.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

DROPS

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether the Government, as vendors of Leyland trucks to DAF, gave any undertaking or warranty in respect of Government contracts yet to be performed, including the demountable rack off-loading pick-up systems contract; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The commercial aspects of the merger of Leyland Trucks and Freight Rover with DAF of Holland were a matter for the Rover Group. Neither they nor Her Majesty's Government gave any warranties of undertakings on future business.

English Industrial Estates

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what will be the level of funding by English Industrial Estates in non-inner areas in 1988-89.

Mr. Atkins: In 1987-88 English Estates planned programme in the assisted areas was increased from £33·5 million to £37 million. In the event, through increased levels of asset sales, they are likely to achieve a record programme of £47 million. In 1988-89 we have asked them to plan for a programme £5 million higher than this year's — £42 million. In practice we expect that they may exceed this figure and we have authorised them to spend up to £49 million if they can generate the necessary funds from their own resources.

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what the future role of English Industrial Estates will be outside the inner city areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: My Department's White Paper of 12 January made clear that English Estates will continue to provide industrial and commercial premises in the assisted areas where there is no prospect of private sector provision.

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what will be the level of development commitment to *(a)* the county of Durham and *(b)* Easington by English Industrial Estates in the years 1988-89 and 1989-90.

Mr. Atkins: The levels of the development programmes for individual areas for 1988-89 are currently under consideration by English Estates. The levels for 1989-90 will not be established until next year.

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what developments have been carried out by English Industrial Estates in the county of Durham in the last five years, and at what cost.

Mr. Atkins: In the period January 1983 to January 1988 English Estates has completed 228 units in the county of Durham on behalf of my Department totalling 785,233 sq. ft. and costing £16·8 million.

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what level of support English Industrial Estates will direct towards inner city areas in 1988-89 and 1989-90.

Mr. Atkins: The level of the new managed workspace programme for the inner cities has not yet been finalised, but it will be additional to the planned expenditure under the existing programme for the assisted areas.

Washing Machines

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the total output of washing machines in Britain, the percentage exported and the share of the domestic market taken by imports in 1958, 1960, 1965, 1970, 1975 and each year from 1979 to 1987.

Mr. Alan Clark: What information is available is shown in the table.

Washing machines

	1975	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*[1]1987*
Sales by United Kingdom manufacturers										
£ million	99	168	178	167	178	207	210	230	231	187
Thousands	1,249	1,309	1,219	1,117	1,231	1,371	1,349	1,430	1,317	978
Per cent. of Sales exported										
By value	16	9	9	9	6	5	6	6	5	6
By number	17	10	10	11	7	6	6	6	6	7
Per cent. of United Kingdom market taken by imports										
By value	27	28	27	32	32	32	34	36	38	35
By numbers	29	31	29	38	36	35	36	39	45	38

[1] First 9 months only.
The sales data relate primarily to units in the United Kingdom with a minimum employment of 25 prior to 1983 and 100 for subsequent years.

Fridges and Freezers

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the total output of domestic refrigerators and freezers in Britain, the percentage exported and the share of the domestic market taken by imports in 1958, 1960, 1965, 1970, 1975 and each year from 1979 to 1987.

Mr. Alan Clark: What information is available is shown in the table.

Domestic Refrigerators and Freezers

	1975	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*[1]1987*
Sales by United Kingdom manufacturers										
£ Million	62	91	102	106	113	131	147	156	153	125
Thousands	1,379	1,253	1,240	1,188	1,250	1,315	1,387	1,419	1,408	1,099
Percentage of Sales exported										
By value	14	19	17	12	11	10	8	8	8	12
By number	13	17	16	13	12	10	9	9	8	8

	1975	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	[1]1987
Percentage share of United Kingdom market taken by imports										
By value	46	54	48	48	48	50	46	43	46	47
By number	40	50	45	48	48	50	47	45	46	46

[1] First 9 months only.

The sales data relate primarily to units in the United Kingdom with a minimum employment of 25 prior to 1983 and 100 for subsequent years.

Television Sets

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the total output of television sets in Britain, the percentage exported and the share of the domestic market taken by imports in 1958, 1960, 1965, 1970, 1975 and each year from 1979 to 1987.

Mr. Alan Clark: What information is available is shown in the table.

Television Sets[1]

Year	Sales[2]	Exports/Sales	Import Penetration
	£ million	Percentage	Percentage
1973	326	2·4	27·0
1975	286	14·3	17·6
1979	393	15·2	22·4
1980	395	18·5	24·6
1981	405	14·2	33·5
1982	431	13·3	33·3
1983	508	11·9	36·0
1984	494	19·9	38·6
1985	494	23·8	34·8
1986[3]	516	30·0	40·9
1987[3,4]	265	37·0	37·0

[1] Video monitors are included with television sets.
[2] Sales refer to those of United Kingdom manufacturers with a minimum employment of 25.
[3] Provisional.
[4] First 6 months only.

Radios

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the total output of domestic radio receivers, the percentage exported and the share of the domestic market taken by imports in 1958, 1960, 1965, 1970, 1975 and each year from 1979 to 1987.

Mr. Alan Clark: What information is available is shown in the table.

Radio Receivers[1]

Year	Sales[2]	Export/Sales	Import Penetration
	£ million	Per cent.	Per cent.
1973	16·4	8·9	71·6
1975	13·1	14·0	74·1
1979	18·9	35·9	90·1
1980	11·6	65·6	93·9
1981	11·6	32·2	84·6
1982	11·3	90·4	98·8
1983	8·2	111·2	100·9
1984	n/a	n/a	n/a
1985	n/a	n/a	n/a
1986	n/a	n/a	n/a

[1] Radio receivers exclude those combined with record decks, cassette recorders (other than car radio-cassettes) or music centres. Tuners and tuner/amplifiers, sold as audio separates are included but amplifiers on their own are excluded.
[2] Sales data relate primarily to units in the United Kingdom with a minimum employment of 25.
n/a = Not available.

British Telecom (Maintenance Service)

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he anticipates Professor Carsberg will be able to complete his inquiries into the charges for British Telecom's premium maintenance service; on what date Professor Carsberg began his inquiries; what income British Telecom has derived from its interim half-rate charge to emergency organisations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: This is entirely a matter for the Director General of Telecommunications, Professor Bryan Carsberg. I understand he will be writing to the hon. Member.

Portable and Car Telephones

Mr. Amess: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has of how many *(a)* car and *(b)* portable telephones were purchased in Britain for each of the last three years.

Mr. Butcher: There are no official statistics but the information I have is as follows:

	Number of units		
	1985	1986	1987
Mobile telephones	31,500	56,000	71,500
Portable telephones	10,500	24,000	38,500

NOTE: *Includes* trans-portable and hand portable.
Source: BIS MacKintosh Ltd.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) what information he has as to how many *(a)* portable telephones and *(b)* car phones are currently registered in Britain;

(2) what information he has as to how many *(a)* hand-held car-portable telephones and *(b)* voice-activated car-portable telephones are currently in use in Britain.

Mr. Butcher: My Department does not keep a register of portable telephones and car phones and does not keep statistics on the number of car-portable telephones in use in Britain. We understand that the mobile radio network operators keep their own register of numbers of subscriber units but these figures are commercially confidential. However, the companies estimate that there are approximately 50,000 portable telephones and 210,000 car phones in use. Separate estimates on hand-held car-portable telephones and voice-activated car-portable telephones are not available.

International Tropical Timber Organisation

Mr. Warren: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement of the results on the International Tropical Timber Organisation meeting held in Japan between 11 and 20 November 1987.

Mr. Atkins: The third session of the ITTO held in Japan in November 1987 continued the steady progress of the previous meetings characterised by growing co-operation between producer and consumer countries. Agreement was reached on the budget for 1988 and on the arrangements for ITTO's headquarters. Twelve projects and three pre-projects were approved.

Iran

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many trade missions went from the United Kingdom to Iran in 1977, 1978, 1984, 1985, 1986 and 1987.

Mr. Alan Clark: My Department provided financial support for six trade missions to Iran in 1977, five in 1978 and three in 1984. There were no dti-supported missions to Iran between 1985-87.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations have been made to him since 11 June 1987 about United Kingdom trade relations with Iran; and what are the prospects in 1988 of United Kingdom trade with Iran.

Mr. Alan Clark: No representations have been made since 11 June. United Kingdom exports to Iran are likely to remain constrained by Iran's acute shortage of foreign exchange due to the war and reduced oil revenue.

Vicuna Wool and Cloth

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) how much finished vicuna wool has been imported into the United Kingdom in each of the past five years;

(2) how much finished vicuna cloth has been exported from the United Kingdom to Hong Kong in each of the past five years.

Mr. Alan Clark: Vicuna wool and vicuna cloth are not separately identified in the *Overseas Trade Statistics*. But there are two triune headings ("Of alpaca, llama, vicuna") in the OTS broken down into, not carded or combed (5302 9400) and carded or combed tops (5305 3100). In the new HS-based United Kingdom tariff the distinction is carried through only for the not carded or combed (510210 300). Imports under the two headings mentioned above for January to November 1987 (latest figures available) were:

	£
5302 9400	79,000
5305 3100	1,665,000

BP Shares

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) what action the Office of Fair Trading is intending to take in relation to the shareholding in BP by Kuwaiti interests;

(2) what steps he is taking to monitor compliance by Kuwaiti interests with the undertaking given on the acqusition of shares in BP.

Mr. Maude: The Kuwaiti Investment Office holding is being considered under our merger control procedures by the Director General of Fair Trading. He will advise my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State whether there may be a "merger situation" which qualifies for investigation and, if so, whether it should be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission for further investigation.

Inner City Task Forces

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what guidelines his Department has issued to civil servants administering funds allocated to inner city task force projects to ensure access to employment and training opportunities for residents of the task force areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The aims of the inner city task forces include:

providing more jobs for local people by identifying and removing impediments to their recruitment by local employers, and by encouraging local enterprise development;

encouraging and facilitating enterprise by local people through the provision of enterprise training, financial and managerial assistance;

improving the employability of local people, including those about to enter the labour market, by training programmes aimed at specific employment opportunities or identified gaps in the labour market.

Funds are available to the task forces to address these aims, and I am satisfied they are being spent accordingly.

Regional Development

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the expected outturn of expenditure in the next financial year on regional development grants in England, Scotland and Wales respectively.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The planned provision for expenditure on regional development grants in 1988-89 in England, Scotland and Wales is as follows:

	£ million
England	155·7
Scotland	58·3
Wales	63·4

These amounts are net of recoveries but gross of receipts from the European regional development fund.

Non-life Insurance

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, pursuant to the reply of the Under-Secretary of State to the hon. Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman) on 13 January, *Official Report*, column *321*, if he will make a statement setting out the elements of the proposed directive on non-life insurance which were agreed at the Internal Council meeting on 18 December.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 21 January 1988]:* Yes. The most important element of the non-life insurance services directive agreed at the Internal Market Council on 18 December 1987 was the level of the thresholds above

which a more liberal regime will be applied to cross-frontier transactions. Other important elements include the circumstances under which a company already established in a member state may do business there on a service basis, treatment of technical reserves (the provisions held by insurers to meet their underwriting liabilities), matching (the requirement of an insurer to hold a proportion of his assets in the currency of his risks), provisions relating to compulsory insurance and provisions relating to taxation of insurance premiums. The directive will also make certain amendments to the non-life insurance establishment directive.

The United Kingdom welcomes this agreement, which represents substantial progress in opening the EC market to cross-frontier transactions and should benefit both the producers and consumers of insurance. We hope the Council will now be able to reach an early common position on the directive.

Weights

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the current weights corresponding to those given in table F1 of the monthly review of external trade statistics, together with export unit values for each entry in the second quarter of 1987 using these weights.

Mr. Alan Clark *[holding answer 22 January 1988]:* Information for the calculation of current weights in 1987 is not yet available.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether the export weights used in table F8 of the monthly review of external trade statistics are the current weights; and if he will provide an estimate for the end of 1987 figures based on changes in exchange rates and on the rate of inflation.

Mr. Alan Clark *[holding answer 22 January 1988]:* The weights used in the table are 1980 base weights. International data on rates of inflation in the fourth quarter of 1987 are not available. Estimates based on changes in effective exchange rates only are in the following table.

Relative export unit value indices 1987 Q4 (Based on changes in effective exchange rates) 1980 = 100

	Indice
United Kingdom	93·2
United States	109·4
Austria	95·1
Belgium	89·4
Canada	76·9
Denmark	112·9
FR Germany	100·3
Finland	104·2
France	102·5
Italy	95·9
Japan	111·9
Netherland	86·7
Norway	87·2
Spain	98·4
Sweden	93·6
Switzerland	128·9

Sources: International Monetary Fund; Bank of England

DEFENCE

Plutonium

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations he has received on the use in nuclear weapons of plutonium produced under the civil programme.

Mr. Sainsbury: One letter has been received recently from a member of the public.

RAF Binbrook (Near Miss)

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish the report on the near miss which took place over RAF Binbrook in Lincolnshire between an Air UK civil airliner Short 360 and a Phantom fighter-bomber in April 1987.

Mr. Freeman: No. It is not the practice to publish reports on such incidents, the efficient investigation of which relies upon information volunteered on a confidential basis.

NATO and Warsaw Pact (Nuclear Weapons)

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will provide an updated estimate of the size of the nuclear weapons held by NATO and that of Warsaw pact countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Information on the numbers of nuclear weapons held by NATO and the Warsaw pact is contained in annex A, figures 15 and 16 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1987". This will be updated in SDE 88.

Nuclear Installations (Decommissioning)

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what, in current prices, was the expenditure in each of the last five financial years of the decommissioning and redevelopment of nuclear-related plant, sites and installations of his Department, and what was the expenditure on such decommissioning in the half year April to October 1987.

Mr. Sainsbury: Expenditure, in current prices, on the decommissioning of nuclear-related defence plant, sites and installations was as follows:

	£ million
1982-83	5·5
1983-84	0·9
1984-85	2·5
1985-86	4·4
1986-87	5·0

April 1987 to October 1987 £2·4 million

Integrated Command Control System

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the ICCS command control computer system at High Wycombe strike command headquarters works to the requirements as set out in the original specifications.

Mr. Sainsbury: The relatively small element of the ICCS command control computer system for strike command headquarters at High Wycombe has been

satisfactorily tested in a working configuration against the original specification and will be installed at High Wycombe as soon as building work permits.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the total cost of the ICCS command control computer system at High Wycombe.

Mr. Sainsbury: The High Wycombe element of the ICCS command and control computer system represents but a small part of the total and cannot be separately identified. The United Kingdom national contribution to the whole ICCS computer system is some £40 million.

Explosives Accidents

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what, for each year since 1975, was the number of explosives accidents and casualties resulting from Army training and exercises; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 14 January 1988]:* The following table gives the figures according to Army records for accidents involving Army ammunition during Army training and exercises.

Year	*Accidents resulting from training and exercises*	*Casualties resulting from training and exercises*			
		Killed		*Injured*	
		Total	*Civilian*	*Total*	*Civilian*
1975	76	—	—	51	2
1976	75	4	—	48	—
1977	111	1	—	71	1
1978	89	3	—	62	—
1979	66	2	—	54	1
1980	94	5	—	56	—
1981	111	—	—	76	—
1982	120	5	—	51	—
1983	122	3	1	62	—
1984	162	1	—	84	—
1985	149	1	—	95	3
1986	133	3	—	98	—
1987	155	6	—	97	1

ENVIRONMENT

Nuclear Waste

69. **Mr. Fearn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to receive a report from United Kingdom Nirex concerning the dumping of low-level nuclear waste, following the recent publication of the consultative document "The Way Forward".

Mr. Moynihan: My right hon. Friend expects United Kingdom Nirex Ltd. to submit its recommendations for a deep dual-purpose disposal facility for low-level and intermediate-level radioactive waste by the end of the year.

Cap de la Hague Nuclear Plant

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what indication he has of the level of pollution in the Channel from the Cap de la Hague nuclear fuel reprocessing plant; what representations Her Majesty's Government have received expressing concern at the possibility of radioactive pollution crossing the Channel; what indication he has of French plans for expansion in nuclear reprocessing capacity at Cap de la Hague; what implications this has for safety in the United Kingdom; whether Her Majesty's Government propose to make any representations to the French Government on this matter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: Expansion of the Cap de la Hague facility is a matter for the French authorities. However, as a signatory to the Euratom treaty France has an obligation under article 37 to provide the Commission with such general data relating to any plan for the disposal of radioactive waste in whatever form as will make it possible to determine whether the implementation of such a plan is liable to result in contamination of the water, soil or airspace of another member state. Any information provided is reviewed by the Commission through a group of experts comprising representatives from member states. We understand that currently some refurbishment of the Cap de la Hague facility is taking place which will lead to a reduction in the discharge levels, in particular alpha bearing wastes.

Representations to Her Majesty's Government expressing concern at the possibility of radioactive pollution crossing the Channel have been received only from Guernsey. Her Majesty's Government have communicated this concern to the French authorities, who have taken note. I understand that French nuclear installations are subject to similar stringent regulatory requirements as those in the United Kingdom.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food carries out regular monitoring for radioactivity in the marine environment around the British Isles, including the Channel Islands, and the results are published annually and placed in the Library of the House. These studies indicate that the concentrations of radioactivity in the marine environment attributable to Cap de la Hague are of negligible radiological significance.

Ordnance Survey

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much public money has had to be underwritten by the Exchequer for Ordnance Survey commercial publications which have failed to make a profit since the introduction of the Ordnance Survey commercial arm in 1981.

Mr. Moynihan: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 18 November 1987, at column 681.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment why the copyright royalties for Ordnance Survey co-publication products are charged as a cost against the revenue from sales whereas the royalties to be paid by private sector map-makers are based on the quantity printed, regardless of the quantity sold.

Mr Moynihan: Copyright royalty on Ordnance Survey maps used in co-publications is a cost which, together with origination and production charges, is set against revenue from sales of the product for the purpose of assessing profitability and return on investment. The royalty cost figure itself is calculated on print quantities in the same way as that applied to publishers who reproduce Ordnance Survey material in their own publications.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will instruct the Ordnance Survey not to prevent national mapping, identified by the Serpell committee as being required in the national interest and paid for by the Exchequer, from being used by the private sector as the basis for commercial mapping which does not compete against the, so defined, national mapping.

Mr. Moynihan: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave on 20 November 1987, at column 682. Ordnance Survey does not unreasonably restrict the use of such mapping in these circumstances.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will now arrange for an independent investigation, as opposed to audit, of how Ordnance Survey allocated its costs for the production of the Temple Press-Ordnance Survey "Motoring Atlas of Great Britain" which was produced in 1982.

Mr. Moynihan: There are no plans to arrange such an investigation. I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave on 18 November 1987, at column 569.

Urban Development Corporations

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much has been spent by the urban development corporations in Tyne and Wear and Cleveland since their inception.

Mr. Trippier: Expenditure from 15 May 1987, when both urban development corporations were established, to the end of 1987 was £963,700 by Tyne and Wear development corporation and £2,211,800 by Teesside development corporation.

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the names of the chairman, vice-chairman and board members, and their remuneration, of the urban development corporations in Tyne and Wear and Cleveland.

Mr. Trippier: For information on membership I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) on 7 July 1987, at column 134. The deputy chairman of Teesside development corporation has since been ennobled and is now Lord Dormand of Easington.

All the posts are part-time. The chairman of Teesside development corporation is paid £18,234 a year on the basis of a time commitment of two days per week. The chairman of Tyne and Wear development corporation is paid £13,676 a year on the basis of a time commitment of one and a half days per week. Both deputy chairmen are paid £6,188 a year on the basis of a time commitment of one day per week. Members are paid at a flat rate of £3,625 a year.

Storm Damage

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has over the next three years to provide financial assistance to help remedy the effects of the October 1987 hurricane.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced on 8 December that the date by which work eligible for 75 per cent. special financial assistance must be completed had been extended to 1 March 1988. For 1987-88 he proposes to exclude from total expenditure, in effect to relieve from block grant losses, all storm-related revenue expenditure above the threshold defined in the Bellwin scheme whether or not eligible for special financial assistance, including revenue contributions to capital outlays made by the end of March 1988. For 1987-88, 1988-89 and 1989-90 he also proposes to exclude from total expenditure all debt charges incurred in respect of capital expenditure on storm damage up to the end of March 1989.

Water Authorities

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the capital spending plans for the English water authorities for 1988-89 will enable the authorities *(a)* to implement COPA part II, *(b)* to extend the list of bathing waters as specified under the European Community directive and *(c)* to meet by 1992 the European Community drinking water directive with particular reference to nitrates.

Mr. Moynihan: The public expenditure White Paper, published on 20 January, provides for investment of the English water authorities to rise by about 10 per cent. in volume terms over the next three years. This is in addition to the 40 per cent. volume increase since 1980-81. The amounts provided are slightly higher than shown in water authorities 1987 corporate plans which indicated significant progress would be made towards the implementation of COPA-II, and the EEC drinking water and bathing waters directive.

Rating Reform

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will list those organisations which will not be allowed to obtain copies of the community charge register; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: Under paragraph 14(3) of schedule 1 to the Local Government Finance Bill the Secretary of State may authorise the sale of an extract from the community charges register. In the light of representations that have been made, my right hon. Friend is considering whether and how that power should be exercised.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the community charge officer will be able to access sources of information other than those data held by a local authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 19 January to my hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson), at column *601*.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether his Department intends to hold a copy of all community charge registers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker), on 11 January at column *78*.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his answer of 13 January, *Official Report*, columns *278-9*, he will add to the note placed in the Library tables updating figure F5 of Cmnd. 9714 showing the relationship of rates and poll tax to net household income on the same equivalent net income basis.

Mr. Howard: I have today placed in the Library a table updating figure F5 of the Green Paper, "Paying for Local Government", (Cmnd. 9714). The table shows the relationship of rates and the community charge to household income by bands of equivalent net income. The basis for adjustment to equivalent income figures is provided in paragraph F14 of the Green Paper. Even on this basis the community charge is a lower percentage of net income, both before and after rebates, for the lowest income group.

Relationship of rates and community charges[1], both gross and net, to net household income in each band of equivalent net income (England, 1986-87 prices)

	Ranges of equivalent net household income (£ per week)											
	Under 50	*50-75*	*75-100*	*100-150*	*150-200*	*200-250*	*250-300*	*300-350*	*350-400*	*400-500*	*500+*	*All households*
Average local tax bill (£ per week)												
Gross rates	6·07	6·17	6·72	7·32	7·95	8·31	8·72	9·27	9·95	10·54	13·64	7·40
Gross community charges	6·00	6·36	7·27	8·03	8·12	8·01	7·59	7·36	7·09	7·42	7·00	7·41
Net rates	1·64	3·04	5·94	7·18	7·90	8·29	8·71	9·27	9·95	10·50	13·62	6·37
Net community charge	1·63	3·13	6·31	7·64	7·91	7·89	7·52	7·31	7·03	7·34	6·89	6·25
Average local tax bill (as a per cent. of net income in each equivalent income band)												
Gross rates	11·0	7·7	5·3	3·8	3·2	2·9	2·7	2·6	2·5	2·3	2·1	3·8
Gross community charge	10·8	8·0	5·7	4·2	3·3	2·8	2·3	2·1	1·8	1·6	1·1	3·8
Net rates	3·0	3·8	4·7	3·8	3·2	2·9	2·7	2·6	2·5	2·3	2·1	3·3
Net community charge	2·9	3·9	5·0	4·0	3·2	2·7	2·3	2·1	1·8	1·6	1·1	3·2

[1] Assuming full replacement of rates.

London Docklands Development Corporation

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment who is carrying out the duties and commitments previously carried out by John Mills, previous deputy chairman of the London Docklands Development Corporation.

Mr. Trippier: The chairman, board members and officers of the corporation.

Council House Sales

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many homes have been bought by council house tenants in each of the last five years in each district in Cheshire.

Mr. Waldegrave: Figures reported by each district are as follows:

Sales of dwellings to sitting tenants—Cheshire

District	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
Chester	226	244	135	147	160
Congleton	233	176	103	121	135
Crewe and Nantwich	289	130	104	121	122
Ellesmere Port and Nantwich	671	299	167	139	181
Halton	999	149	109	161	134
Macclesfield	189	220	255	210	222
Vale Royal	526	285	289	216	196
Warrington	394	263	179	167	292

Housing Waiting Lists

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many households were housed by *(a)* Vale Royal and *(b)* Chester from their waiting lists through allocation procedures in each of the last five years.

Mr. Waldegrave: Local authorities' annual housing investment programme returns include the numbers of dwellings let on secure tenancies, in the years ending 31 March, to households under normal waiting list allocation procedures. Figures for individual authorities appear in column E9C of the "HIP1 all items print" for 1983, 1986 and 1987 and in column D9C for 1984 and 1985; copies of all these documents are in the Library.

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many landlords were recorded on local authority housing waiting lists at a convenient date in each of the last five years in *(a)* Vale Royal and *(b)* Chester.

Mr. Waldegrave: This information is not available.

Homelessness

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the number of homeless families in *(a)* Vale Royal and *(b)* Chester; and what has been the figure in each of the last five years.

Mr. Waldegrave: The number of households for whom the authorities reported accepting responsibility to secure accommodation under the homelessness provisions of Housing Acts, in each year from 1981 to 1986, appear in a table which is available in the Library.

Vale Royal reported 152 acceptances in January to September 1987 and Chester reported 110 acceptances in the first half of the year.

Empty Property (Wandsworth)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the number of empty council properties in the London borough of Wandsworth on 31 March 1987.

Mr. Waldegrave: According to information provided by the council, 1,078.

Rate Support Grant (Cumbria)

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the value in money terms of the domestic resource equalisation component in the rate support grant settlement to the county of Cumbria for 1984-85.

Mr. Chope: The value in 1984-85 is estimated to have been £15·6 million.

Hampstead Heath

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many consultation papers have now been issued by the London residuary body in respect of Hampstead Heath; what was the date of issue and the consultation period in each case; and when he now expects a conclusion to be reached.

Mr. Chope: The London residuary body has issued three consultation documents on the future of Hampstead Heath. The first was issued in July 1986 and was intended to provide a starting point for discussion about the future of the heath. The consultation period ended on 30 September 1986. The second was issued on 30 January 1987 and sought comments by 30 April 1987 on the main options which had emerged. The most recent was issued on 11 January this year. It sets out further details of the current options and asks for comments by 19 February. As I stated in my answer on 20 January, at column 758, the LRB expects to make its recommendations to the Secretary of State thereafter with a view to a formal transfer of the heath as from 1 April 1989.

Leisure Facilities

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the originators of the 352 responses to the consultation paper "Competition in the Management of Local Authority Sport and Leisure Facilities"; and if he will place the responses in the Library.

Mr. Moynihan: The organisations and individuals who have responded to the consultation paper are as follows. We are confirming with them that they have no objection to the release of their replies and copies will be placed in the Library as soon as possible.

Local Authority Associations
Association of District Councils
London Boroughs Association
Association of London Authorities
Association of Metropolitan Authorities
Association of County Councils
Welsh Office of the Association of District Councils
Convention of Scottish Local Authorities

Local Authorities
North Devon District Council
City of Coventry
Wealden District Council
Chelmsford Borough Council
Congleton Borough Council
South Oxfordshire District Council
North Norfolk District Council
Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council
City and District of St. Albans
Worthing Borough Council
Epsom and Ewell Borough Council
Borough of Boston
Mid Suffolk District Council
Kincardine and Deeside District Council
Runnymede Borough Council
Borough of Hove
Ribble Valley Borough Council
Wycombe District Council
North Kesteven District Council
Midlothian District Council
Ettrick and Lauderdale District Council
Borough of Blackburn
City of Norwich
Mole Valley District Council
Horsham District Council
Taunton Deane Borough Council
Babergh District Council
South Ribble Borough Council
Reading Borough Council
Wansbeck District Council
Wansdyke Borough Council
Harrogate Borough Council
Chesterfield Borough Council
Suffolk Coastal District Council
West Dorset District Council
District Council of Uttlesford
Stafford Borough Council
Dacorum Borough Council
Amber Valley District Council
Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council
Inverness District Council
Borough of Blyth Valley
Cleveland County Council
Guildford Borough Council
London Borough of Bromley
Leicester City Council
Nottinghamshire County Council
Perth and Kinross District Council
Hertfordshire County Council
City of Portsmouth
City of Salford
Cambridge City Council
London Borough of Islington
Cannock Chase District Council

Wokingham District Council
City of Nottingham
Metropolitan Borough of Calderdale
Tameside Metropolitan Borough
London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham
Thanet District Council
Isle of Wight County Council
Great Grimsby Borough Council
Derby City Council
South Derbyshire District Council
London Borough of Southwark
Bassetlaw District Council
Bolton Metropolitan Borough
North Warwickshire Borough Council
London Borough of Merton
Borough of Thamesdown

Leicestershire County Council
Lancaster City Council
City of Bradford Metropolitan Council
New Forest District Council
Warrington Borough Council
North Tyneside Metropolitan Borough Council
South Norfolk District Council
Borough of Redditch
Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council
Winchester City Council
West Oxfordshire District Council
Borough of Macclesfield
Council of the City of Chester
Burnley Borough Council
Staffordshire County Council
Allerdale District Council
Borough of Torfaen
Newport Borough Council
Rhymney Valley District Council
Monmouth District Council
Islwyn Borough Council
London Borough of Wandsworth
Dunfermline District Council
London Borough of Waltham Forest
Borough of Tamworth
Halton Borough Council
Holderness Borough Council
City of Liverpool
Inverclyde District Council
Clydesdale District Council
Ross and Cromarty District Council
Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council
Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea
London Borough of Camden
South Derbyshire District Council
Chelmsford Borough Council
Borough of Blaenau Gwent
Cambridge County Council
City of Westminster
Tendring District Council

Nottinghamshire County Council
Epping Forest District Council
Norfolk County Council
City of York
Metropolitan Borough of Stockport
London Borough of Newham
West Lindsey District Council
Derbyshire County Council
Wealden District Council
Purbeck District Council
Town Council of Whitworth
London Borough of Richmond upon Thames
Wreking Council
London Borough of Hackney
Borough of Milton Keynes
South Hams District Council
City of Sheffield
Bracknall District Council
Chorley Borough Council
North Tyneside Metropolitan Borough Council
Waverley Borough Council
London Borough of Bexley
London Borough of Brent
Stirling District Council

City of Edinburgh District Council
Moray District Council
Newark and Sherwood District Council
Suffolk County Council
London Borough of Lewisham
Bearsden and Milngarie District Council
London Borough of Redbridge
Hertsmere Borough Council
Wiltshire County Council
Borough Council of Taff-Ely
Borough of Sunderland
Roxburgh District Council
Oxford City Council
Cheshire County Council
Bolton Metropolitan Borough

Gwent County Council
Kerrier District Council
South Staffordshire District Council
Borough of Crewe and Nantwich
London Borough of Lambeth
Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
Hull City Council

Sports National Bodies
Sports Council
Sports Council for Wales
Scottish Sports Council
Central Council for Physical Recreation
British Olympic Association
National Council for School Sports
British Council of Physical Education
Scottish Physical Education Association
Womens Sports Foundation

Governing Bodies of Individual Sports
Amateur Athletics Association
English Schools Swimming Association
English Mini Basket Ball Association
Scottish Basket Ball Association
National Greyhound Racing Club
National Small-Bore Rifle Association
Golf Foundation
National Federation of Sea Anglers
Speedway Control Board
British Crown Green Bowling Association
Surf Life Saving Association of Great Britain
Royal Yachting Association
Badminton Association of England
British Canoe Union
English Ski Council
British Schools Lawn Tennis Association
Welsh Curling Association
Welsh Baseball Union

Keep Fit Association of Wales
Welsh Yachting Association
Table Tennis Association of Wales
British Amateur Gymnastics Association
British Mountaineering Council
Squash Rackets Association
Welsh Bowling Association
British Sub-Aqua Club
Jockey Club
Football Association
English Basketball Association
English Volleyball Association
Board of Control for Cricket in Wales
Hockey Association
Scottish Amateur Swimming Association
English Pool Association
All England Netball Association
Lawn Tennis Association
Amateur Swimming Association
Scottish Volleyball Association
Welsh Shooting Council
Scottish Trampoline Association
Scottish Sub-Aqua Club
Scottish Sports Association
Welsh Women's Hockey Association

Other sport organisations
East Midlands Regional Council for Sports and Recreation
Yorkshire & Humberside Regional Council for Sport and Recreation
South East Council for Sport and Recreation
South Western Council for Sport and Recreation
North West Council for Sport and Recreation
Eastern Council for Sport and Recreation
West Midlands Council for Sport and Recreation
London Council for Sport and Recreation
Southern Council for Sport and Recreation
Northern Council for Sport and Recreation
Wrekin & District Sports Advisory Council
Worthing and District Sports Council
Hereford Sports Council
Weymouth and Portland Sports Advisory Council
Yorkshire Union of Golf Clubs
Bromley Sports Council
Bromley Ladies Athletic Club
Bromley Gymnastic Association
Leicestershire Playing Fields Association
Yorkshire and Humberside Orienteering Association
Chadderton Amateur Swimming Club
Haringey Sports Council
Bulwell Forest Golf Club
Northern Sunday League
Oldham Metropolitan Swimming and Water Polo Association
Northern Counties Women's Amateur Athletics Association
Incorporated West Herts Golf Club
Eskvale Hockey Club
Norwich Sports Council
Yorkshire Women's Amateur Athletics Association
Yorkshire Cricket Association
Thamesdown Sports Council
Hyde Seal Swimming Club
Crompton Classics Amateur Swimming Club
Salford Metropolitan Sports Council
Verlea Athletic Club
Lewisham Sports Council
Cumbria Amateur Athletic Association
Sport Hall Athletic Association
Cambrian Cave Council
Border City Swimming Club
Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews
Bingley Harriers and Athletics Club
North Farnborough Football Club
Barrowford Bowling Club
Christie Miller Gymnastics Club
Havant Athletic Club
Federation of Sport and Recreation Organisations (W Midlands)
Oswestry and District Sports Council
Conference of Sport and Recreation (South East Region)
Woking Athletic Club
Dudley Sports Council
Leicester Handball Club '73
Tynedale Sports Council
Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames Sports Council
Leeds City Sports Federation
Kendal Amateur Athletic Club
Football Trust
Sussex County Playing Fields Association
Hammersmith and Fulham Advisory Council
Sussex County Hockey Association
Kent Athletic Coaching Committee
Cleethorpes and District Athletics Club
Southern Counties Hockey Association
Walthamstow Athletic Club
19 proforma letters from members of the Satellite Swimming Club (Macclesfield)
22 proforma letters from users of Borough of Blackburn's sports facilities

Private sector companies
Fitness Company Limited
Arthur Young International
Crossland Leisure (Holdings) Limited
Public Sector Management
Bourne Leisure Group Limited
Association of Independent Businesses
Lifestyle Engineering
MTM Leisure
Plimley Estates Limited
Rank Leisure
Coopers and Lybrand Associates Limited
KPMG Peat Marwick McLintock
Price Waterhouse (Office of Local Government Services)

Professional bodies and trade unions
Association of Metropolitan District Engineers
Institution of Civil Engineers
Institute of Leisure and Amenity Management
Institute of Baths and Recreation Management
National and Local Government Officers Association
Society of Local Authority Chief Executives
Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy
Chief Leisure Officers Association
National Union of Public Employees
Incorporated Society of Valuers and Auctioneers
Association of Directors of Recreation, Leisure and Tourism
Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators
Trades Union Congress
Midlothian Trades Council
Scottish Association of Community Education Staff
Scottish Trades Union Congress
Institution of Environmental Health Officers

Other Organisations and Individuals
Audit Commission
District Audit Service
Colehill Residents' Association
Holt Park Middle School
Scottish Tourist Board
Scottish Community Education Council
Mr. P. Stickley
YMCA British Urban Group
Mr. W. J. Balshaw
Mr. N. A. Sumnersgill
Fareham Alliance Group
Penicuik and District Singers
Linlithegow Community Education Association
National Turfgrass Council
British Resorts Association
Edinburgh Federation of Community Centre Mangement Committees
Countryside Commission for Scotland
Coronary Prevention Group
Local Government Training Board
National Union of Ratepayers' Association
Lawrence Graham Solicitors
South Side Association
West Lothian Federation of Management Committees
Marchment Regional Council
Mr. A. Jack
Mr. A. James
Welsh Health Promotion Authority
Mr. H. Stovin
Mr.P. K. Lyers
Mr. D. J. Morris
Commission for New Towns
Dr. E. L. Lloyd
Bradford Metropolitan District Council (Conservative Group)
Councillor I.R. Kimm (London Borough of Southwark)
De Aston Sports Centre
Lothian Regional Council
Mr. H. E. Knott
Health Education Authority

Water Meters

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what research has been done to design water meters which are unaffected by the abrasive qualities of water; and how often it will be necessary to remove and replace such water meters.

Mr. Moynihan: There is no evidence to suggest that water meters of the type used in Britain are affected by the abrasive quality of water, although, as part of the proposed metering trials, the in-service performance of meters will be carefully monitored. Current research suggests that meters have a lifespan of 10 to 15 years.

Game Licences

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many game licences were issued in each category during each of the last five years; what revenue was in each category, respectively; and what were the administrative costs involved.

Mr. Moynihan: The following table shows the numbers of game licences issued and the related revenue:

Game licences issued in England and Wales

	Game (red)	*Game (green)*	*Game (blue)*	*Game occasional*	*Game dealer*	*Game keeper*	*Totals*
1982-83 Number issued	24,525	457	9,718	1,232	1,435	825	38,192
Revenue	£147,150	£1,828	£38,872	£2,464	£5,740	£3,300	£199,354
1983-84 Number issued	25,131	466	10,206	1,148	1,336	814	39,101
Revenue	£150,786	£1,864	£40,824	£2,296	£5,344	£3,256	£204,370
1984-85 Number issued	24,862	545	9,773	1,249	1,233	820	38,482
Revenue	£149,172	£2,180	£39,092	£2,498	£4,932	£3,280	£201,154
1985-86 Number issued	23,647	581	10,175	1,172	1,415	809	37,799
Revenue	£141,882	£2,324	£40,700	£2,344	£5,660	£3,236	£196,146
1986-87 Number issued	11,342	463	9,589	920	436	264	23,014
Revenue	£68,052	£1,852	£38,356	£1,840	£1,744	£1,056	£112,900

Administration costs for game licences are not available separately from those for dog licences. Total costs were:

	£K
1982-83	3,680
1983-84	3,816
1984-85	3,311
1985-86	3,469
1986-87	3,098

Maen Valley Caravan Park, Falmouth

Mr. Mudd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will arrange for the local inquiry into the called-in-planning application of the proposed chalet development at Maen Valley caravan park, Falmouth, to be convened at the earliest possible date.

Mr. Waldegrave: Yes. I shall write to my hon. Friend to let him know the date when it is fixed.

The Firs, Mawla, Redruth, Cornwall (Planning Appeal)

Mr. Mudd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he hopes to publish his decision on the recommendations of the inspector, Mr. J. J. Tackley, following the public inquiry on 16 to 19 June 1987 into a planning appeal involving The Firs, Mawla, Redruth, Cornwall; and why it has taken so long to arrive at a decision.

Mr. Waldegrave: A heavy work load in the Department's planning inspectorate has delayed the inspector's report.

The report was submitted to the Secretary of State earlier this month and a decision will be issued as quickly as possible.

National Rivers Authority

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment to what extent the proposed regional managers for the National Rivers Authority will be answerable to *(a)* the central National Rivers Authority and *(b)* to the non-executive consultative committees; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: The National Rivers Authority will inherit water authorities' statutory obligation to consider the advice of regional fisheries advisory committees, and will also have a statutory obligation to consider the advice of the new regional river advisory committees. Regional staff of the National Rivers Authority will be responsible to the authority itself.

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any intention of creating regional National Rivers Authority boards.

Mr. Moynihan: As the December policy statement made clear, the National Rivers Authority will have a strong regional management structure. No decisions have yet been taken about the internal management organisation of the National Rivers Authority.

East Anglia

Mr. Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the implications for his Department's *(a)* planning and *(b)* spending on measures to protect the environment of recent projections published by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys that East Anglia will have in the next 13 years the greatest proportionate population increase of both people moving in and of new births of any English region.

Mr. Waldegrave: Both the plans and expenditure of bodies concerned with the protection of the environment, are subject to regular procedures of review and revision.

I am sure that at the next occasion for review the bodies concerned, including where appropriate my Department, will want to take into account revised population projections from the OPCS wherever they are relevant to their proposals.

Expenditure

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the estimated outturn net and gross capital expenditure, in total, by region, for each year from 1981-82 to 1986-87, with the comparable planned figures for 1987-88 and 1988-89.

Mr. Ridley: Planned figures for estimated net outturn and gross capital expenditure by region for 1987-88 and 1988-89 are not available. Estimated outturn net and gross capital expenditure by region for the period 1981-82 to 1986-87 are not readily available on a basis comparable with the planning figures.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the planned, budgeted and outturn net and gross capital expenditure, in total, for each year from 1981-82 to 1988-89.

Mr. Ridley: The figures for gross and net capital expenditure on a public expenditure basis (that is DOE/LA1) are as follows. Data on budgets are not available.

Capital expenditure in DOE/LA1

	Gross capital expenditure		*Net capital expenditure*	
	Plan £ million	*Outturn* £ million	*Plan* £ million	*Outturn* £ million
1981-82	4,007	3,739	3,139	2,510
1982-83	4,541	4,654	3,385	2,607
1983-84	4,731	5,367	2,935	3,264
1984-85	4,438	5,617	2,453	3,520
1985-86	4,031	5,047	1,911	2,911
1986-87	4,304	4,955	2,369	2,386
1987-88	4,927	n/a	2,834	n/a
1988-89	5,173	n/a	2,551	n/a

n/a = not available.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will publish the capital allocation to each local authority, within each expenditure block and in total, in 1987-88 and 1988-89, showing the percentage change for each authority between the two years in their total allocation;

(2) if he will publish the capital allocation in total to the local authorities within each region, by expenditure block, in 1987-88 and 1988-89, showing the percentage change for each region.

Mr. Ridley: Tables 1 and 2 give capital allocations (issued) by expenditure block in 1987-88 and 1988-89 by region. Tables 3 and 4 showing the information by local authority will be placed in the Library of the House shortly.

Comparison of year-on-year total allocations is not meaningful because only £1·3 million (0·3 per cent.) urban programme allocations have been issued in 1987-88 and no urban programme allocations have been issued for 1988-89. A significant proportion of the total allocations excluding urban programme has also not been issued: £70 million (2·6 per cent.) and £250 million (9·5 per cent.) in 1987-88 and 1988-89 respectively.

Table 1
Capital allocations by service 1987-88

£'000

	Education *Cell 291 Column 1*	*Personal social services* *Cell 292 Column 2*	*Transport* *Cell 293 Column 3*	*Housing* *Cell 294 Column 4*	*Other services* *Cell 295 Column 5*	*Urban programmes* *Cell 296 Column 6*	*Total* *Cell 297 Column 7*
South-east	103,216	24,595	217,039	608,298	104,826	257	1,058,231
South-west	32,114	4,867	50,461	89,224	22,033	1,054	199,753
East Anglia	15,101	2,458	21,914	42,795	10,789	0	93,057
West Midlands	31,264	7,500	63,222	144,457	26,353	0	272,796
East Midlands	23,292	3,907	41,373	83,996	19,348	0	171,916
North-west	40,238	11,197	128,257	206,729	37,165	0	423,586
Yorkshire and Humberside	31,893	5,553	72,267	123,072	32,474	0	265,259
Northern region	19,882	3,296	38,484	80,612	17,353	0	159,627

Table 2
Capital allocations by service 1988-89

£'000

	Education *Cell 291 Column 1*	*Personal social services* *Cell 292 Column 2*	*Transport* *Cell 293 Column 3*	*Housing* *Cell 294 Column 4*	*Other services* *Cell 295 Column 5*	*Urban programme* *Cell 296 Column 6*	*Total* *Cell 297 Column 7*
South-east	139,325	29,778	236,213	522,117	80,878	0	1,008,311
South-west	32,285	5,769	59,135	71,820	20,015	0	189,024
East Anglia	15,349	2,018	16,853	33,593	9,127	0	76,940
West Midlands	32,541	8,745	58,660	119,320	22,283	0	241,549
East Midlands	27,744	4,944	41,567	61,302	18,262	0	153,819
North-west	52,301	10,250	90,023	147,605	27,825	0	328,004
Yorkshire and Humberside	43,426	5,921	51,284	102,490	22,414	0	225,535
Northern region	25,990	3,300	39,817	68,272	14,625	0	152,004

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will publish proposals for the reform of capital expenditure control.

Mr. Ridley: When I am ready.

Palace of Westminster

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he is contemplating any form of sprinkler protection against fire risks in the Palace of Westminster.

Mr. Chope: There is already a system of sprinkler protection in the car park beneath New Palace Yard. There are no proposals to install sprinklers elsewhere.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the average winter temperatures when the House is sitting of the Members' Tea Room, the Strangers' Cafeteria, the Members' Cafeteria, the Harcourt Room, the Members' Dining Room, the Strangers' Dining Room, the Library and the Committee rooms.

Mr. Chope: Temperatures are not recorded continuously, so information is not available in the form requested. When the House is sitting, readings are taken at 9 am, 11 am, 2 pm and 7 pm in all the rooms listed except the Committee rooms, where the 7 pm readings are omitted, and the Harcourt Room, where no readings are taken.

During the period 2 November 1987-15 January 1988 the minimum temperature recorded was 58°F and the maximum 75°F. Both readings were taken in Committee rooms.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the average cost of heating for the Palace of Westminster for each of the last five years.

Mr. Chope: Expenditure on fuel for the parliamentary estate has been:

	£
1982-83	769,169
1983-84	748,282
1984-85	821,951
1985-86	909,957
1986-87	901,051

It is not possible to identify separately the costs which relate specifically to the Palace of Westminster. Nor is it possible to exclude expenditure on gas for cooking, or electricity for lighting and appliances.

Greater London Council (Seaside and Country Homes)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total number of the Greater London Council's seaside and country homes likely to be disposed of to the North British Housing Association.

Mr. Chope: A total of 3,443.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if any of the former Greater London Council's seaside and country homes have been disposed of by the London residuary body.

Mr. Chope: A total of 24 have been sold under the right to buy.

London Residuary Body

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, further to his reply of 20 January, *Official Report*, column *758*, if he will detail for each of the services there listed, the potential successor body with which the London residuary body is negotiating and the current stage of the negotiation, together with the looked-for completion date for transfer.

Mr. Chope: The housing association mortgages remaining with the London residuary body are the subject of the London Government Reorganisation (Housing Association Mortgages) (No. 2) Order currently before the House, which provides for transfer by 30 March 1988.

I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 20 January at column 758, with regard to Hampstead Heath.

It is the responsibility of the London residuary body to negotiate successor bodies as appropriate for the other services listed in my reply of 20 January, at column 758.

Vicuna Wool

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has about the importation of vicuna wool into the United Kingdom during the past five years.

Mr. Moynihan: Except for one consignment of yarn in February 1983 from a European country to which it had been legitimately imported prior to 1975, no permits have been issued for the import of vicuna wool into the United Kingdom during the past five years.

Boundary Commission

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to how many submissions or other representations had been received at 31 December 1987 by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, in relation to each of the metropolitan districts in Merseyside, Greater Manchester, South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire in connection with the current Boundary Commission reviews which started on 1 September 1987.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 22 January 1988]:* None. It is for the commission to consider such representations and to report to my right hon. Friend when it considers it is in a position to do so. At this stage, the Department has no need of such information.

Faslane and Coulport

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many civilians residing in Dumbarton district are presently employed on the expansion of facilities at Faslane and Coulport.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 11 January 1988]:* I understand from the contractors and consultants concerned that about 800 of their employees on the Clyde submarine base development have addresses in Dumbarton district. In addition, about 100 civilian Government employees engaged full-time on the development have addresses in Dumbarton district. Comparable figures for the Strathclyde region as a whole are about 1,650 and 100 respectively.

Olympic Games, Seoul

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consideration he has given to the safety of United Kingdom competitors when they attend the summer Olympic Games in Seoul, in the light of the current civil unrest in South Korea; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: The Department and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office will continue to review the situation in the Republic of South Korea during the period between now and the Olympic games in Seoul. I understand that the number of incidents has declined sharply since the presidential elections on 16 December 1987.

Whitefronted Geese

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many whitefronted geese on Islay will be shot under the terms of the licences issued; how the killings will be monitored; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have been asked to reply.

It is not possible to state how many Greenland whitefronted geese will be shot under licence. As the primary purpose is to scare, few geese will be shot. The shooting will be monitored by my officials.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many Greenland whitefronted geese are currently on Islay; and what has been the population in each of the past five years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have been asked to reply.

On the basis of data collected by the Wildfowl Trust, the population of whitefronted geese on Islay over the five-year period from 1982-83 to 1986-87 has risen as follows:

	Numbers
1982-83	3,300
1983-84	3,900
1984-85	4,600
1985-86	5,300
1986-87	6,300

In the current year the population has been estimated as being in excess of 7,270.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Soil Erosion

Mr. John Garrett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he intends to discourage the growing of winter cereals on the grounds of increased risk of soil erosion; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Soil erosion caused by autumn rather than spring sowing of cereals, although significant in some localities, is not widespread and autumn sowing can be advantageous in other respects—for example, by helping to reduce the level of nitrate leaching from the soil. In these circumstances, I do not believe that any restrictions on the cultivations of winter cereals would be justified, although I would urge all cereals growers to follow ADAS advice designed to reduce soil erosion when preparing land for the sowing of winter cereals.

Dairy Farmers

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many dairy farmers in each county in England and Wales produce milk up to the quota; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The information requested by my hon. Friend is not immediately available, but I will reply to him as soon as possible.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many people are at present employed in agriculture in the United Kingdom; what were the corresponding figures for 1968 and 1978; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The figures requested are as shown and are taken from the results of the June census. Statistics on salaried managers, farmers, partners, and directors and their spouses were not collected in 1968 and therefore cannot be shown. The "All workers" category represents whole and part-time regular workers and seasonal or casual workers.

Number of Persons Employed on Agricultural Holdings in the United Kingdom

Thousands

	1968	*1978*	[1]*1987*
Salaried Managers	—	8·3	8·0
Farmers, Partners, Directors, (doing farm work)	—	303·3	287·1
Spouses of Farmers, Partners Directors, (doing farm work)	—	79·8	77·3
All Workers	450·1	365·6	298·1
Total Labour Force	—	757·0	670·5

[1] Provisional

Farm Incomes

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his latest assessment of the prospects for farm incomes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer *[pursuant to his reply 22 October 1987, c.886]:* A White Paper setting out the conclusions of the 1988 annual review of agriculture is being laid before Parliament today. The White Paper shows that gross output at current prices is expected to be much the same in 1987 as in 1986, partly reflecting the poor weather. Total inputs and the gross product of the industry are also very similar to the previous year. Aggregate farming income is estimated to have fallen by around 1½ per cent. to £1·404 million in 1987. There were marked variations over the United Kingdom as a whole with farming income forecast to have improved in 1987 in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The White Paper includes fuller information than in previous years on the general financial position of the industry, distinguishing between type, size and tenure of farm businesses.

Council of Agriculture Ministers

Mr. Aspinwall: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the outcome of the Council of Agriculture Ministers' meeting on 18 and 19 January in Brussels; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor *[pursuant to his reply, 21 January 1988, c. 835]:* A further meeting of the Council of Agriculture Ministers took place over the weekend of 23 and 24 January in Brussels at which I represented the United Kingdom. The meeting continued discussions of measures to stabilise expenditure on the common agricultural policy. This was in preparation for the European Council meeting on 11 and 12 February which will be discussing the Community's future financing arrangements. No decisions were reached and a report is now going to the Foreign Affairs Council.

The German presidency proposed that the European Council should be asked only to give its general approval in principle to the need for stabilisers for products other than cereals, oilseeds and proteins and that the details should be left to subsequent discussion after the European Council had made its decisions on the future financing. I made it clear that the German president's approach on this was not acceptable to the United Kingdom and that it would not lead to an agreement at the European Council. On this aspect we were supported by seven other member states.

Much of the discussion centred on a text by the German presidency covering changes in the stabilisers for cereals and oilseeds which had been before the last European Council in Copenhagen in December.

For oilseeds, the changes amount to increases in the guaranteed quantities and an alteration in the formula for price adjustment if production exceeds these quantities. For cereals, the proposed guaranteed quantity is higher and the stabiliser mechanism based on a different approach which is less automatic and certain than that discussed in Copenhagen. Greater emphasis is now being given within the mechanism to the cereals co-responsibility levy, including an increase and changes in the method of applying it. I firmly resisted, supported by my Dutch colleague, attempts to water down this part of the package.

The Council also continued its consideration of the Commission's proposal for an enlarged set-aside scheme for arable land on the basis of a text prepared by the presidency. Some progress was made and, although certain issues remain to be settled, I believe that it should now be possible to reach agreement on this aspect of the package. The most important point in this context is that the German presidency has now accepted, as we insisted, that a set-aside scheme should be complementary to, and not a substitute for, stabilisers.

SCOTLAND

Consultants

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of consultants by specialty in each health board of Scotland in 1979 and 1987, showing in each case how many consultants were on full-time National Health Service contracts in both years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information for 1979 in the form requested is not available except at disproportionate cost. The total number of consultants and the numbers with whole-time contracts by specialty and health board for 1980 and 1987 are shown in the tables.

Table 1: Total[1] Number of Consultants by Specialty and Health Board: 30 September 1980

	Argyll and Clyde	*Ayrshire and Arran*	*Borders*	*Dumfries and Galloway*	*Fife*	*Forth Valley*	*Grampian*	*Greater Glasgow*	*Highland*	*Lanark-shire*	*Lo[illegible]*	*Orkney*	*Shetland*	*Tayside*	*Western Isles*
All specialties	95	78	19	48	71	68	123	519	63	126	277	1	2	135	6
Cardiothoracic Surgery	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	4	—	2	3	—	—	—	—
ENT Surgery	3	3	—	1	1	3	4	19	2	3	6	—	—	4	—
General Surgery	10	6	3	3	5	6	9	36	8	14	20	1	2	10	2
Neurosurgery	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	4	—	—	3	—	—	2	—
Ophthalmology	4	3	—	3	3	2	5	18	3	3	5	—	—	5	—
Orthopaedic Surgery	5	4	2	3	4	4	6	26	3	11	11	—	—	9	—
Plastic Surgery	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	4	—	—	4	—	—	2	—
Surgical Paediatrics	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	6	—	—	4	—	—	—	—
Urology	—	2	—	—	1	2	2	13	—	2	3	—	—	2	—
Accident and Emergency	1	1	—	1	1	—	2	2	—	—	1	—	—	—	—
Anaesthetics	9	14	3	5	11	9	16	75	5	10	44	—	—	17	1
Communicable Diseases	1	1	—	—	1	—	—	3	—	1	3	—	—	2	—
Dermatology	2	1	—	1	—	1	3	10	1	1	3	—	—	3	—
General Medicine	10	7	3	4	6	7	13	45	6	16	23	—	—	11	1
Cardiology	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	4	—	—	3	—	—	1	—
Clinical Pharmacology and Therapeutics	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Endocrinology and Diabetes	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—
Gastroenterology	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	—
Homoeopathy	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Medical Oncology	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Nephrology	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	1	—	—	—	—
Rheumatology	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	1	—	—	2	—	—	—	—
Sexually Transmitted Diseases	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	4	1	—	4	—	—	1	—
Geriatric Medicine	4	2	1	2	3	2	4	17	2	4	8	—	—	5	1
Medical Paediatrics	4	3	1	2	3	2	3	15	2	4	10	—	—	5	—
Neurology	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	5	—	—	4	—	—	1	—
Radiotherapy and Oncology	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	13	1	—	5	—	—	3	—
Rehabilitation Medicine	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	3	—	—	2	—
Respiratory Medicine	—	3	—	—	2	—	2	16	2	1	6	—	—	2	—
Oral Surgery and Oral Medicine	—	1	—	1	—	—	2	5	1	1	2	—	—	2	—
Orthodontics and Paediatric Dentistry	1	1	—	1	1	1	2	3	2	1	2	—	—	1	—
Restorative Dentistry	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	1	—	—	—	—
Obstetrics and Gynaecology	9	5	—	3	6	7	5	31	4	11	16	—	—	7	1

	Argyll and Clyde	Ayrshire and Arran	Borders	Dumfries and Galloway	Fife	Forth Valley	Grampian	Greater Glasgow	Highland	Lanark-shire	Lothian	Orkney	Shetland	Tayside	Western Isles
Child and Adolescent Psychiatry	2	1	—	2	3	1	2	5	1	1	6	—	—	4	—
Forensic Psychiatry	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	5	—	—	1	—	—	1	—
Mental Handicap	—	1	—	—	2	3	4	1	1	—	—	—	—	1	—
Mental Illness	15	5	3	7	7	8	12	41	7	14	27	—	—	15	—
Psychotherapy	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Blood Transfusion	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Clinical Chemistry	1	1	—	1	—	1	—	6	1	1	1	—	—	2	—
Clinical Genetics	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Haematology	3	2	—	2	1	2	1	13	1	2	4	—	—	—	—
Immunology	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Microbiology	2	1	—	1	2	1	2	15	2	1	5	—	—	—	—
Nuclear Medicine	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—
Pathology	4	3	1	2	2	2	—	16	1	6	8	—	—	5	—
Radiodiagnosis	5	7	2	3	6	4	9	30	4	12	21	—	—	10	—
Virology	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	3	—	—	—	—	—
Occupational Health	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

[1] Includes whole-time, part-time and maximum part-time consultants.

Table 2: Whole-time Consultants by Specialty and Health Board: 30 September 1980

	Argyll and Clyde	Ayrshire and Arran	Borders	Dumfries and Galloway	Fife	Forth Valley	Grampian	Greater Glasgow	Highland	Lanark-shire	Lothian	Orkney	Shetland	Tayside	Western Isles
All Specialties	79	66	19	35	65	65	96	417	60	121	217	1	2	121	5
Cardiothoracic Surgery	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	4	—	2	3	—	—	—	—
ENT Surgery	3	2	—	—	1	1	2	13	2	3	3	—	—	3	—
General Surgery	6	4	3	2	5	6	7	22	7	13	15	1	2	8	1
Neurosurgery	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	4	—	—	2	—	—	2	—
Ophthalmology	3	1	—	—	—	2	1	10	2	2	—	—	—	2	—
Orthopaedic Surgery	4	3	2	2	3	4	4	19	3	10	5	—	—	9	—
Plastic Surgery	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	4	—	—	1	—
Surgical Paediatrics	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	5	—	—	3	—	—	—	—
Urology	—	1	—	—	1	2	1	7	—	2	1	—	—	2	—
Accident and Emergency	1	1	—	—	1	—	2	2	—	—	1	—	—	—	—
Anaesthetics	9	13	3	4	11	9	11	62	4	10	36	—	—	15	1
Communicable Diseases	1	1	—	—	1	—	—	3	—	1	3	—	—	2	—
Dermatology	2	1	—	—	—	1	2	5	1	1	2	—	—	3	—
General Medicine	8	6	3	4	6	7	11	36	6	14	13	—	—	9	1
Cardiology	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	4	—	—	2	—	—	1	—
Clinical Pharmacology and Therapeutics	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Endocrinology and Diabetes	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—
Gastroenterology	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	—
Homoeopathy	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Medical Oncology	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Nephrology	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	1	—	—	—	—
Rheumatology	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	1	—	—	2	—	—	—	—
Sexually Transmitted Diseases	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3	1	—	4	—	—	1	—
Geriatric Medicine	4	1	1	2	3	2	4	16	2	4	7	—	—	5	1
Medical Paediatrics	4	3	1	2	3	2	3	14	2	4	9	—	—	5	—
Neurology	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	4	—	—	3	—	—	1	—
Radiotherapy and Oncology	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	13	1	—	5	—	—	3	—
Rehabilitation Medicine	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	3	—	—	2	—
Respiratory Medicine	—	3	—	—	2	—	2	16	2	1	6	—	—	2	—
Oral Surgery and Oral Medicine	—	1	—	—	—	—	2	5	1	1	1	—	—	2	—
Orthodontics and Paediatric Dentistry	1	1	—	—	—	1	2	3	2	1	1	—	—	1	—
Restorative Dentistry	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	1	—	—	—	—
Obstetrics and Gynaecology	4	4	—	1	6	6	2	18	4	11	11	—	—	5	1
Child and Adolescent Psychiatry	—	1	—	2	3	1	2	5	1	1	5	—	—	4	—
Forensic Psychiatry	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	5	—	—	1	—	—	1	—
Mental Handicap	—	1	—	—	2	3	4	1	1	—	—	—	—	1	—
Mental Illness	14	5	3	7	6	8	12	36	7	14	25	—	—	15	—
Psychotherapy	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Blood Transfusion	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Clinical Chemistry	1	1	—	1	—	1	—	5	1	1	1	—	—	2	—
Clinical Genetics	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Haematology	3	2	—	2	1	2	1	13	1	2	2	—	—	—	—
Immunology	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Microbiology	2	1	—	1	2	1	2	15	2	1	5	—	—	—	—
Nuclear Medicine	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—
Pathology	4	3	1	2	2	2	—	16	1	6	8	—	—	5	—
Radiodiagnosis	5	6	2	3	6	4	7	24	4	12	19	—	—	9	—
Virology	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	3	—	—	—	—	—
Occupational Health	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Table 3: Total[1] Number of Consultants by Specialty and Health Board: 30 September 1987

	Argyll and Clyde	Ayrshire and Arran	Borders	Dumfries and Galloway	Fife	Forth Valley	Grampian	Greater Glasgow	Highland	Lanark-shire	Lothian	Orkney	Shetland	Tayside	Western Isles
All Specialties	116	96	27	53	82	81	156	489	76	160	292	1	2	159	6
Cardiothoracic Surgery	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	5	—	2	3	—	—	—	—
ENT Surgery	3	3	—	2	2	3	4	12	2	5	6	—	—	5	—
General Surgery	11	7	3	5	6	6	10	31	9	13	19	1	2	10	2
Neurosurgery	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	4	—	—	2	—	—	2	—
Ophthalmology	6	3	—	1	2	4	5	14	3	4	5	—	—	5	—

	Argyll and Clyde	Ayrshire and Arran	Borders	Dumfries and Galloway	Fife	Forth Valley	Grampian	Greater Glasgow	Highland	Lanark-shire	Lothian	Orkney	Shetland	Tayside	Western Isles
Orthopaedic Surgery	6	6	2	3	4	4	9	22	3	12	11	—	—	11	—
Plastic Surgery	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	5	—	—	3	—	—	2	—
Surgical Paediatrics	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	5	—	—	3	—	—	—	—
Urology	—	2	—	—	2	3	3	11	—	3	3	—	—	2	—
Accident and Emergency	2	1	—	—	1	—	2	3	—	2	2	—	—	—	—
Anaesthetics	12	17	4	7	12	10	20	76	9	26	47	—	—	22	1
Communicable Diseases	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	3	—	1	3	—	—	3	—
Dermatology	3	2	—	2	1	1	3	9	2	2	4	—	—	4	—
General Medicine	14	12	3	4	6	8	13	31	6	17	21	—	—	8	1
Cardiology	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	7	—	—	4	—	—	1	—
Clinical Pharmacology and Therapeutics	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Endocrinology and Diabetes	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	1	—	—	1	—
Gastroenterology	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	—
Homoeopathy	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Medical Oncology	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	1	—	—	3	—	—	—	—
Nephrology	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	4	—	—	2	—	—	1	—
Rheumatology	—	—	—	—	—	—	3	2	—	1	2	—	—	1	—
Sexually Transmitted Diseases	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	4	1	—	4	—	—	1	—
Geriatric Medicine	5	4	2	2	4	4	7	19	2	5	10	—	—	7	—
Medical Paediatrics	4	3	2	2	3	3	6	18	2	4	13	—	—	6	—
Neurology	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	6	—	—	5	—	—	1	—
Radiotherapy and Oncology	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	9	1	—	4	—	—	3	—
Rehabilitation Medicine	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	3	—	—	1	—
Respiratory Medicine	—	—	—	—	2	—	3	11	2	—	5	—	—	2	—
Oral Surgery and Oral Medicine	—	1	—	1	—	—	2	6	1	1	2	—	—	2	—
Orthodontics and Paediatric Dentistry	2	1	1	1	1	2	2	3	2	2	3	—	—	1	—
Restorative Dentistry	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3	—	—	—	—	—	1	—
Obstetrics and Gynaecology	9	6	1	3	6	6	8	27	3	11	15	—	—	8	1
Child and Adolescent Psychiatry	3	1	1	2	2	2	4	4	1	3	6	—	—	4	—
Forensic Psychiatry	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	4	—	—	3	—	—	—	—
Mental Handicap	—	1	—	1	2	2	4	—	1	—	—	—	—	1	—
Mental Illness	19	7	4	7	11	10	12	45	8	15	27	—	—	17	1
Psychotherapy	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	4	—	—	2	—	—	1	—
Blood Transfusion	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Clinical Chemistry	2	1	—	1	—	1	—	6	1	1	2	—	—	2	—
Clinical Genetics	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	1	—
Haematology	3	3	1	3	2	2	1	13	2	5	6	—	—	2	—
Immunology	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Microbiology	2	2	1	1	1	1	2	11	2	2	5	—	—	2	—
Nuclear Medicine	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—
Pathology	3	4	—	2	3	2	4	15	2	7	8	—	—	4	—
Radiodiagnosis	7	8	2	3	7	5	10	29	5	16	21	—	—	13	—
Virology	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Occupational Health	—	1	—	—	—	1	1	1	3	—	1	—	—	1	—

[1] Includes whole-time, part-time and maximum part-time consultants.

Table 4: Whole-time Consultants by Specialty and Health Board: 30 September 1987

	Argyll and Clyde	Ayrshire and Arran	Borders	Dumfries and Galloway	Fife	Forth Valley	Grampian	Greater Glasgow	Highland	Lanark-shire	Lothian	Orkney	Shetland	Tayside	Western Isles
All Specialties	86	77	23	43	77	71	127	396	71	144	220	1	2	147	5
Cardiothoracic Surgery	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	5	—	2	2	—	—	—	—
ENT Surgery	1	—	—	2	2	1	1	6	2	4	2	—	—	4	—
General Surgery	5	5	3	4	5	4	8	23	9	10	11	1	2	8	1
Neurosurgery	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	4	—	—	1	—	—	2	—
Ophthalmology	2	2	—	1	1	4	3	10	3	4	—	—	—	3	—
Orthopaedic Surgery	5	3	2	2	4	4	5	13	3	11	4	—	—	10	—
Plastic Surgery	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	—	—	2	—	—	1	—
Surgical Paediatrics	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	4	—	—	3	—	—	—	—
Urology	—	—	—	—	2	2	2	4	—	2	1	—	—	1	—
Accident and Emergency	2	1	—	—	1	—	2	3	—	2	2	—	—	—	—
Anaesthetics	10	14	4	5	12	9	12	63	8	23	36	—	—	21	1
Communicable Diseases	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	3	—	1	3	—	—	3	—
Dermatology	—	2	—	—	—	1	2	5	2	1	2	—	—	4	—
General Medicine	10	11	3	4	6	7	12	25	6	15	17	—	—	8	1
Cardiology	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	7	—	—	4	—	—	1	—
Clinical Pharmacology and Therapeutics	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Endocrinology and Diabetes	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	1	—	—	1	—
Gastroenterology	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	—
Homoeopathy	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Medical Oncology	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	1	—	—	3	—	—	—	—
Nephrology	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	4	—	—	2	—	—	—	—
Rheumatology	—	—	—	—	—	—	3	2	—	1	1	—	—	1	—
Sexually Transmitted Diseases	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	3	1	—	4	—	—	1	—
Geriatric Medicine	5	4	2	2	4	4	7	18	2	5	8	—	—	7	—
Medical Paediatrics	4	3	2	2	3	3	6	16	2	4	12	—	—	6	—
Neurology	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	5	—	—	3	—	—	1	—
Radiotherapy and Oncology	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	9	1	—	4	—	—	3	—
Rehabilitation Medicine	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	3	—	—	1	—
Respiratory Medicine	—	—	—	—	2	—	3	11	2	—	3	—	—	2	—
Oral Surgery and Oral Medicine	—	1	—	—	—	—	2	5	1	1	1	—	—	2	—
Orthodontics and Paediatric Dentistry	2	1	—	—	—	1	2	3	2	2	2	—	—	1	—
Restorative Dentistry	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3	—	—	—	—	—	1	—

	Argyll and Clyde	Ayrshire and Arran	Borders	Dumfries and Galloway	Fife	Forth Valley	Grampian	Greater Glasgow	Highland	Lanark-shire	Lothian	Orkney	Shetland	Tayside	Western Isles
Obstetrics and Gynaecology	5	4	1	1	5	4	6	19	5	11	9	—	—	6	1
Child and Adolescent Psychiatry	2	1	—	2	2	2	3	4	1	3	5	—	—	4	—
Forensic Psychiatry	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	4	—	—	2	—	—	—	—
Mental Handicap	—	1	—	1	2	2	4	—	1	—	—	—	—	1	—
Mental Illness	17	6	4	7	11	10	12	38	8	15	24	—	—	17	1
Psychotherapy	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	3	—	—	2	—	—	1	—
Blood Transfusion	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Clinical Chemistry	2	1	—	1	—	1	—	4	1	1	2	—	—	2	—
Clinical Genetics	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	1	—
Haematology	3	3	1	3	2	2	1	13	1	5	5	—	—	2	—
Immunology	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Microbiology	2	2	1	1	1	1	2	11	2	2	5	—	—	2	—
Nuclear Medicine	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—
Pathology	3	4	—	2	3	2	4	15	2	6	8	—	—	4	—
Radiodiagnosis	6	7	2	3	7	5	8	23	5	13	17	—	—	12	—
Virology	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Occupational Health	—	1	—	—	—	1	1	1	—	—	1	—	—	1	—

Nurse Training

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much has been spent on nurse training in Scotland in each of the last 10 years; and how much has been spent by each of the health boards on nurse training in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is as follows:

	Annual expenditure	
	Colleges of nursing and midwifery etc.	*Health boards*
Year	*£ million*	*£ million*
1977-78	4·4	—
1978-79	4·8	—
1979-80	5·8	—
1980-81	7·7	—
1981-82	8·4	—
1982-83	9·7	—
1983-84	10·6	36·5
1984-85	11·5	39·2
1985-86	12·7	38·1
1986-87	15·7	38·3

The first column includes the salaries, national insurance and superannuation costs of nurse teachers and support staff at colleges of nursing and midwifery, including midwifery teachers in 1986-87 and the costs of the National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting for Scotland and its predecessors. The second column includes learners' national insurance, superannuation and salary costs, but makes no allowance for the service contribution made by learners during training, which varies according to the course and the particular college of nursing. Figures for expenditure on learners' remuneration for years prior to 1983-84 are not directly available, and figures for individual health boards are not held centrally.

Road Costs

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will show annual outturn expenditure 1980-81 to 1986-87, estimated expenditure for 1987-88 and forecast expenditure for 1988-89 and 1990-91, in real terms at current prices on *(a)* trunk road construction, *(b)* trunk road maintenance, *(c)* local road construction and *(d)* local road maintenance.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is set out in the table.

	£ million at 1987-88 prices[1]			
	Trunk road		*Local road*	
Financial year	*Construction*	*Maintenance*[2]	*Construction*	*Maintenance*
1980-81	72·7	17·8	108·1	168·4
1981-82	74·1	30·6	126·5	166·2
1982-83	85·3	28·5	130·6	167·7
1983-84	74·2	34·7	128·0	170·2
1984-85	86·4	29·9	122·9	163·2
1985-86	87·4	30·9	133·5	155·8
1986-87	81·2	36·1	128·6	156·1
1987-88[3]	89·5	39·2	[4]128·5	[5]165·5
1988-89[6]	[7]	[7]	[7]	[7]
1990-91[6]	[7]	[7]	[7]	[7]

[1] Figures for trunk roads revalued to constant 1987-88 prices using the roads output price index which is specifically designed for trunk road construction work. Figures for local roads have been revalued using GDP deflators.
[2] Includes structural, routine and winter maintenance.
[3] Estimate.
[4] Baseline provision.
[5] Local authority budget estimates of expenditure.
[6] Forecast.
[7] To be announced later this year.

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will show 1986-87 outturn expenditure, 1987-88 estimated expenditure and 1988-89 planned expenditure on (i) trunk roads, broken down into *(a)* new construction and improvement, *(b)* structural maintenance, and *(c)* routine maintenance, and (ii) local authority roads broken down into *(a)* new construction and improvements, and *(b)* maintenance, (iii) public transport administration and (iv) local authority car parks, broken down into *(a)* capital and *(b)* current (net), and *(c)* road safety in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is set out in the table:

	£ million cash		
	1986-87 Outturn[1]	*1987-88 Estimated*	*1988-89 Planned*[2]
1. Motorways and trunk roads			
(a) New construction and improvement	79·2	89·5	[4]
(b) Structural maintenance	15·9	20·2	[4]
(c) Routine and winter maintenance	19·3	19·0	[4]
2. Local authority roads			
(a) New construction and improvement	128·6	133·9	[4]
(b) Maintenance	156·1	172·5	[4]
3. Public transport administration[3]	25·1	27·8	[4]
4. Local authority car parks			
(a) Capital	0·8	1·9	[4]
(b) Current (net)	—	—	[4]
5. Road safety in Scotland[3]	1·5	1·6	[4]

[1] Local authority outturn figures are provisional only.
[2] Local authority expenditure on administration of roads and transport services.
[3] Excludes expenditure by the Department of Transport on national road safety publicity. Expenditure on new construction and improvements and on maintenance also contributes to road safety, as do various specialist staff costs.
[4] To be announced later this year.

Vehicle Mileage

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the percentage change in vehicle mileage on roads in Scotland since 1982.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: There has been a 15 per cent. increase in vehicle mileage on roads in Scotland between 1982 and 1986, the latest year for which figures are available. The figure relates to motorways, all-purpose trunk roads and principal local roads. Statistics are not held centrally for other classes of road.

Electricity Prices

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from foundries and other intensive energy users in Scotland about the flexibility of electricity prices; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: I have received one such representation, to which a response will be made shortly. Electricity tariffs for all categories of consumers, including intensive energy users, are a matter for the electricity boards.

Renal Failure

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide the figures, for the last five available years in Scotland, of patients diagnosed as suffering from end-stage renal failure for the first time; and if he will give for the same years the numbers dying from end-stage renal failure, or complications arising from such failure.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information on the number of new patients diagnosed as suffering from end-stage renal failure is not centrally available. However, all such patients who are referred to consultants, and would in their clinical judgment benefit from renal dialysis, receive the treatment. The number of new patients being accepted for dialysis in the last five years is as follows:

	Number
1982	159
1983	175
1984	213
1985	225
1986	245

Specific information on the number of deaths arising from end-stage renal failure or complications from such failure is not centrally available.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide the figures for the last five available years of the average numbers of patients receiving kidney dialysis treatment in Scotland, showing the average or median number of months they have been on such treatment.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The number of patients receiving kidney dialysis treatment in all its forms in Scotland is as shown. Information on the length of time they have been receiving treatment is not centrally available.

	Number
1982	521
1983	579
1984	631
1985	615
1986	658

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide, for the last five available years,

the figures of successful kidney transplants performed in Scottish hospitals, showing how many such operations were being conducted on patients for a second or subsequent time.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The number of kidney transplant operations carried out in Scotland is as shown. Information on how many of these operations were successful, and how many involved second or subsequent grafts, is not available.

Year	*Number*
1983	132
1984	149
1985	126
1986	111
[1]1987	102

[1]Provisional.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the cost, in terms of equipment resources, staff, drugs and supplies of kidney dialysis treatment in Scotland *(a)* in total, *(b)* per patient month or year and *(c)* per patient over the course of treatment.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information sought on the cost of treatment by kidney transplant is not centrally available.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the current cost, in terms of equipment, resources, staff, drugs and supplies, of kidney transplants in Scotland *(a)* in total per year, *(b)* per transplant carried out and *(c)* per patient per annum after transplantation.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The cost of treating patients by renal dialysis is provisionally estimated to be for the current year as shown:

	Cost per patient per year £	*Total cost per year £*
Hospital dialysis	17,900	4,545,900
Home dialysis	9,100	1,635,100
Continuous ambulatory peritoneal dialysis	7,900	2,346,000
		8,545,000

The length of time on treatment varies between patients, and no information is centrally available about cost per patient over the course of treatment.

Intensive Care Units

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide the figures, for the last five available years, of *(a)* the number of intensive care units which exist or have existed in Scottish hospitals, *(b)* the number of patients who have been dealt with by the units concerned in these years, *(c)* the numbers of patients who have died in these units in these years and *(d)* the number of kidneys which have been made available for transplant because of these deaths.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information on the number of intensive care units in Scotland, the number of patients dealt with by these units and the number of patients who have died in these units is not centrally available in the form sought.

Organ Donation

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will authorise the compilation of a survey of medical staff in Scotland concerning their attitudes to organ donation for transplant, with particular reference to those concerned with dying patients and their attitudes to asking relatives about potential organ donation.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No.

Dental Surgeons

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the number of general dental surgeons in practice in Scotland in each of the last 10 years, showing a breakdown of these numbers per 100,000 population in each of Scotland's health board areas.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is set out in the table. The numbers of general dental practitioners (as they are now known) are the numbers in contract with their health board as at 30 September each year. The numbers of dentists per 100,000 population are based on population figures at 30 June each year except for 1987 where the 1986 population figure is used.

Number of General Dental Practitioners
(Number Per 100,000 Population)

Health Board	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
Argyll and Clyde	89	91	97	102	102	110	114	113	127	130
	(19)	(20)	(21)	(22)	(22)	(24)	(25)	(25)	(28)	(29)
Ayreshire and Arran	95	95	98	104	107	113	119	112	116	122
	(25)	(25)	(26)	(28)	(28)	(30)	(32)	(30)	(31)	(32)
Borders	21	20	23	23	23	25	27	32	34	33
	(21)	(20)	(23)	(23)	(23)	(25)	(27)	(31)	(33)	(32)
Dumfries and Galloway	28	29	31	30	30	33	31	33	36	35
	(20)	(20)	(22)	(21)	(21)	(23)	(21)	(22)	(24)	(24)
Fife	74	76	76	78	79	84	84	86	90	94
	(22)	(22)	(22)	(23)	(23)	(24)	(24)	(25)	(26)	(27)
Forth Valley	57	58	61	65	67	63	67	65	68	71
	(21)	(21)	(22)	(24)	(24)	(23)	(25)	(24)	(24)	(26)
Grampian	97	91	97	104	108	110	114	113	119	130
	(21)	(19)	(21)	(22)	(22)	(22)	(23)	(23)	(24)	(26)
Greater Glasgow	236	244	246	250	268	263	273	264	287	286
	(23)	(24)	(24)	(25)	(27)	(27)	(28)	(27)	(30)	(30)
Highland	43	45	49	50	54	52	56	52	53	58

Health Board	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987
	(23)	(24)	(26)	(26)	(28)	(26)	(28)	(26)	(26)	(29)
Lanarkshire	112	112	116	132	129	134	136	129	138	143
	(20)	(20)	(20)	(23)	(22)	(23)	(24)	(23)	(24)	(25)
Lothian	223	226	232	234	238	243	250	251	258	264
	(30)	(30)	(31)	(31)	(32)	(33)	(34)	(34)	(35)	(36)
Orkney	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3
	[1](16)	(16)	(17)	(11)	(16)	(16)	(15)	(15)	(16)	(16)
Shetland	3	4	3	3	4	6	8	4	4	5
	[1](14)	(18)	(13)	(12)	(16)	(26)	(34)	(17)	(17)	(21)
Tayside	101	106	113	120	121	119	120	121	124	129
	(25)	(26)	(28)	(30)	(30)	(30)	(30)	(31)	(32)	(33)
Western Isles	3	4	5	5	7	7	7	8	10	12
	[1](10)	(13)	(17)	(16)	(22)	(22)	(22)	(25)	(32)	(38)
Scotland	1185	1204	1250	1302	1340	1365	1409	1386	1467	1515
	(23)	(23)	(24)	(25)	(26)	(26)	(27)	(27)	(29)	(30)

[1] Notional figures.

Pharmacists

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the total number of pharmacists in Scotland in each of the past 10 years, giving a breakdown per 100,000 population in each of Scotland's health board areas.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is not available centrally in the form requested. The table sets out the number of registered pharmacists in Scotland for each of the past 10 years. "Scottish Health Statistics", copies of which are in the Library, contain from 1979 onwards by health board the information requested in respect of hospital pharmacists and from 1981 onwards the number of pharmacies contracted to provide primary care pharmaceutical services.

	Number of registered pharmacists
1977	2,800
1978	2,832
1979	2,842
1980	2,822
1981	2,929
1982	2,960
1983	3,000
1984	3,048
1985	3,070
1986	3,092

Alcoholism

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if the definition of alcoholism for the purposes of statistics on the treatment of alcoholism among prisoners changed between 1985 and 1986.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information on numbers of inmates in Scottish penal establishments treated for alcoholism in 1986 (as reported in the annual "Prisons in Scotland" report for 1986) was collected in the same way and on the same basis as figures for 1985 and earlier years.

The substantial fall in the number of male inmates treated for alcoholism in 1986 continued a similar downward trend evident in earlier years as follows:

Male inmates treated for alcoholism in Scottish penal establishments

Year	*Inmates*
1983	1,730
1984	1,560
1985	1,165
1986	649

Education Expenditure

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the average expenditure per pupil in (i) primary and (ii) secondary schools in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* Belgium, *(c)* the Federal Republic of Germany, *(d)* France, *(e)* Holland, *(f)* Denmark and *(g)* Spain.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Comparable figures are not readily available.

Amusement Arcades

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will take urgent steps to stop the proliferation of amusement arcades in urban centres in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave on 9 December 1987, at column *420*, to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall).

School Management

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many school boards would be created under his proposals contained in the consultative paper "School Management and the Role of Parents" in *(a)* the Tayside regional council area and *(b)* the Dundee district authority area.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Consultation on the proposals in "School Management and the Role of Parents" showed that there was a widespread wish to have a separate school board for each primary, secondary and special school in Scotland. In the conclusions we recently announced, we have agreed to meet that wish. There are 251 schools in the Tayside regional council area of which 73 are in the Dundee district; each would have its own board.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many representatives from Tayside regional

council would be required to take part in the meetings of the school boards proposed by his consultative paper "School Management and the Role of Parents".

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No education authority representatives would be required to attend school board meetings. In the light of comments made by authorities in response to the consultative paper, the Government have concluded that education authorities should have a right, but not a duty, to be represented at school board meetings by a non-voting assessor.

Waiting Lists

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of patients awaiting *(a)* urgent and *(b)* non-urgent operations in (i) the Tayside health board area and (ii) the Dundee district authority area, on the latest available figures; and if he will give the corresponding figures for the previous six and 12 months, respectively.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Emergency cases are dealt with immediately and information is not available for local authority areas. The numbers of people on waiting lists for in-patient hospital treatment in Tayside health board were as follows:

	Number
31 March 1986	6,658
30 September 1986	6,214
31 March 1987	5,653

Cervical Cancer

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how the existing laboratories for the testing of cervical cancer are distributed in the Tayside health board area.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There are two such laboratories, one in Dundee royal infirmary and the other in Perth royal infirmary.

Crime Prevention

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much the Tayside police force spent on crime prevention projects in cash terms and real terms at 1986-87 prices for each year since 1979; how much of its total budget this represents; and how much it is proposed to spend next year.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information about expenditure by individual police forces on local crime prevention projects is not held centrally.

Housing

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the most recent figures available to him on the number of households registered on the housing waiting list in the Dundee district authority area who have remained on the waiting list for *(a)* less than one year, *(b)* between one and two years, *(c)* between two and three years, *(d)* between three and four years, *(e)* between four and five years and *(f)* over five years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is not available centrally.

Rented Houses

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate how many privately owned dwellings in the Dundee district authority area suitable for letting are not available for letting.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The available information on unoccupied private sector dwellings was published in "Scottish Development Department Statistical Bulletin HSIU No. 1. Unoccupied Dwellings: a survey following the 1981 census", a copy of which is available in the House Library.

Industrial Projects

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate how many factories and industrial sites in *(a)* the Tayside region and *(b)* the Dundee area are standing empty or unused.

Mr. Lang: For the latest information readily available centrally on vacant factories I refer the hon. Member to my answer given to the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) on 17 November at column *541*.

Provisional figures for Tayside region at 31 March 1987 show 64 sites allocated for industry of which 26 were in Dundee city district.

Islay (Geese)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the alleged damage to Islay caused by Greenland whitefronted geese.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The number of Greenland whitefronted geese wintering on Islay has more than doubled in recent years and large flocks of up to 500 birds are causing serious damage to grassland on certain farms outwith the sanctuary areas.

Labour Statistics

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list for each local authority ward in the Dundee district council area the number unemployed at the latest available date; and what are the corresponding figures for each year since 1979.

Mr. Lang: Unemployment statistics on a local authority ward basis are available only from 1983. The following table shows the number of unemployed claimants in each local authority ward in city of Dundee district for December 1987 (the latest date for which information is available) and the corresponding figures in 1983, 1984, 1985 and 1986.

City of Dundee District

Ward	*Unemployed claimants (December)* 1983	1984	1985	1986	1987
Ancrum	169	211	207	181	171
Ardler	458	443	457	428	376
Balgillo	101	139	114	130	107
Baxter Park	270	272	279	301	261
Blackshade	418	390	425	389	355
Broughty Ferry	172	186	184	164	167
Caird	578	538	542	487	430
Central	315	395	346	378	366
Clepington	147	147	142	145	137
Coldside	325	371	361	342	325
Craigie Bank	165	217	274	240	265
Craigie Burns	136	152	155	145	127
Douglas	460	425	415	390	356
Downfield	269	256	236	231	201
Drumgeith	566	538	568	536	522
Dudhope	396	462	537	660	405
Eastern	146	133	156	147	140
Fairmuir	228	190	195	197	185
Fintry North	602	600	565	480	484
Fintry South	558	547	487	430	414
Gillburn	423	419	416	428	350
Gourdie	361	356	317	298	292
Gowrie	149	154	148	172	130
Hilltown	421	410	391	372	334
Law	221	257	255	218	209
Lochee East	475	425	424	397	380
Lochee West	386	344	347	309	281
Logie	183	219	204	185	186
Longhaugh	765	827	825	799	662
Maryfield	264	281	291	326	290
Menzieshill	285	311	285	243	216
Midmill	831	720	749	713	676
Monifieth East	145	164	166	165	151
Monifieth West	122	133	118	130	116
Pitalpin	396	424	345	317	283
Riverside	177	199	216	206	183
Rockwell	151	186	171	154	159
St. Marys	432	366	378	333	303
St. Ninians	304	279	257	246	226
Sidlaw	215	226	239	225	202
Trottick	711	703	639	565	528
Wellgate	323	451	541	579	411
West Ferry	266	261	266	216	219
Whitfield	919	977	940	806	677
Total	15,404	15,704	15,573	14,803	13,258

Due to changes in the compilation of the statistics during the intervening periods these figures are not directly comparable.

This information is available in the Library.

Forestry

Sir Hector Monro: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consideration he has given to the report "Birds, Bogs and Forestry: the Peatlands of Caithness and Sutherland", published by the Nature Conservancy Council; whether he proposes to approve further forestry planting in Caithness and Sutherland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: I have today written to the chairman of the Nature Conservancy Council in the following terms:

"As you know, the Government have been considering carefully your Council's report 'Birds, Bogs and Forestry: the Peatlands of Caithness and Sunderland' and your representations about the relationship between afforestation and nature conservation in the area. You will be aware that helpful discussions have taken place between Departmental and NCC officials to clarify certain aspects of the report. Officials have also had the benefit of seeing some of the detailed scientific material which will in due course be incorporated in your report 'The Flow Country'.

It would clearly not be right to attempt to reach final conclusions on this matter at the present time. First, 'The Flow Country' has not yet been finalised. Second, the Highland Regional Council have, as you will be aware, set up a working party to propose a land use strategy for the area. The working party is currently assessing evidence and is likely to report next month. We have, however, sought to form an interim view on your findings in order to consider their implications for forestry in the short term. In this, we have been helped by the receipt of interim responses to your report from the Highland Regional Council, the Highlands and Islands Development Board, the Countryside Commission for Scotland and the Crofters Commission.

We acknowledge the important service which your Council have rendered by highlighting the exceptional nature conservation interest occurring in Caithness and Sutherland. We agree that much of the two counties is of national and international importance for conservation. We do not think, however, that the whole of the area identified in 'Birds, Bogs and Forestry' can be considered to be of uniformly high importance. Indeed, the detailed evidence contained in your own work suggests that there are varying degrees of conservation significance, and we believe therefore that it is possible to identify a selection of key areas which should be safeguarded, amounting in total to a very substantial are a of peatland. These would require a substantial expansion of the SSSI network and, taken together with the sizeable area within existing SSSIs, might amount to around half of the total unafforested peatland area of some 350,000 hectares. We envisage that these areas would, in particular, include the most important bog systems and bird habitats, especially on the wet flows.

It seems to us that some new planting needs to take place in Caithness and Sutherland both in order to contribute to the overall national forestry planting programme and to maintain local employment in forestry and maximise the opportunities for future investment in wood-processing industry. We consider, moreover, that the evidence points to the view that Caithness and Sutherland can accommodate some further afforestation without affecting the conservation significance of the area as a whole.

There is, of course, no question of any forestry approval being given or grant offered without full regard to the conservation case and, as you know, the consultation arrangements which currently apply throughout Caithness and Sutherland provide for disputed cases to be referred, if necessary, to me. I have seven such cases before me at the moment as a result of NCC objections. I have advised the Forestry Commissioners that I support their view that grant should be offered for a substantial part of the area subject to application at Limekiln and Whitewell. I have examined the available evidence carefully and have concluded that the conservation evidence is not sufficient to justify opposing forestry over the very large tract of land involved. However, I am aware that the southern part of this site does contain some wetland and pool complexes which are of considerable interest and I have asked the Commissioners to seek NCC's detailed views before determining the precise boundary of the area which may be approved for planting.

I have also decided to support the Forestry Commissioners' intention to approve the applications at Jubilee Wood (Shinside), and Loubcroy, subject to certain modifications suggested by the Commission's Wildlife and Conservation Officer in respect of the Jubilee Wood application. I am proposing a further discussion with NCC about areas of peatland that might be excluded from planting at Sciberscross where, however, I have given general approval to the planting proposals. All these are areas outside the main region of prime peatland, and not of outstanding intrinsic conservation value according to the information before me.

The remaining three cases, on the other hand, do lie in the heart of the flow country and involve land comprising peatlands and wader habitat of high quality and I have asked for these cases to be referred back to your Council for a decision on future designation. I shall be considering further cases in the next few months and it may be appropriate to give additional approvals. Each case will, however, be scrutinised with great care, and the conclusions I have reached on the present tranche should not be taken as establishing a presumption in favour of forestry on other sites in their vicinity.

The present arrangement under which consultations with your Council on forestry grant applications extend to the whole of Caithness and Sutherland is, of course, an interim measure only, pending the more precise definition of the conservation interest and the establishment of the appropriate measures to protect it. It is therefore essential that high priority is given by NCC to the work of identifying those parts of the area which are of prime importance for nature conservation so that they can be safeguarded.

With regard to the means of protection, we consider that the notification of SSSI's is the only satisfactory approach to the conservation of areas of prime importance in Caithness and Sutherland, though your suggested approach of seeking to make *ad hoc* management agreements may provide a convenient means of protection where this is necessary to secure protection in advance of the SSSI programme. While the selection of SSSIs is, of course, ultimately a matter for NCC, it would I believe be helpful in this case for the various officials involved within NCC, the Departments concerned and the Highland Regional Council to get together at an early date so that the site selection process can be tied in with the on-going work of the HRC working party, with the application of the forestry consultation procedures and with the assessment of the financial implications arising from potential management agreements.

I shall arrange for my officials to get in touch with yours to discuss the next steps.

I propose to make this letter public, along with an announcement about the forestry cases referred to above."

The letter refers to a number of forestry grant applications which are before me at the moment. I have advised the Forestry Commissioners that I am content for grant to be offered in the four cases listed, subject to further consultations with the Nature Conservancy Council about the boundary of the area to be planted in the first two cases and subject to some minor modifications to improve the planting design in the third case. These cases concern the following applications:

Proposed area to be planted

Location	*(hectares)*
Limekiln and Whitewell, Caithness	1,307
Sciberscross, Sutherland	790
Jubilee Wood, Shinside, Sutherland	19
Loubcroy, Sutherland	202

Prisons

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will announce his plans on prisons and penal policy.

Mr. Rifkind: I made today a comprehensive statement on penal policy and the future operation of the Scottish prison service. I am arranging to have a copy of this statement placed in the Library.

Fine Defaulters

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many persons in 1986 were committed to prison in Scotland for default in payment of fines.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In 1986 there were 10,626 receptions to penal establishments for fine default. This represents a reduction of 8 per cent. from the corresponding figure of receptions in 1985 (11,564) and relative to the number of persons fined by the courts there was also a decline to 74 per thousand in 1986 from the corresponding level in 1985 (of 78 per thousand). There was a particularly marked reduction in receptions in default of fines for less serious offences such as breach of the peace (down from 3,423 in 1985 to 2,918 in 1986) and drunkenness (down even more sharply from 631 in 1985 to 271 in 1986).

The average daily population of fine defaulters in 1986, however, was 329 or 5·9 per cent. of the total average population in penal establishments in 1986.

THE ARTS

Buildings (Maintenance and Refurbishment)

38. **Mr. Martin:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what priority he gives to the maintenance and refurbishment of the buildings under the responsibility of the Office of Arts and Libraries.

Mr. Luce: I attach a high priority to the maintenance and refurbishment of the buildings occupied by the institutions for which my Department is responsible.

I have increased next year's grant-in-aid to the 11 national museums and galleries for their building and maintenance programme to some £49 million. This represents an increase of more than 20 per cent. on the equivalent figures for the current year.

Northern Regional Arts Association

39. **Mr. Ted Garrett:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what information he has on the level of funding in 1988-89 for the Northern Regional Arts Association.

Mr. Luce: It is for the Arts Council to determine the level of funding of individual regional arts associations; the 1988-89 funding level for Northern Arts has not yet been announced.

Museums (Leicestershire)

40. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he has any proposals for the funding of museums in Leicestershire.

Mr. Luce: This is not a matter for me but for the responsible authority, whether public or private, in the case of each museum.

Theatre and Music (Youth Participation)

41. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what steps he is taking to encourage youth participation in the theatre and music in Britain.

Mr. Luce: The Arts Council and the regional arts associations encourage all subsidised theatre companies to develop policies for young people, and theatre-in-education schemes. The council does not, as a rule, give direct financial support to youth theatre companies and orchestras, but I have been encouraged to see that several such bodies have attracted very substantial sponsorship. They are doing excellent work.

Arts (Plural Funding)

42. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he will make a statement on the concept of plural funding for the Arts.

Mr. Luce: I announced at Newcastle in July of last year the start of a long-term plan for the funding of the arts. The aim of the plan is to maintain the level of support from public funds in a way which encourages subsidised bodies in the performing arts, museums and libraries to become more self-reliant in their development and growth. My announcement last November of a substantial increase in arts funding for 1988-89 and the two subsequent years represented an important practical step towards the implementation of this plan. My announcement included specific provision for incentive schemes for the performing arts and for help to museums and galleries to improve their management and marketing.

Arts (Business Sponsors)

43. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** To ask the Minister for the Arts how many first-time business sponsors of the arts have been attracted by the business sponsorship incentive scheme so far; and what is his estimate for 1987-88 as a whole.

Mr. Luce: The scheme has attracted 618 first-time business sponsors since it began in 1984.

This includes 179 in 1987-88 and the figure for the complete year should be over 210.

Arts (Funding)

44. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what information he has on the 1988-89 budget for the Greater London Arts association.

Mr. Luce: The Arts Council has yet to announce its grant to Greater London Arts for 1988-89.

49. **Mr. Chris Smith:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he plans to meet the chairman and director of Greater London Arts to discuss its budget for 1988-89.

Mr. Luce: I would refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) earlier today.

45. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he plans to meet the chairman of the Welsh Arts Council to discuss the level of funding for the arts in Wales in 1988-89.

59. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he plans to meet the chairman of the Scottish Arts Council to discuss the level of funding for the arts in Scotland in 1988-89.

Mr. Luce: I expect to be meeting the chairmen during the year, and funding is likely to feature in our discussions.

52. **Ms. Walley:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what information he has on the level of funding for the arts in the west midlands in 1988-89.

Mr. Luce: The Arts Council has yet to announce its allocation of grant to West Midlands Arts for 1988-89. The chairman will keep me informed of its decisions.

53. **Mr. Barron:** To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he plans to meet the chairman of Yorkshire Arts to discuss the level of funding for the arts in Yorkshire in 1988-89.

Mr. Luce: Yorkshire Arts' grant allocation for 1988-89 has yet to be announced, but funding will certainly feature in any discussions I have with the chairman this year.

58. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he plans to visit Cumbria to discuss the funding for the arts.

Mr. Luce: I have no immediate plans to do so, but I expect to be meeting the chairman of Northern Arts this year and funding in the region is likely to feature in our discussion.

61. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Minister of the Arts what information he has on the level of funding for the arts in Scotland in 1988-89.

Mr. Luce: The Arts Council expects to be in a position to announce the Scottish Arts Council's allocation shortly. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland makes a number of grants to national institutions and other arts bodies in Scotland, and these, too, will be announced shortly.

Community Plays

46. **Sir Jim Spicer:** To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will encourage the expansion of the concept of community plays; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: The Arts Council sees the large-scale community play, with a cast of local people and a small core of professional directors, designers and writers, as an important part of drama provision. The council encourages the creation of these plays through its theatre writing scheme; the productions themselves are generally funded by local authorities, with assistance and advice from the regional arts associations.

Libraries (Funding)

Miss Widdecombe: To ask the Minister for the Arts what steps he is taking to increase the funding of libraries.

Mr. Luce: It is the responsibility of local library authorities to decide what resources to allocate to public libraries. I hope, however, to provide new opportunities to help public libraries expand by allowing them to charge for a wider range of additional and specialised services. I shall be issuing a consultative paper on how this might best be done. In addition, as I announced in a written answer on 8 December, at column *952*, I have set aside £250,000 a year for three years for the establishment of an incentive scheme to encourage new developments designed to extend or improve the public library service in England.

Museums and Galleries (Funding)

Mr. Summerson: To ask the Minister for the Arts how his policy of incentive funding applies to museums and galleries.

Mr. Luce: Museums and galleries, like other organisations funded by the arts programme, will have an incentive to strengthen their financial position.

The figures which I have announced for the next three years give the institutions a firm base on which to develop and pursue their plans. I have renewed for the next three years my undertaking to the national institutions that they may retain any additional receipts they earn in addition to those which were assumed at the time of their grant-in-aid allocations.

Within my allocations for running costs to the national museums and galleries, I have earmarked a total of £0.57 million to help them through training and in other ways to improve their management and marketing. I have also made provision for the Museums and Galleries Commission to assist other museums and galleries in the same way.

In announcing the increase of £6 million, or over 20 per cent. in the building and maintenance programme of the national museums and galleries in 1988-89 I made it clear that the allocation of the margin amounting to over £12 million in 1989-90, and nearly £15 million in 1990-91, would depend partly upon the extent to which the institutions can raise money from other sources towards the achievement of their plans. A number of institutions have shown great initiative already in attracting private funds for new developments.

Ffotogallery (Cardiff)

50. **Mr. Boyes:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what plans he has to visit the Ffotogallery in Cardiff.

Mr. Luce: I shall be visiting Wales in March and may be able to take in the work of the gallery, time permitting.

Public Libraries

51. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what plans he has for expansion of the public library service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: I hope to provide new opportunities to help public libraries expand by allowing them to charge for a wider range of additional and specialised services. I shall be issuing a consultative paper on how this might best be done. In addition, as I announced in a written answer on 8 December, at column *95*, I have set aside £250,000 a year for three years for the establishment of an incentive scheme to encourage new developments designed to extend or improve the public library service in England.

British Council

54. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what representations he has received from British arts companies touring abroad concerning the effect on their activities of levels of funding for the British Council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: None. The funding of the British Council is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs.

Local Arts Groups (Cornwall)

55. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what representations he has received concerning support currently given to local arts groups within Cornwall.

Mr. Luce: None.

Tourism

56. **Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what contribution tourism makes to the arts in Britain.

Mr. Luce: Tourism makes a big contribution. I cannot put a monetary value on it, but in recent years around three-quarters of overseas visitors to this country have visited a museum and half have attended a theatre or concert, and I believe that this trend will continue.

British Library Business Information Service

57. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will explain the objectives of the British Library business information service.

Mr. Luce: The objectives of the British Library's business information service are:

(1) to contribute towards the building, monitoring and organising of an effective national reference collection of business literature; (2) to promote awareness of the information which resides within this collection, its potential value and effective methods for accessing it; (3) to provide specialist help to callers to the library who need to obtain business information; (4) to provide a free telephone inquiry for brief inquiries; (5) to offer, as a charged service, comprehensive and thoroughly researched answers to inquiries about markets, companies and products through access to the British Library's unique printed collections and utilising on-line databases.

Tate Gallery (Liverpool)

60. **Mr. Burt:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what special provisions he has made to help the new Tate gallery in Liverpool.

Mr. Luce: The Government have made a significant financial contribution to this important new development.

The capital cost of the new Tate gallery, Liverpool, has been met by a combination of public funds (OAL £0·5 million and Merseyside Development Corporation £5·1 million) and privately raised funds (£1·7 million from various benefactors).

The allocation of £6·3 million for the running costs of the Tate gallery, which I announced on 16 December, at columns 531-34, takes account of the needs of the new gallery in Liverpool. Comparing like with like, this represents an increase of 19 per cent. on the figure for the current year. No specific sum is earmarked within this total for the new Liverpool gallery as it is for the trustees and director of the Tate to decide on the disposition of the funds available to them.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Civil Service (Dispersal)

70. **Mr. McLeish:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about Her Majesty's Government's policy of dispersal of the Civil Service to the regions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: Two letters from hon. Members on the subject of Civil Service dispersal have recently been referred to me and are currently being dealt with. With regard to a statement, I would refer the hon. Member to the answer I provided to the hon. Member for East Kilbride (Mr. Ingram) on 18 January 1988, at columns *475-76*.

Civil Service (Working Patterns)

71. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects to implement the recommendations of the "Working Patterns of the Civil Service" contained in the study document issued by the Cabinet Office.

Mr. Brooke: Departments are already considering the report, and have been asked to come forward with any proposals on alternative working patterns which meet their particular needs.

Customs Clearance Station (Armagh)

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proposals he has for the provision of a new customs clearance station on the Armagh to Monaghan road; whether it will include facilities for the handling of importation of live cattle from the Republic of Ireland into the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lawson: It is proposed that a new customs clearance station will be provided on the Armagh to Monaghan road. A planning application is under consideration in respect of a site on the Monaghan road, Armagh, 180 m west of Umgola house. The proposals do not include facilities for dealing with regular importations of live cattle from the Republic of Ireland into the United Kingdom. It is intended, however, to make provision for the temporary holding of cattle which on occasion may have been detained for customs purposes.

Value Added Tax

Sir Fergus Montgomery: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has had any representations concerning value added tax on donations of equipment to higher educational establishments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: I have received a number of representations concerning VAT on donations of equipment to higher educational establishments.

Mr. Colin Shepherd: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what he estimates will be the yield in the current year 1987-88 of value added tax from confectionery, chocolate biscuits, nuts, snacks and ice creams.

Mr. Lilley: The forecast yield of value added tax in 1987-88 from chocolate and sugar confectionary, chocolate biscuits, potato crisps, nuts and ice cream is around £590 million.

Customs (Confiscations)

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether the clothes and personal effects confiscated from those arrested by Her Majesty's customs officials at airports and seaports are subsequently returned to the owners; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: Clothes and personal effects taken from arrested persons are in general returned to their owners. They may, however, be withheld if they are liable to forfeiture because of a prohibition or restriction on importation or exportation, because they are subject to duty which has not been paid, or because they have been used to facilitate the commission of an offence.

Exchange Rate

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the change in *(a)* the nominal and *(b)* the real exchange rate of (i) the United Kingdom, (ii) West Germany, (iii) Japan and (iv) the United States of America against other G7 countries in the following periods: the last quarter of 1969 to the first quarter of 1971, the last quarter of 1976 to the first quarter of 1979, the second quarter of 1979 to the first quarter of 1981 and the third quarter of 1986 to date.

Mr. Lilley: I refer the hon. Member to *International Financial Statistics* published monthly by the International Monetary Fund and to the table on page 46 of *Economic Trends* published monthly by the Central Statistical Office. Copies of both publications are in the House of Commons Library.

Interest Rates

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was *(a)* the nominal interest rate and *(b)* the real interest rate on an annual basis for (i) the United Kingdom, (ii) West Germany, (iii) Japan and (iv) Austria in each year from 1977 to date.

Mr. Lilley: There are a number of ways of measuring real interest rates. Data on interest rates and various price indices for the OECD countries are contained in the monthly publication "OECD Main Economic Indicators." Longer series can be found in "OECD Historical Statistics."

Treasure Trove

Mr. Key: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects to complete his review of treasure trove; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: I expect to receive the report of the review of ex gratia awards to finders of treasure trove very shortly.

Finance Acts

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the gain or loss to those with incomes *(a)* under £5,000, *(b)* £5,000 to £10,000, *(c)* £10,000 to £15,000, *(d)* £15,000 to £20,000, *(e)* £20,000 to £30,000, *(f)* £30,000 to £50,000, *(g)* £50,000 to £70,000, *(h)* £70,000 to £100,000 and *(i)* over £100,000 a year as a result of each Finance Act since 1979, both in aggregate and per person on average in each of these income groups, in each case indicating how much is due to indexation and how much is real gain.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 13 January 1988]:* The information is in the tables. For each financial year shown, the tables compare the yield from the tax regime in that year with the 1978-79 tax regime. All estimates are based on a provisional 1987-88 income base projected from the 1984-85 survey of personal incomes and all tax regimes have been indexed to 1987-88 levels by reference to the statutory formula. The comparisons therefore allow for budgetary changes in income tax rates and allowances, but not for any changes since 1978-79 in the definition of the income tax base.

The first table shows the total reduction (+) or increase (−) in tax yield from each income range; and the second table shows the average change for individual tax units. Because of the uncertainties of projecting for those with the highest incomes, taxpayers with incomes over £70,000 are shown in a single range.

As child tax allowances were being phased out in 1978-79 they have been excluded from the comparison.

It is not possible to provide useful estimates of the liabilities in 1987-88 for the 1978-79 regime without indexation since Inland Revenue records do not cover many of the people who would be brought into tax by such low levels of personal allowances. A partial analysis with incomplete coverage would be misleading.

Reductions (+)/Increases (−) in income tax compared with 1978-79 indexed regime

(£ million)

Range of total income in 1987-88[1] £	*Number of units paying tax in 1987-88 (million)*	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*
Under 5,000	3·20	230	100	−290	−250	−20	110	230	270	340
5,000 to 10,000	7·70	1,210	740	−270	−160	410	790	1,120	1,410	1,990
10,000 to 15,000	5·20	1,410	1,010	190	280	740	1,150	1,450	1,820	2,540
15,000 to 20,000	2·50	1,010	770	290	350	610	890	1,060	1,330	1,870
20,000 to 30,000	1·50	1,140	940	370	440	780	1,040	1,160	1,410	1,900
30,000 to 50,000	0·50	1,090	950	540	590	830	1,040	1,100	1,210	1,400
50,000 to 70,000	0·10	550	510	370	390	460	560	570	590	610

Range of total income in 1987-88[1] £	Number of units paying tax in 1987-88 (million)	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88
Over 70,000	0·06	970	940	850	860	910	1,060	1,070	1,080	1,090
Total	20·90	7,610	5,960	2,060	2,490	4,710	6,640	7,780	9,110	11,730

Average gain (+)/loss (−) per tax unit

(£ per annum)

Range of total income in 1987-88[1] £	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88
Under 5,000[2]	60	25	−70	−60	−10	30	60	70	90
5,000 to 10,000[2]	150	90	−30	−20	50	100	140	180	230
10,000 to 15,000	270	190	40	50	140	220	280	350	490
15,000 to 20,000	400	300	120	140	240	350	420	520	740
20,000 to 30,000	750	620	250	290	510	690	770	930	1,250
30,000 to 50,000	2,000	1,750	1,000	1,090	1,520	1,920	2,030	2,230	2,570
50,000 to 70,000	5,590	5,130	3,790	3,930	4,700	5,640	5,790	5,920	6,150
Over 70,000	17,030	16,450	14,850	15,020	15,920	18,630	18,800	18,900	19,100
Total	350	270	90	110	220	300	360	420	540

[1] All information is in terms of tax units—that is married couples are counted as one and their incomes combined.
[2] Average gains and losses are calculated by reference to the estimated number who would be liable to pay tax under the indexed 1978-79 regime; this number is some 900,000 greater than the numbers paying tax in 1987-88, some 750,000 in the income range below £5,000 and 150,000 in the range £5,000 to £10,000.

Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether the Government expect the rate of growth in output per head in manufacturing to go on increasing faster than the rate of growth in the rest of the economy over the next year; and if he will publish in the *Official Report* an estimate of the loss in gross domestic product as a result of the decline in the manufacturing base of the United Kingdom since 1979.

Mr. Major *[holding answer 22 January 1988]:* Manufacturing output in the three months to November 1987 was 2·7 per cent. above the level in 1979. Total output rose 17 per cent. over that same period. The Autumn Statement contained no forecast of the growth of output per head.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for each of the decades ending 1967, 1977 and 1987 the annual rate of growth in manufacturing, in industrial products less the extraction of oil and gas and in gross domestic product less the extraction of oil and gas.

Mr. Major *[holding answer 22 January 1988]:* Data for the whole of 1987 are not yet available. The information, based on the lastest available data, is as follows:

Annual growth rates

	1957 to 1967	1967 to 1977	1977 to 1987
Manufacturing output	+3·1	+1·7	[3]0·0
Industrial production less oil and gas[1]	+2·9	+1·7	[3]+0·1
Gross domestic product[2] less oil and gas[1]	+2·9	+1·8	[4]+1·7

[1] Class 13 of the Standard Industrial Classification 1980 — extraction of mineral oil and natural gas.
[2] The output based measure of gross domestic product, the appropriate measure for comparison by industry.
[3] To November 1987 inclusive.
[4] To third quarter 1987 inclusive.
Source: Central Statistical Office.

Personal Incomes (Statistics)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what evidence he has on whether increases in wage rates in manufacturing industry have led to inflation; and if he will include in the *Official Report* a table showing for the period since May 1979 the increase in *(a)* median earnings of blue collar workers, *(b)* median earnings of white collar workers, *(c)* the remuneration of directors of public companies and *(d)* the earnings of those employed in the financial sector.

Mr. Major *[holding answer 22 January 1988]:* Wage rates in manufacturing are more likely to be a determinant of manufacturing employment and I would draw the hon. Member's attention to the Treasury paper "The Relationship between Employment and Wages", published in January 1985.

On the second part of the question, the hon. Member's attention has on numerous occasions been drawn to the publications in which such information as is available may be found. In this instance, the *New Earnings Survey* will provide all information requested except details of remuneration of directors of public companies which are not normally collected by Government.

Government Borrowing

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the purpose of Government borrowing since 31 October 1987 in excess of the borrowing requirement; and if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for each issue the amount borrowed and the exact cost per annum.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 22 January 1988]:* The public sector's net borrowing is necessarily equal to its

borrowing requirement: it is an accounting identity. Figures for new issues and redemptions of gilt-edged stock are given in table 3.6 of *Financial Statistics*, published by the Central Statistical Office. Those issued since 31 October are as listed.

Date and Stock	*Nominal Amount (£ million)*	*For Cash (£ million)*	*Cost Per Annum (£ million)*
10 November 1987			
8 per cent. Treasury 1992	100	99	8·0
10 per cent. Treasury Loan 1994	150	158	15·0
8¾ per cent. Treasury 1997	200	199	17·5
2½ per cent. Index Linked Treasury 2001	100	109	[1]2·5
2½ Index Linked Treasury 2020	100	94	[1]2·5
2 December 1987			
2½ per cent. Index Linked Treasury 2003	50	54	[1]1·25
2½ Index Linked Treasury 2009	50	51	[1]1·25
2½ per cent. Index Linked Treasury 2013	50	44	[1]1·25
11 December 1987			
8 per cent. Treasury Convertible Stock 1990	1,000	980	[2]80·0
21 December 1987			
10 per cent. Treasury 1993	100	103	10·0
10½ per cent. Exchequer Stock 1997	150	159	15·75
9½ per cent. Treasury Loan 2002	100	103	9·75
9½ per cent. Conversion Stock 2004	100	100	9·5
2 per cent. Index Linked Treasury 2006	100	107	[1]2·0
13 January 1988			
8¾ per cent. Treasury 1997 "C"	1,000	925	87·5
18 January			
8 per cent. Treasury 1992	300	286	24·0
9½ per cent. Conversion Stock 2005	150	149	14·25
9½ per cent. Conversion Stock 2004	150	147	14·25

[1] Index Linked Stocks: There will be an additional cost at redemption due to capital uplift.
[2] Convertible stock: Annual cost may vary slightly due to the exercising of conversion options.

Revenue Statistics

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the increase in revenue and the decrease in expenditure as a result of the reduction in unemployment in 1987-88; how much of this would accrue to the national insurance fund via an increase in national insurance contributions and a reduction in social security payments; and if he will provide comparable figures for 1988-89 on the basis of the present level of employment and unemployment.

Mr. Major *[holding answer 22 January 1988]:* It is not possible to estimate the extra revenue accruing to the Exchequer as a result of the fall in unemployment. Details of the estimated effect of a fall in unemployment on overall benefit expenditure are given in table 3.15.18 of the 1987 public expenditure White Paper, and table 6.15.20 of the 1988 public expenditure White Paper (published 20 January). The estimated increase in contribution income to the national insurance fund resulting from the increase in employment in 1987-88 is £300 million. The estimated reduction in unemployment benefit expenditure in 1987-88 resulting from the decrease in the numbers entitled to unemployment benefit is £250 million. The overall effect of a fall in unemployment and increase in employment on the national insurance fund in 1988-89 is described in the report of the Government Actuary on the Social Security (Contributions, Re-rating) Order (No.2) 1987, which will be published shortly.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the total tax receipts from the sale of the following items: *(a)* cigarettes, *(b)* tobacco, *(c)* beer, *(d)* wine, *(e)* whisky, *(f)* petrol and *(g)* diesel for each year for which figures are available between 1979 and 1987.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 22 January 1988]:* The figures, in financial years, show the information at the lowest level of detail for which total tax receipts (i.e. both VAT and excise duty) can be provided.

£ million

	(a) Cigarettes	*(b) Tobacco*	*(c) Beer*	*(d) Wine*	*(e) Spirits*[1]	*(f) + (g) Petrol & Diesel*[1]
1979-80	2,717·9	243·4	1,406·4	523·3	1,422·9	3,047·4
1980-81	3,094·6	276·8	1,738·4	606·9	1,502·5	3,928·0
1981-82	3,672·1	368·5	2,136·3	765·4	1,602·1	5,155·3
1982-83	3,717·6	396·3	2,366·0	786·0	1,355·3	5,840·3

	(a) Cigarettes	(b) Tobacco	(c) Beer	(d) Wine	(e) Spirits[1]	(f) + (g) Petrol & Diesel[1]
1983-84	4,103·3	401·5	2,608·8	982·8	2,131·6	6,293·8
1984-85	4,477·9	414·7	2,835·0	997·7	1,702·4	6,820·5
1985-86	4,851·5	412·4	3,057·7	1,066·4	2,003·4	7,272·8
1986-87	5,193·6	424·7	3,124·2	1,098·5	1,989·2	8,262·2

[1] VAT statistics do not distinguish whisky from "spirits" or petrol from "motor fuels in general".

Domestic Rates (VAT)

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the increase in the rate of value added tax required in 1987-88 to replace the revenue currently raised from domestic rates; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 22 January 1988]:* It is estimated that the rate of value added tax would need to be increased by about six percentage points (i.e. from the current rate of 15 per cent. to 21 per cent.) to replace the revenue currently raised from domestic rates.

Pension Funds

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the Inland Revenue plans to examine the affairs of large pension funds.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 22 January 1988]:* Large pension funds are treated in the same way as any other taxpayer. Each case is treated on its merits and inquiries made where, on the available facts, they are considered appropriate.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer from how many pension funds the Inland Revenue (technical division) special office, Sheffield, has requested information.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 22 January 1988]:* Information has been requested from 12 pension funds.

Inland Revenue (Sheffield)

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people the Inland Revenue (technical division) special office, Sheffield, employs.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 22 January 1988]:* Fifteen staff are employed.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the budgeted expenditure for the year 1987-88 for the Inland Revenue (technical division) special office, Sheffield.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 22 January 1988]:* £358,000.

Retail Prices and Taxation

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the current average retail price and the corresponding tax duty payable on each of the following items: *(a)* 20 king size cigarettes, *(b)* half an ounce of tobacco, *(c)* a pint of beer, *(d)* a bottle of wine, *(e)* a bottle of whisky, *(f)* a gallon of four-star petrol and *(g)* a gallon of diesel.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 22 January 1988]:* The information is as follows:

	Current price	Duty	VAT
	£	£	£
(a) 20 King size cigarettes	1·45	0·92	0·19
(b) 25 gms[1] Pipe tobacco	1·36	0·62	0·18
(c) Pint of beer (bitter)	0·84	0·18	0·11
(d) Bottle of table wine (litre)	2·25	0·98	0·29
(e) Bottle of whisky (75cl)	7·47	4·73	0·97
(f) Gallon of petrol (4-star)	1·70	0·88	0·22
(g) Gallon of diesel	1·56	0·75	0·20

[1] A representative price for half an ounce of tobacco is not available.

Rental Values

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish the figures for the average increase in rental values determined for rating purposes of non-domestic properties for each year since 1973.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 22 January 1988]:* At present, the rateable values of all properties are based on the level of annual rental values for similar properties at the time when the current valuation list came into force on 1 April 1973. The rateable values so determined are not adjusted to take account of any subsequent changes in the level of rental values which may occur during the currency of the list.

Books, Newspapers and Periodicals (VAT)

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimates he has of the amount which would be raised in a full year by the levying of value added tax on books, newspapers and periodicals at *(a)* 5, *(b)* 10 and *(c)* 15 per cent.; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 22 January 1988]:* The estimated full year net revenue yield in 1988-89 of imposing value added tax on books, newspapers and periodicals is as follows:

	£ million
(a) 5 per cent	180
(b) 10 per cent.	350
(c) 15 per cent.	515

Domestic Staff

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will introduce legislation to make the wages paid to domestic staff in private households tax deductible; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 21 January 1988]:* I have noted my hon. Friend's suggestion.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Illegitimate Babies (Deaths)

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give, for each year from 1975 onwards, the numbers of stillbirths, early neonatal deaths and postneonatal deaths of jointly registered illegitimate babies in England and Wales with fathers whose occupations were classified as *(a)* social class I, *(b)* social class II, *(c)* social class III non-manual, *(d)* social class III manual, *(e)* social class IV, *(f)* social class V, *(g)* armed services and *(h)* students, unoccupied and any occupations not included in *(a)* to *(g)*.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that the full information requested can be provided only at disproportionate cost. However, the table shows data for the first and last year available which can be produced without incurring disproportionate cost.

Number of stillbirths, early neonatal deaths, late neonatal deaths and postneonatal deaths of jointly registered illegitimate babies by social class, England and Wales 1975 and 1985

Social Class	*Stillbirths*	*Early neonatal*	*Late neonatal*	*Postneonatal*
1975				
Total	161	296	70	190
Social Class I	5	8	2	2
Social Class II	13	23	6	12
Social Class IIIN	12	28	—	10
Social Class IIIM	64	91	26	69
Social Class IV	33	61	11	40
Social Class V	29	42	9	28
Armed Forces	1	3	2	1
Students, Unoccupied and inadequately described	4	40	14	28
1985				
Total	394	416	96	436
Social Class I	2	7	1	6
Social Class II	31	50	9	32
Social Class IIIN	22	25	3	22
Social Class IIIM	151	162	45	166
Social Class IV	90	78	16	70
Social Class V	72	64	14	92
Armed Forces	3	4	—	2
Students, Unoccupied and inadequately described	23	26	8	46

Early neonatal: deaths in the first week of life.
Late neonatal: deaths from one week to under four weeks.
Postneonatal: deaths from four weeks to under one year.

Nursing and Administrative Staff

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the percentage change in the numbers of nursing and midwifery staff, whole-time equivalents, in *(a)* the north-west region and *(b)* England as a whole, between 1978 and the latest available year.

Mr. Newton: Between 30 September 1978 and 30 September 1986 National Health Service nursing and midwifery staff (including agency staff) in North Western regional health authority and England, increased by 14·7 and 20·4 per cent. respectively. These percentages have not been adjusted to take account of the reduction in hours introduced during 1980-81.

Doctors (Earnings)

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services by what percentage the earnings of *(a)* consultants, *(b)* house officers, and *(c)* general practitioners are estimated to have risen between 1974 and 1987 in real terms.

Mr. Newton: Based on the rates of pay effective on the dates specified, the real terms increases for house officers, consultants and general practitioners (intended net remuneration) were 48 per cent., 13·6 per cent. and 17·4 per cent. respectively. In relation to house officers, I should explain that because of the introduction of 1975 of a basic salary related to the first 40 hours duty per week, the figure quoted is based on a comparison between the current rate of pay, including supplements, for an average weekly commitment of 80 hours and the basic rate paid in 1974 for a commitment of up to 80 hours per week.

The changes in pay in real terms between February 1974 and March 1979 and between March 1979 and March 1987 were as follows:

	February 1974 to March 1979 Per cent.	*March 1979 to March 1987 Per cent.*
House Officer	+8·6	+29·8
Consultant	−25·6	+28·9
General Practitioner	−16·8	+25·9

(intended net remuneration).

Dialysis Patients

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many patients are currently receiving kidney dialysis; how many new patients have

been admitted to dialysis in the last 12 months; and what is his estimate of the number of patients in the United Kingdom who would benefit from dialysis.

Mrs. Currie: According to provisional figures provided by the European Dialysis and Transplant Association, a total of 6,890 patients were under treatment on all forms of dialysis in the United Kingdom on 31 December 1986. The number of new patients accepted during 1986 for all forms of treatment for end stage renal failure was 2,647 which represents 47 new patients per million population. The target of 40 new patients per million population was set by Ministers in 1984.

It is not possible to estimate the total number of patients who would benefit from dialysis. The assessment and treatment of individual patients is a matter for the clinical judgment of the doctors concerned. A total of 1,479 patients received a cadaveric kidney transplant in the United Kingdom during 1987 and 6,804 at 31 December 1986 had a functioning kidney transplant: both figures are provisional.

Obstetrics

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has received a document "Anaesthetic Services For Obstetrics—A Plan For The Future" from the Association of Anaesthetists of Great Britain and Ireland; whether, because of its implications for the future of small obstetric units, he will ensure that a full discussion takes place between the anaesthetists and his officials before final decisions are made; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: A copy of the document has been received and is being considered. There are at present no plans for officials to meet representatives of the Association. Anaesthetists are represented by the Royal College of Surgeons and discussions will take place with that body as necessary.

The Government's current policy, as set out in the reports of the maternity services advisory committee, is that women should be encouraged to have their babies in a hospital offering the range of obstetric paediatric and supporting services including anaesthetics necessary to cope with any emergency. Responsibility for determining the pattern of maternity services best suited to local needs and circumstances rests with individual health authorities.

Ethnic Minorities

Miss Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he is taking to make those ethnic minority communities whose first language is not English aware of the major changes to the benefits system due to come into effect in April; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: FB2 "Which benefit?" is produced in six ethnic minority languages under the leaflet code FB22. The languages used are Chinese, Urdu, Hindi, Gujerati, Bengali and Punjabi. FB2/FB22 is the main social security overview leaflet, which briefly describes all the major social security benefits. It is intended to produce updated editions of FB22 later in 1988. These will cover the new benefits introduced in April. New posters advertising the new editions will go on display in social security offices and at normal distribution points.

Miss Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he is taking to ensure that his Department employs bilingual or multilingual staff in areas where there are substantial ethnic minority communities.

Mr. Portillo: The Department of Health and Social Security follows the long-standing principle that recruitment to the Civil Service should be by fair and open competition, and selection should be on merit. The Department's aim is that its work force should reflect the ethnic composition of the community it serves, but it does not seek to recruit bilingual or multilingual staff as such. A recent experiment at Bradford (West) local office involved the appointment of an existing member of staff as a full-time interpreter/liaison officer to the Asian community. It has been successful and we are considering proposals to extend the experiment to similar offices in other parts of the country.

Departmental Local Offices

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the allocation between local offices of the extra 2,000 posts agreed for supplementary benefit work in 1986, distinguishing between posts funded on a short term and on a permament basis.

Mr. Portillo: I assume that the hon. Member is referring to an increase in the staff-in-post target of about 2,000 for the end of the year 1985-86. This addition was made at a time when many local offices were in excess of the complement. Some were permitted to retain excess staff and others to increase staffing levels. I regret that since such decisions were made locally, I am unable to provide the hon. Member with the details of the allocation which he seeks.

Cervical Smear Tests

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women have taken cervical smear tests in the Sunderland, Durham and Hartlepool areas in each year since 1985.

Mrs. Currie: The available information is not precisely in the form requested. Centrally, information is collected on the number of smear tests performed by the laboratories in the district health authority rather than the number of women, resident in the district, who were tested. Some districts will therefore record no smears examined where there are no laboratories in their area. The available information is given in the table. The hon. Member may wish to approach the respective District Health Authorities for further information.

Cervical cytology—number of cases examined

District health authorities	*1985*	*1986*
Sunderland, Durham and Hartlepool	36,063	34,340

Note: A woman who was tested more than once was counted on each occasion, but where more than one smear was taken from the same patient at the same session, they were counted as one test.

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what measures are being taken to encourage women living within the area of Durham, Sunderland and Hartlepool area health authorities to have cervical smear tests.

Mrs. Currie: We are committed to reducing deaths from cervical cancer and have asked all health authorities in England to implement, by 31 March this year, computerised call and recall systems to invite women to have cervical smear tests. Most health authorities, including Durham and Sunderland, already have their systems in operation. I understand that Hartlepool health authority plans to extend its existing recall system to provide a call facility from 1 April. For details of further measures taken to encourage uptake in these districts the hon. Member may wish to write to the chairmen of the respective health authorities.

Meningitis

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many cases of meningitis have been reported in the Sunderland, Durham and Hartlepool areas in each year from 1985.

Mrs. Currie: Meningitis can be caused by several different organisms. The hon. Member is probably particularly interested in meningococcal meningitis: the table gives figures for this and for all forms of acute meningitis.

Number of notifications of acute and meningococcal meningitis in Sunderland, Durham and Hartlepool district health authorities, 1985-87

	Sunderland		Durham		Hartlepool	
	(a)	*(b)*	*(a)*	*(b)*	*(a)*	*(b)*
1985	—	—	1	1	2	2
1986	7	1	9	3	5	5
1987[1]	15	6	11	6	21	9

[1] Provisional.
(a) Acute or (all forms).
(b) Meningococcal meningitis.

Plastic Surgery

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the current number of private clinics for plastic surgery and the number in 1983 and 1978; and if he will make a statement on the method of assessment of the quality of service of such clinics.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that the statistical information requested is not held centrally. Each private clinic performing plastic surgery must register with its local district health authority. Under the Registered Homes Act 1984, that authority must inspect it at least twice per year and must be satisfied that its premises and management arrangements meet the requirements of registration. The clinical service provided in such a clinic is a matter between each individual purchaser and the clinician involved.

Health Districts (Spending Priorities)

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what criteria he uses to assess the spending priorities between health districts within a given authority; and what criteria are used for the inner London authorities, such as Wandsworth and Roehampton, within the South West Thames region.

Mrs. Currie: It is the responsibility of regional health authorities to determine district resource allocations which take account of agreed service plans and allow for a manageable pace of change. My hon. Friend may like to approach the chairman of the South West Thames regional health authority for further details in respect of Wandsworth and Roehampton.

Nurses (Accommodation)

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many units of health authority accommodation are available to National Health Service nursing staff in Greater London; and how this compares with *(a)* five and *(b)* 10 years ago.

Mrs. Currie: The Department does not at present collect information about the number of units of residential accommodation, but proposes to do so from the next financial year.

Crewe Health District

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received about the need for further resources in Crewe health district; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: A number of representations have been received from hon. Members, the Community Health Council, the local authority, hospital staff, and members of the public. However, the allocation of resources to the Crewe health authority is primarily the responsibility of the Mersey regional health authority.

Health Education Council (Advertising)

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what advertising agents were appointed by the former Health Education Council or by the Central Office of Information on its behalf to handle campaigns involving the communication of information for which it was responsible during *(a)* 1985-86; and *(b)* the succeeding period until the council's abolition; what was the subject of each campaign; how much was spent on each campaign; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: I understand from the authorities concerned that the information requested is as follows:

Year	*Agency*	*Campaign(s)*	*Cost* £
1985-86	Abbot Mead Vickers	Smoking	889,500
1985-86	Redheads Advertising	Whooping Cough	583,000
1986-87	Abbot Mead Vickers	Smoking	737,200

In 1985-86 the Health Education Council also collaborated with the DHSS in a Departmentally funded pilot campaign to discourage teenage smoking, which employed the advertising agents FCO and cost £1 million.

Dr. Kevin Browne

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services on what occasions his Department has been advised by Dr. Kevin Browne concerning the prescription of lung cancer in asbestos workers where there is no evidence of asbestosis or bilateral diffuse pleural thickening; and what was the consequence of any such advice.

Mr. Scott: Following publication of the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council's report on "Asbestos-Related Diseases Without Asbestosis" (Cmnd. 8750) in November

1982, a number of eminent experts in occupational chest diseases, including Dr. Browne then employed full-time by Cape Industries, wrote to my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) the then Minister of State for Social Security and the Disabled. As a result of their representations the report was referred back to the council for further consideration. The council subsequently modified its recommendations in a supplement to its report, which was published in March 1984 (Cmnd. 9184).

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether Dr. Kevin Browne has access to special medical board records relating to past or present employees of Cape Industries.

Mr. Scott: As a part-time adjudicating medical practitioner Dr. Browne has no access to medical boarding centre records other than those relating to the cases he boards. Special procedures have been introduced to ensure these do not include present or past employees of Cape Industries.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether Dr. Kevin Browne of the London medical boarding centre has been reprimanded or disciplined in relation to the curriculum vitae he submitted.

Mr. Scott: The senior medical officer at the London medical boarding centre (respiratory diseases) has discussed the matter with Dr. Browne. I am satisfied that Dr. Browne had no intention of deliberately misleading the Department.

Boarding Doctors (Asbestos)

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list any boarding doctors employed on respiratory disease claims who have in the past had links with the asbestos industry.

Mr. Scott: Dr. Kevin Browne is the only doctor employed on respiratory disease claims who has past or present links with the asbestos industry.

Junior Hospital Doctors

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what statistical information he has about the extent and regularity of overtime working by junior hospital doctors.

Mr. Newton: Information is collected annually on the contracted hours of junior hospital doctors and dentists. The weekly average on 30 September 1986 was 85·7. These are hours of duty not hours of work. According to a survey commissioned by the Independent Doctors and Dentists Review Body in 1985, average hours of work were 57. An employing authority may, by agreement with a practitioner, contract separately with him for additional duty undertaken outside his regular commitment. Information on such additional duty is not available centrally.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received in the last nine months on the subject of overtime by junior hospital doctors.

Mr. Newton: We have received letters from 45 hon. Members and 31 other individuals or organisations concerning the hours of work of junior hospital doctors. Officials and representatives of the medical profession are currently discussing the scope for achieving further reductions in hours.

Speech Therapists

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many student training allowances were paid to speech therapy staff in the financial years 1983-84, 1984-85, 1985-86 and 1986-87; how many such allowances are being paid at the present time; and what proportion of speech therapy staff were or are in receipt of such allowances at the dates stated;

(2) what was the annual value of the speech therapists' student training allowance in 1983-84, 1984-85, 1985-86, 1986-87 and currently.

Mr. Newton: The information required about the number of speech therapy training allowances paid to speech therapy staff is not readily available and can be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Rates of allowance and estimated total cost (Great Britain) for the years 1984-85, 1985-86 and 1986-87 are given in the following table. Cost figures are not available for 1983-84 or for the current financial year.

Student training allowance

£ per annum

Grade	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
1. Head or Designated Officer in approved Department	750	750	864
2. Senior II	500	500	576
3. Designated Officer	250	250	288
For those not entitled to full allowances			
(a) as detailed in 1. above	375	375	432
(b) as detailed in 2. above	250	250	288
(c) as detailed in 3. above	125	125	144
Estimated Great Britain cost	412,400	434,400	500,100

Nurses

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many re-registrations of nurses occurred in each of the last five years;

(2) what income he anticipates will arise from charges for the re-registration of nurses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Responsibility for maintaining the professional register rests with the United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting. Since 1 January 1987 nurses, midwives and health visitors have been required by the United Kingdom Central Council to re-register every three years. Prior to that date registration was for life.

I understand from the United Kingdom Central Council that re-registrations during 1987 totalled 541,000. During the 1988-89 financial year it expects to raise £4,324,000 from periodic registration fees.

Dual Laser Beam Flow Sorter

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if his Department proposes to acquire or advise other agencies to acquire a dual laser beam flow sorter.

Mrs. Currie: No, but a number of specialised laboratories in the United Kingdom have these devices in use.

Boarding Doctors (Industrial Disablement)

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether any boarding doctors have past or present links with any industrial board claimants for industrial disablement benefit for any prescribed disease.

Mr. Scott: Many of the adjudicating medical practitioners who board claimants for prescribed diseases and industrial accidents have had, or currently have, appointments in industry as occupational physicians. Such industrial experience is of considerable value in this work. Departmental practice in this matter is governed by the provisions of Regulation 33 (1), (2) and (3), of the Social Security (Adjudication) Regulations 1986.

Kidney Patients

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he can give his Department's best estimate of the annual cost to the public purse in benefits (excluding all health care costs) of the average patient with end-stage renal failure, distinguishing between those who *(a)* have no treatment other than amelioration and care, *(b)* have renal dialysis treatment and *(c)* have had successful kidney transplant treatment.

Mr. Scott: The diversity of medical and financial circumstances within each of the three categories, and the resulting variations in benefit entitlement, are too great to permit any worthwhile attempt at an average annual benefit cost.

Social Workers

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the estimated cost of the proposed Open University course for social workers with deaf people.

Mr. Scott: I understand that the total development cost is now estimated at about £500,000 over a period of six years.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to meet the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work to discuss the training of social workers with deaf people.

Mr. Scott: Discussions have been held at official level and the Department will continue to keep in touch with the council about this issue.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to give the Open University a decision on funding the development costs of its proposed post-qualifying course for social workers with deaf people; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what priority he has given to funding the development costs of the Open University's proposed post-qualifying course for social workers with deaf people; and if he expects to announce a decision by the end of January to enable the course to be on offer in 1990.

Mr. Scott: I refer the right hon. and hon. Members to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) on 25 January at column *584*.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services which organisations have requested him to support the proposed Open University course for social workers with deaf people.

Mr. Scott: The application has been made by the Royal National Institute for the Deaf on behalf of the panel of four main national organisations helping deaf people and the national training group on which other voluntary organisations are also represented. The Association of Directors of Social Services has endorsed the proposal which also has the approval in principle of the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will outline the present provision for training social workers to work with profoundly deaf people.

Mr. Scott: There is no formal training course at present.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many local authorities have in post a social worker designated as working with deaf people; and what proportion this is of the total.

Mr. Scott: Information is not held centrally on the nature of the work carried out by particular social workers.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any proposals to collect centrally statistics on the number of social workers qualified to work with deaf people.

Mr. Scott: We have no plans to do so, although arrangements for collecting information centrally are kept under review to take account of changing needs.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he intends to take to increase the provision of training for social workers specialising in work with deaf people.

Mr. Scott: We are well aware of the need and both the Department and the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work are giving careful consideration to a proposal for a new course involving the Open University.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what assessment he has made of the adequacy of social work provision for deaf people; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The adequacy of such provision is for local authorities to determine in the light of local needs.

Deaf People

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the estimated number of profoundly deaf people in the United Kingdom; and how many of these are likely to require *(a)* environmental aids and *(b)* help with communication.

Mr. Scott: The information is not available in the form requested. The number of deaf people with and without

speech on local authority registers in England at 31 March 1986 totalled 34,077. Figures for the rest of the United Kingdom are matters for my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales and Northern Ireland and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

All deaf people will clearly require some help with communication, but it is not possible to estimate how many could benefit from the provision of particular kinds of assistance or of environmental aids.

Family Planning Clinics

Mr. Nicholas Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish figures about closures of family planning clinics within the last period for which figures are available; and what representations he has received about further proposed closures of these clinics.

Mr. Newton: Information is not centrally available in the form requested. National figures for the number of health authority family planning outlets and sessions provided in the last five years for which figures are available are set out in the table. There have been a number of representations about health authority proposals for reductions in clinic services, including correspondence from the Family Planning Association. There have been no referrals to Ministers, under the defined consultation procedures where consumer views are represented, of proposals for substantial changes where agreement cannot be reached locally.

Family planning clinic service: England
Community and hospital clinics[1]

	1982	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Premises regularly used for FP sessions	1,739	1,755	1,768	1,746	1,756
Sessions (all types)[2]	197,472	199,100	197,127	196,075	195,700

[1] The table covers all clinic services including any provided by voluntary bodies or others on an agency basis.
[2] A session with two doctors has been included as two sessions. If more than one nurse was present at a "nurse only" session it has been included as one session unless each nurse was advising a separate group.

Social Fund

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he plans to publish information about the social fund in minority languages; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: The Department intends to publish general information about the social fund in minority languages later in 1988. This will be in the form of a new edition of leaflet FB22 which is presently translated into six ethnic minority languages.

Health Services Information

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the progress being made in implementing the recommendations of the Korner steering group's reports on health services information.

Mr. Newton: The first phase in implementing the recommendations of the Korner steering group on health services information has proceeded satisfactorily. All district health authorities are collecting the required data. However, difficulties in interfacing computer systems meant that several districts were unable to provide some of the first quarter's returns to the Department: some of these difficulties are affecting the second quarter. A report on the first phase was published in the November issue of the British Journal of Healthcare Computing volume 4, pages 39 to 41 a copy of which is in the Library. The second phase relating to community and paramedical services is not due for implementation until 1 April 1988.

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will make a statement on progress being made with his Department's computer-based package to provide information as to the relative performance of *(a)* hospitals and *(b)* district health authorities;

(2) what information his Department's computer-based performance indicator package discloses concerning *(a)* the number of out-patient attendances at acute hospitals per annum and *(b)* the average cost per attendance; and if he will publish those details in respect of each acute hospital dealing with more than 100,000 out-patient attendances per annum;

(3) what information his Department's computer-based performance indicator package discloses concerning *(a)* the number of in-patient cases treated in acute hospitals per annum and *(b)* the average cost per in-patient case; and if he will publish those details in respect of each acute hospital dealing with more than 20,000 cases per annum;

(4) if he intends to introduce information as to diagnosis-related groups into his Department's computer-based performance indicator package.

Mr. Newton: A new set of the performance indicators for the hospital and community health services based on data for 1986-87 will be issued in February 1988. As in previous years this will be sent to every authority in England and a copy will be placed in the Library.

An improved, expanded set of indicators is currently being developed to make use of the new data collected from 1 April 1987 following the implementation of the recommendations of the steering committee on health service information (the "Kõrner committee"). Publication of the new health service indicators, based on data for 1987-88, is planned for January 1989.

The current indicators do not include information about attendances and costs of consultant out-patient clinics at acute hospitals. It is planned to include such information in the revised package of indicators. The current indicators do not provide information about the number of in-patients treated in acute hospitals; nor do they identify hospitals by the number of patients in them. Cost per case indicators are provided by district and major acute hospital but do not distinguish between hospitals by the number of cases treated.

Work is in hand in the context of resource management in the NHS to establish the potential of diagnostic related

groups (DRG's). Until the value of DRGs is demonstrated there are no plans to make use of them in performance indicators.

East Anglia

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the implications for his Department's *(a)* planning and *(b)* spending on health and social services of recent projections published by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys that East Anglia will have in the next 13 years the greatest proportionate population increase of both people moving in and of new births of any English region.

Mr. Newton: The resource allocation working party formula, which is used to calculate each region's target share of available resources, takes account of changes in the size of regional populations (and of the use made of health services by people of different ages and sexes). Annual allocations aim to bring regions towards their targets over time. East Anglia's growth in population is reflected in its 6·6 per cent. cash increase for 1988-89 compared with a national average of 5·7 per cent.

Medical Treatment (Spain)

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans his Department has to seek better reciprocal arrangements for medical treatment for United Kingdom nationals injured or taken ill in Spain; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: Under the terms of European Community regulations, United Kingdom nationals receive medical treatment in Spain from the Spanish state health care system on the same basis as Spanish nationals. Negotiations are currently taking place to ease access to the Spanish state system and to provide more information about it. United Kingdom nationals may also of course, if they wish, use Spanish private sector health care facilities paid for by themselves or by private insurance.

Unemployment Costs (Sheffield)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the total cost to public funds of unemployment within the Sheffield, Brightside constituency for the year ended December 1987, including benefits paid and tax and national insurance cost.

Mr. Portillo: I regret that it is not possible to estimate the total cost of unemployment, to include tax and national insurance contributions forgone, because of the number of factors that could affect this. The cost of paying benefit in 1987 to those unemployed in the Sheffield, Brightside, constituency could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Adjudication Officer's Guide

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when the adjudication officer's guide will be published.

Mr. Portillo: It is anticipated that the adjudication officer's guide will be published shortly, in time for the new social security benefits which come into operation on Monday 11 April 1988. I will write to the hon. Member when the exact date is known.

NHS (Accounting and Auditing)

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to change accountancy methods used within the National Health Service in the United Kingdom and the auditing arrangements for the overall accounts of the National Health Service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: There are no plans to change accounting methods in use within the NHS in England.

There may be some technical differences in the treatment of accounts generally in the other countries of the United Kingdom, and of course questions concerning the NHS in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are matters for my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales and Northern Ireland and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland. In England, current methods and accounting standards are closely modelled and developed in line with the statements of standard accounting practice applying within the private sector. This includes accounting for expenditure on an accruals basis, as well as accounting on a cash basis for Parliamentary Vote control purposes. Capital expenditure and income is recorded in the accounts, but there is no record in a balance sheet of capital assets, nor is there any provision for depreciation of such assets in the revenue accounts. However currently work is in hand in the NHS to develop improved methods of capital asset management, including capital accounting.

The monitoring and expenditure of health authorities that currently takes place on an informal basis will in future be reflected in the formal and regular monitoring of income, and expenditure levels and of output and activity as I announced on 16 December. This is planned to be undertaken in association with the in-year monitoring process which at present deals only with cash Vote control.

There are also no plans to change the auditing arrangements for NHS accounts, which are as outlined in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) on 13 January at columns *330-1*.

Benefits

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the total number of claimants in England, Scotland, Wales and the Fife, Central constituency who have been refused benefit through the decision of an independent adjudication officer; if he will break this figure down according to the reasons given for the withdrawal of benefit; and if he will provide the information requested for each year from 1979 to 1987, inclusive.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 1 December 1987]:* For unemployment benefit, which I assume is the benefit of interest to the hon. Member, a breakdown of disallowances in England, Scotland and Wales is shown in the tables. Adjudication work for Fife is centralised in the Edinburgh (East) adjudication office. The boundaries of the area dealt with by this office are not conterminous with those of the Fife central constituency and it is not possible, therefore, to provide separate figures for this constituency.

Total numbers of disallowances in England

Reasons for disallowance	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1985*	*1986*
All questions	683,798	795,168	756,721	800,961	829,197	842,754	922,760
Capability	2,138	2,349	2,369	3,080	3,742	5,043	6,149
Employment not terminated	43	20	21	143	53	207	14
Engaged in employment	15,135	24,188	37,267	56,983	84,009	62,374	53,690
Employed to full normal extent	764	1,336	1,686	2,476	9,098	22,798	28,461
Normal idle day	385	637	1,042	1,669	1,435	1,115	949
Payment in lieu of notice or wages, etc.	80,830	155,063	213,348	200,318	197,728	165,652	184,519
Recognised or customary holiday	1,802	1,969	2,582	3,368	4,811	6,114	6,777
Whether unemployed	12,080	21,212	26,053	33,277	39,128	46,256	51,626
Share fishermen—							
work as	100	46	338	133	193	144	86
no work available	71	78	645	234	195	105	38
Dependants benefit—							
child	4,417	7,298	6,804	5,847	4,542	380	170
adult	2,818	3,822	3,913	3,915	3,680	4,319	3,422
Delayed claim	52,805	69,246	67,375	79,320	87,572	106,491	132,121
Failure to attend for interview	360	374	141	136	281	213	381
Failure to keep to signing time	87	88	28	40	26	65	44
Occupational pensioners	—	—	—	224	147	79	136
Availability	22,960	33,437	33,693	44,810	43,308	40,515	52,720
Restricted availability	6,991	9,742	8,444	8,004	6,291	5,037	6,687
Share fishermen—neglect to avail	25	42	168	56	59	20	16
Trade dispute	7,648	3,874	1,473	485	811	2,030	778
Seasonal working	2,271	2,678	2,557	3,038	3,972	4,681	3,773
Leaving voluntarily	343,232	289,447	204,583	214,704	221,233	252,573	269,935
Misconduct	100,673	113,312	86,864	82,072	81,373	84,611	86,213
Employment—							
neglect to avail	561	608	480	333	331	641	1,132
refusal of	5,943	6,742	3,367	1,879	1,278	1,295	1,669
Refusal or premature termination of training	308	364	314	231	1,013	6,024	5,709
Refusal to carry out written recommendations	147	237	114	62	76	110	25
Earnings related supplement	333	894	1,103	19	—	—	—
Restart	—	—	—	—	—	—	408
Other questions	18,871	46,065	49,949	54,105	32,812	23,862	25,112

Notes:

1. The headings used in the Annual Analysis changed from 1982.
2. Figures for 1984 are not available.

Total Numbers of Disallowances in Scotland

Reasons for disallowance	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1985*	*1986*
All questions	102,412	111,154	97,784	103,120	108,464	113,633	116,109
Capability	688	960	823	1,189	1,323	1,410	1,474
Employment not terminated	1	1	5	2	2	4	2
Engaged in employment	2,026	2,853	4,749	6,859	9,851	7,239	4,675
Employed to full normal extent	172	134	206	317	1,224	3,331	4,889
Normal idle day	53	98	101	203	416	553	806
Payment in lieu of notice or wages, etc	11,148	19,657	21,770	24,231	27,556	23,793	25,085
Recognised or customary holiday	291	281	412	451	435	547	366
Whether unemployed	1,992	2,812	3,819	5,116	6,501	8,087	9,607
Share fishermen—work as	42	124	69	98	112	85	224
no work available	156	1,081	2,499	237	306	200	164
Dependants benefit—child	369	491	487	410	344	26	17
adult	330	353	388	299	363	539	462
Delayed claim	7,228	9,519	9,340	10,250	10,939	13,055	13,588
Failure to attend for interview	28	39	10	12	22	34	230
Failure to keep to signing time	12	16	6	2	3	11	1
Occupational pensioners	—	—	—	24	22	18	5
Availability	4,155	5,604	4,469	5,880	5,097	5,770	6,626
Restricted availability	791	1,086	947	964	526	448	362
Share fishermen—neglect to avail	62	122	994	127	111	95	187
Trade dispute	488	207	221	93	92	358	104
Seasonal working	250	312	304	425	474	670	2,067
Leaving voluntarily	53,077	44,404	29,359	29,296	28,469	32,312	30,806
Misconduct	15,755	15,566	11,748	10,419	9,548	10,254	9,513
Employment—neglect to avail	63	84	80	78	71	68	75
refusal of	455	756	455	243	96	145	189
Refusal or premature termination of training	42	31	23	23	130	838	446
Refusal to carry out written recommendations	88	6	2	5	15	3	1
Earnings related supplement	25	25	35	3	—	—	—
Restart	—	—	—	—	—	—	91
Other questions	2,625	4,532	4,463	5,864	4,416	3,740	4,047

Reasons for Disallowance	Total Numbers of Disallowances in Wales						
	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1985	1986
All questions	38,578	43,155	37,693	39,472	40,317	43,054	42,525
Capability	191	236	216	387	453	587	675
Employment not terminated	—	—	1	2	39	1	5
Engaged in employment	376	710	1,018	1,508	2,900	2,063	996
Employed to full normal extent	97	136	246	401	1,314	2,344	2,647
Normal idle day	16	46	40	42	61	105	107
Payment in lieu of notice or wages etc.	3,820	6,858	7,857	7,887	7,071	6,949	6,227
Recognised or customary holiday	169	181	224	271	479	593	533
Whether unemployed	819	1,253	1,333	1,590	1,967	2,529	2,486
Share fishermen—work as	12	4	1	2	4	1	—
no work available	—	—	2	6	1	—	—
Dependants benefit—child	380	613	598	431	276	34	—
adult	185	303	298	255	206	272	255
Delayed claim	3,290	5,016	4,574	5,184	5,967	5,695	6,503
Failure to attend for interview	2	11	5	4	22	7	6
Failure to keep to signing time	4	4	2	1	3	2	—
Occupational pensioners	—	—	—	14	22	3	2
Availability	999	1,794	1,480	2,035	1,838	1,735	2,056
Restricted availability	621	763	413	322	177	175	322
Share fishermen—neglect to avail	—	—	1	—	6	2	—
Trade dispute	135	210	81	8	73	69	10
Seasonal working	379	420	413	532	569	834	818
Leaving voluntarily	20,009	16,452	11,837	11,822	11,582	13,321	13,488
Misconduct	5,504	5,992	4,560	3,827	3,775	3,873	3,776
Employment—neglect to avail	38	44	25	23	31	53	35
—refusal of	714	729	372	126	76	94	87
Refusal or premature termination of training	30	52	29	20	106	146	167
Refusal to carry out written recommendations	13	21	6	1	3	3	6
Earnings related supplement	7	21	3	—	—	—	—
Restart	—	—	—	—	—	—	6
Other questions	768	1,286	2,058	2,771	1,296	1,564	1,312

Hospital Closures

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list those hospitals for which closure proposals have currently been referred to him, and the date of the reference in each case.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 14 January 1988]:* The information requested is given in the table:

Referred by (RHA) and proposal	Date of referral
Northern	
Change of use of Hermitage Rehabilitation Centre	25 November 1986
Yorkshire	
Closure of Whartedale Hospital GP maternity unit	26 January 1987
North-West Thames	
Change of use of Kershaw ward, Gordon Hospital	10 August 1987
Transfer of plastic surgery from West Middlesex Hospital to Charing Cross Hospital	7 January 1988
North-East Thames	
Closure of maternity unit King George's Hospital	27 July 1987
Closure of Southend Hospital and North Middlesex Hospital radiotherapy units	23 December 1987
South-East Thames	
Night closure of A and E department, Orpington Hospital	1 October 1986
Closure of neurosciences unit at Brook Hospital	1 June 1987
Transfer of orthopaedic beds for Preston Hall Hospital to Maidstone Hospital	1 December 1986
Closure of continuing care beds at Linton Hospital	1 December 1986
West Midlands	
Closure of Whitley Hospital, Coventry	15 October 1987
North Western	
Transfer of urology services from West Lancashire Health Authority to Wigan Health Authority	26 July 1987
Rationalisation of hospital services in Glossop	16 December 1987

Mentally Ill People

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the numbers of mentally ill patients registered in the Central Nottinghamshire health authority area for each year 1979 to 1987, inclusive.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 15 January 1988]:* The numbers of people in National Health Service mental illness hospitals and units in the Central Nottinghamshire health authority on 31 December are given in the table. The people concerned are not registered and may not have been resident in the area of the health authority before their admission as patients. The figures relate to in-patients only and these cannot be analysed by district of residence (for home address) as this information is not centrally collected. The numbers of residents in a

particular district health authority are limited by the availability of local facilities and Central Nottinghamshire DHA has no large mental illness hospitals within its boundaries. Figures for 1987 are not yet available.

Numbers of people in mental illness hospitals and units in Central Nottinghamshire health authority at 31 December

Year	Number
1979	78
1980	75
1981	80
1982	77
1983	77
1984	98
1985	88
1986	100

Hospital Beds

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the decline in the number of beds in National Health Service hospitals since 1958.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 21 January 1988]:* The information requested is given in the table, together with in-patients treated over the period.

NHS hospitals in England

Year	Average daily number of available beds	Discharges and deaths	[1]Throughput
1958	450,597	3,694,940	8·2
1959	448,795	3,782,731	8·4
1960	448,343	3,931,938	8·8
1961	442,343	4,035,374	9·1
1962	440,316	4,149,641	9·4
1963	439,176	4,317,981	9·8
1964	438,404	4,455,092	10·2
1965	437,408	4,540,162	10·4
1966	434,846	4,616,726	10·6
1967	434,378	4,722,399	10·9
1968	432,140	4,848,229	11·2
1969	428,737	4,968,391	11·6
1970	423,621	5,011,713	11·8
1971	419,612	5,170,791	12·3
1972	412,664	5,222,978	12·7
1973	403,526	5,132,302	12·7
1974	396,235	5,171,706	13·1
1975	387,632	4,975,750	12·8
1976	383,132	5,254,551	13·7
1977	375,926	5,344,967	14·2
1978	369,235	5,370,319	14·5
1979	361,670	5,400,120	14·9
1980	355,978	5,670,001	15·9
1981	351,669	5,759,877	16·4
1982	348,104	5,719,634	16·4
1983	343,091	6,016,585	17·5
1984	334,513	6,177,545	18·5
1985	325,487	6,353,812	19·5
1986	315,714	6,413,789	20·3

[1] Number of cases per available bed.

WALES

Water Rates

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what the percentages rise in average water rates for Wales has been between 1979 and the latest date available in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* real terms.

Mr. Grist: The percentage rise in average water rates for the Welsh water authority between 1979-80 and 1987-88 in cash and real terms was 149·8 per cent. and 43·6 per cent. respectively.

These figures are based on the rates payable for the average domestic heriditament the rateable value of which was £120 from 1979 to 1982 and £124 thereafter.

EC Structural Fund (Review)

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how he expects the review of EEC structural funds to affect *(a)* European regional development fund assistance and *(b)* European social fund assistance to (i) Wales and (ii) Mid-Glamorgan.

Mr. Peter Walker: Discussions are still in progress, on the basis of the proposals made by the Commission, on the future objectives for the structural funds. Agreement on the objective criteria for defining those areas which may, in the longer term, be eligible for assistance has not yet been reached. The need to consider those areas traditionally affected by industrial decline is, however, specifically reflected both in the EC treaty and in the Commission's present proposals.

Library Authority (Newport)

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he will announce a decision on Newport borough council's application of 1984 to be designated a library authority under the provisions of the Local Government Act 1972.

Mr. Grist: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) on Friday 22 January 1988, at column *881*.

Circular 44/87

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales which councils received copies of his Department's circular 44/87; and why it was sent to them.

Mr. Grist: It is known that two local authorities (Swansea city council and Gwynedd county council) have received copies of a document which appeared to be an updated version of circular 30/86, "Housing for Senior Management". The Department has since written to all local authorities in Wales explaining that circular 30/86 continues in force.

Regional Aid

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is *(a)* his predicted expenditure on regional aid in Wales in 1988-89, excluding the Welsh Development Agency and *(b)* expenditure on regional selective assistance and regional development grant in 1986-87, at constant prices.

Mr. Peter Walker: The 1988 public expenditure White Paper contained planned provision of £111 million (net of non-EC receipts) for regional aid in Wales in 1988-89. The outturn figure will be very much affected by the number of Welsh firms that take advantage of the opportunity of applying for regional development grant prior to 31 March 1988, because any valid application prior to that date will have two years from approval to take advantage of the grant.

The figure for 1986-87 for regional selective assistance and regional development grant at comparable prices was £128·7 million, but £70·9 million of this was residual payments for the RDG I scheme, which was ended as a result of the review in 1984.

The substantial increase in WDA expenditure plus the increased use of regional selective assistance mean that in total expenditure on regional policy will be enhanced in coming years.

House Condition Survey

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to publish the results of the 1986 Welsh house condition survey.

Mr. Grist: Publication of the 1986 "Welsh House Condition Survey" will take place in spring of this year.

Civil Service (Redundancies)

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many Civil Service redundancies, in which Civil Service ranks, will be caused by the decision to end regional development grants in Wales; and how many new posts and at what level will be created to administer the newly announced selective grants.

Mr. Peter Walker: No redundancies will arise. It is too early to say precisely how many staff will eventually be required to administer the regional investment and regional innovation grant schemes, but staff are being redeployed to that work and further staff will be provided as required.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a commentary on the Welsh public expenditure programme, similar to that published annually by the Scottish Office.

Mr. Peter Walker: My Department's resources, achievements and priorities are set out in the Wales chapter of "The Government's Expenditure Plans 1988-89 to 1990-91", Cm. 288. The narrative comprises almost 100 paragraphs and is further supplemented by 34 tables and charts, together with an extensive bibliography.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish an analysis of expenditure shown in table 17.1 of "The Government's Expenditure Plans 1988-89 to 1990-91" Cm. 288, on a similar basis to those published in his reply of 28 January 1987, *Official Report*, column 686.

Mr. Peter Walker: The following tables provide an analysis of the expenditure shown in table 17.1 of The Government's Expenditure Plans 1988-89 to 1990-91" Cm. 288, on a similar basis to the tables which appeared in the *Official Report* for 22 January 1987, at columns 686-96.

In all the tables the totals have been derived from unrounded figures and the components may not therefore always add to the totals shown.

It is misleading to make comparisons between the planned level of expenditure for one year and the outturn (or estimated outturn) for other years. I am therefore including a table which sets out the planned provision within the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Wales for each of the years 1982-83 to 1987-88 as published in successive volumes of the Government's expenditure plans.

Due to changes in the definition and classification of public expenditure and to increases in the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Wales over the period, the figures shown in the tables are not strictly comparable in every case. Also, the public expenditure provision for the Secretary of State for Wales for the years 1982-83 to 1984-85 did not include regional development grants.

Planned provision within the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Wales

(£ million)

	1982-83	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*
Agriculture, fisheries and food	66	78	93	81	77	82
Industry, energy, trade and employment	86	79	78	148	157	138
Other services:						
Tourism	5	6	6	7	8	8
Roads and transport	290	299	287	286	300	319
Housing	169	143	118	126	140	166
Other environmental services	275	294	284	272	293	323
Education	645	682	665	694	730	846
Arts and libraries			28	30	31	38
Health and personal social services	850	915	968	1,035	1,115	1,220
Other public services	36	31	32	32	37	38
Total other services	2,271	2,370	2,388	2,482	2,655	2,958
Nationalised industries' EFL						
National Bus Company			26	27	—	—
Welsh Water Authority					16	13
Total nationalised industries external financing			26	27	16	13
Total expenditure within the Secretary of State's responsibility	2,423	2,538	2,585	2,737	2,904	3,192

Programme 16.9 Health and Personal Social Services

£ million

	1982-83 Outturn	1983-84 Outturn	1984-85 Outturn	1985-86 Outturn	1986-7 Outturn	1987-88 Estimated Outturn	1988-89 Plans	1989-90 Plans	1990-91 Plans
Health Services									
Hospital and Community Health Services									
Current Expenditure									
Gross	521	548	589	629	672	753	795	—	—
Charges	1	1	1	2	3	2	2	—	—
Net	520	547	588	627	669	751	793	—	—
Capital Expenditure									
Gross	47	50	53	55	61	55	62	—	—
Charges	1	1	1	2	3	3	5	—	—
Net	46	49	52	53	58	52	57	—	—
Family Practitioner Services									
Current Expenditure									
Gross	188	202	221	233	252	281	305	—	—
Charges	15	17	18	17	19	20	22	—	—
Net	173	185	203	216	233	261	282	—	—
Capital Expenditure (net)	—	—	—	1	1	1	—	—	—
Central Health and Miscellaneous Services									
Current Expenditure	13	16	19	23	28	35	40	—	—
Capital Expenditure	—	—	—	1	1	—	—	—	—
Total National Health Services									
Current expenditure									
Gross	722	766	829	886	952	1,069	1,141	—	—
Net	706	748	810	866	931	1,047	1,116	—	—
Capital Expenditure									
Gross	47	50	54	56	62	56	62	—	—
Net	46	49	52	55	59	53	57	—	—
Personal Social Services									
Central Government Services									
Current Expenditure	—	1	1	1	1	1	1	—	—
Local Authority Services									
Current Expenditure									
Gross	125	137	140	150	160	172	179	—	—
Charges	22	24	23	24	26	28	29	—	—
Net	103	113	118	126	134	145	150	—	—
Capital Expenditure									
Gross	6	6	7	5	8	8	7	—	—
Charges	1	1	1	—	1	1	1	—	—
Net	5	5	6	5	7	7	6	—	—
Total Personal Social Services									
Current Expenditure									
Gross	125	138	141	151	161	173	180	—	—
Net	103	114	118	126	134	145	151	—	—
Capital Expenditure									
Gross	6	6	7	5	8	8	7	—	—
Net	5	5	6	5	7	7	6	—	—
Total Health and Personal Social Services									
Current Expenditure									
Gross	848	904	970	1,036	1,112	1,242	1,321	—	—
Charges	39	42	42	44	47	49	55	—	—
Net	809	862	928	992	1,065	1,193	1,266	—	—
Capital Expenditure									
Gross	53	56	61	62	69	64	68	—	—
Charges	2	2	3	2	3	5	4	—	—
Net	51	54	58	60	66	59	64	—	—
Total Health and Personal Social Services Current and Capital Net	859	916	987	1,052	1,131	1,252	1,330	1,390	1,440

Programme 16.8 Arts and Libraries

£ million

	1982-83 Outturn	1983-84 Outturn	1984-85 Outturn	1985-86 Outturn	1986-87 Outturn	1987-88 Estimated Outturn	1988-89 Plans	1989-90 Plans	1990-91 Plans
Central government									
National Library of Wales									

	1982-83 Outturn	1983-84 Outturn	1984-85 Outturn	1985-86 Outturn	1986-87 Outturn	1987-88 Estimated Outturn	1988-89 Plans	1989-90 Plans	1990-91 Plans
Current	2	2	2	2	2	3	3		
Capital	—	—	1	1	1	1	—		
National Museum of Wales									
Current	6	6	6	7	7	7	8		
Capital	1	1	1	1	1	6	4		
Total central government	9	9	10	11	11	17	15		
Local authorities									
Relevant current spending									
Libraries	15	15	16	17	18	19	20		
Museums and Galleries	1	2	2	2	2	2	2		
Total relevant current spending	16	17	17	18	20	21	22		
Local authority capital									
Libraries	1	1	1	1	1	2	1		
Museums and Galleries	—	1	1	1	1	1	1		
Total Local Authority Capital	1	2	2	2	2	3	1		
Total local authorities	17	19	19	21	22	24	23		
Total libraries, museums and arts	26	28	29	32	33	41	38	40	40

Programme 16.7 Education

£ million

	1982-83 Outturn	1983-84 Outturn	1984-85 Outturn	1985-86 Outturn	1986-87 Outturn	1987-88 Estimated Outturn	1988-89 Plans	1989-90 Plans	1990-91 Plans
Central government									
Schools									
Primary, secondary and other									
Capital	1	1	1	1	1	2	2		
Current	—	1	1	1	1	2	2		
Higher and further education									
Voluntary									
Current	1	1	2	2	2	2	2		
Capital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—		
Adult education (including awards)	2	2	2	2	2	2	2		
Miscellaneous education services and research									
Youth services	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		
Other educational services	—	—	—	1	1	1	2		
Support for the Welsh Language	1	1	1	1	2	2	2		
Total central government	6	7	8	9	10	12	13		
Local authorities									
Relevant current spending									
Schools									
Under 5's	27	29	29	31	33	37	39		
Primary	158	164	166	177	196	217	229		
Secondary	218	232	239	239	272	301	308		
Special schools	18	20	22	23	25	28	30		
Other (including supporting services)									
Child Guidance	6	1	2	2	2	2	3		
Pupil Support		4	4	4	4	4	5		
Transport	21	23	23	23	24	25	29		
Meals and milk	27	28	29	28	30	31	32		
Further education									
AFE	80	29	31	33	37	40	41		
NAFE		55	56	57	64	71	75		
Adult education		1	3	3	3	3	4		
Awards to students	7	8	9	9	8	9	11		
Miscellaneous education services									
Youth services	5	6	6	6	7	8	8		
Other education services	5	5	4	4	4	5	6		

	1982-83 Outturn	1983-84 Outturn	1984-85 Outturn	1985-86 Outturn	1986-87 Outturn	1987-88 Estimated Outturn	1988-89 Plans	1989-90 Plans	1990-91 Plans
Administration	29	31	32	33	32	36	42		
Total Revelant Current Spending	601	636	655	672	742	817	862		
Local Authority Capital	34	35	34	29	35	45	46		
Total Local Authorities	635	672	689	701	776	862	908		
Total education	641	679	697	710	786	874	922	950	980

Programme 16.6: Other environmental services

£ million

	1982-83 Outturn	1983-84 Outturn	1984-85 Outturn	1985-86 Outturn	1986-87 Outturn	1987-88 Estimated Outturn	1988-89 Plans	1989-90 Plans	1990-91 Plans
Urban group									
Urban Development Corporation	—	—	—	—	—	12	16		
Urban Programme (including Urban Development Grant and Urban Regeneration Grant)	18	16	21	25	25	25	36		
Derelict land reclamation	10	11	7	5	6	12	12		
New Towns									
Gross expenditure	2	2	2	3	4	2	—		
Receipts	—	—	−1	−14	−3	−16	—		
Net expenditure	2	2	1	−11	1	−14	—		
Recreation and Environmental Protection									
Recreation and environmental bodies (including research)	3	4	4	4	5	5	5		
Heritage—cadw									
Historic buildings and ancient monuments	2	2	3	4	4	5	5		
Local Environmental Services									
Capital									
Gross expenditure	55	70	66	73	92	85	63		
Receipts	9	14	18	10	18	19	24		
Net expenditure	46	56	48	63	74	66	39		
Current expenditure	165	168	175	180	189	199	207		
Other Local Authority Current									
Local authority rate collection	8	7	8	8	8	9	9		
Records and registration of births, deaths and marriages	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		
Water									
Welsh Water Authority EFL	23	19	24	21	17	13	11		
Civil defence	—	—	—	—	—	—	1		
Other water services	1	1	1	1	1	1	2		
Total other environmental services (including Welsh Water Authority EFL)	281	287	291	300	331	334	344	350	350

Programme 16.5 Housing

£ million

	1982-83 outturn	1983-84 outturn	1984-85 outturn	1985-86 outturn	1986-87 outturn	1987-88 estimated outturn	1988-89 plans	1989-90 plans	1990-91 plans
Gross capital expenditure									
Central Government Housing Corporation									
Support to private sector									
Provision for rent by Housing Associations (including low cost home ownership)	46	49	43	44	51	63	60	—	—

	1982-83 outturn	1983-84 outturn	1984-85 outturn	1985-86 outturn	1986-87 outturn	1987-88 estimated outturn	1988-89 plans	1989-90 plans	1990-91 plans
Local authorities									
Public sector provision									
Renovation	48	48	44	52	78	71	68	—	—
Provision for rent	41	47	36	27	26	37	23	—	—
Support for private sector									
Renovation and clearance	44	112	86	59	75	85	101	—	—
Home ownership	8	9	5	3	6	3	3	—	—
Public corporations									
New towns									
Public sector provision									
Renovation	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	—	—
Provision for rent	5	3	4	3	1	0	0	—	—
Total public sector provision	94	99	84	82	105	107	91	—	—
Total support to private sector	98	169	135	106	133	151	164	—	—
Total renovation	92	161	130	111	153	156	169	—	—
Total provision for rent (including support for home ownership)	100	108	88	76	84	102	86	—	—
Total Housing Corporation	46	49	43	44	51	63	60	—	—
Total local authorities	140	216	171	141	185	195	195	—	—
Total New Towns	5	4	4	3	1	0	0	—	—
Total gross capital expenditure	192	269	219	187	237	258	255	—	—
Capital receipts									
Housing Corporation	−2	−8	−4	−4	−5	−6	−5	—	—
Local authorities	−86	−79	−91	−71	−82	−91	−107	—	—
New Towns	−10	−5	−7	−5	−2	−4	0	—	—
Total capital receipts	−98	−92	−102	−79	−89	−101	−112	—	—
Net capital expenditure									
Housing Corporation	45	41	39	40	46	57	55	—	—
Local authorities	54	137	80	70	103	104	88	—	—
New Towns	−5	−2	−3	−2	−1	−4	0	—	—
Total net capital expenditure	94	176	117	108	148	157	142	—	—
Current Expenditure									
Central government									
Subsides to:									
Housing Associations	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	—	—
Local authorities	12	2	6	7	12	10	11	—	—
Housing Corporation and central government: current	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	—	—
Local authorities									
Subsidies to revenue deficits on local authority housing for rent	11	8	5	2	3	2	2	—	—
Other current	6	7	7	7	7	8	8	—	—
Public corporations									
Subsidies to New Towns	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	—	—
Total current expenditure	31	19	20	20	24	23	24	—	—
Total housing	125	196	137	128	172	180	166	170	170

Programme 16·4 Roads and Transport

£ million

	1982-83 Outturn	1983-84 Outturn	1984-85 Outturn	1985-86 Outturn	1986-87 Outturn	1987-88 Estimated Outturn	1988-89 Plans	1989-90 Plans	1990-91 Plans
Central Government									
National roads system									
Current (1)	8	12	12	14	15	14	14	—	—
Capital (2)	110	136	93	85	97	111	118	—	—
Assess road grants	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Rural bus grants	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Freight facilities grants	—	1	—	1	—	1	1	—	—

	1982-83 Outturn	1983-84 Outturn	1984-85 Outturn	1985-86 Outturn	1986-87 Outturn	1987-88 Estimated Outturn	1988-89 Plans	1989-90 Plans	1990-91 Plans
Other (including research and development, Road safety, etc.)	—	1	1	1	—	—	—	—	—
Total central government	119	149	105	100	112	125	133	—	—
Local Authorities									
Relevant current spending									
Roads	69	74	74	75	83	90	90	—	—
Car parks (net of receipts)	—.	−1	−1	−2	−2	−2	−2	—	—
Revenue support for public transport	3	4	4	4	10	8	10	—	—
Concessionary Fares	6	6	6	6	7	7	8	—	—
Professional and technical services including Road Safety	10	15	16	15	16	18	21	—	—
Total relevant current spending	89	97	98	99	114	121	126	—	—
Local authority capital									
Roads	66	58	55	65	63	70	58	—	—
Public transport	5	6	4	4	1	5	5	—	—
Total Local Authority Capital	71	64	59	69	65	75	63	—	—
Public Corporations									
National Bus Company EFL	6	7	7	7	—	—	—	—	—
Other Public Corporations	2	1	3	1	3	3	—	—	—
Total Public Corporations	8	8	10	8	3	3	—	—	—
Total roads and transport	286	318	273	276	293	324	322	340	350

Programmes 16.2 and 16.3 Industry and Employment

£ million

	1982-83 Outturn	1983-84 Outturn	1984-85 Outturn	1985-86 Outturn	1986-87 Outturn	1987-88 Estimated Outturn	1988-89 Plans	1989-90 Plans	1990-91 Plans
Industry									
Regional and general industrial support	127	85	93	107	120	94	111	—	—
Other Public Corporations (WDA and DBRW)									
(i) Voted Estimates	62	46	44	39	42	65	72	—	—
(ii) Other	3	8	6	5	4	4	4	—	—
(iii) Total Other Public Corporations	65	53	51	44	45	69	77	—	—
Total industry	192	138	144	151	165	163	188	—	—
Employment									
Tourism	5	5	6	8	8	9	9	—	—
Careers Service—local authorities									
(i) Relevant current expenditure	2	3	3	3	4	4	4	—	—
(ii) Non-relevant current expenditure	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	—	—
(iii) Total careers service	3	4	4	4	5	5	5	—	—
Total employment	8	9	10	12	13	14	14	—	—
Total industry and employment	201	147	154	164	178	177	203	190	190

Programme 16.1 Agriculture, Fisheries and Food

£ million

	1982-83 Outturn	1983-84 Outturn	1984-85 Outturn	1985-86 Outturn	1986-87 Outturn	1987-88 Estimated Outturn	1988-89 Plans	1989-90 Plans	1990-91 Plans
Intervention board for Agricultural produce and other EC expenditure									
Market Support[1]	9	20	25	27	41	38	35	—	—

	1982-83 Outturn	1983-84 Outturn	1984-85 Outturn	1985-86 Outturn	1986-87 Outturn	1987-88 Estimated Outturn	1988-89 Plans	1989-90 Plans	1990-91 Plans
Total IBAP and other EC expenditure	9	20	25	27	41	38	35	—	—
Domestic Agriculture, Fisheries and Food									
Structural Measures for Agriculture	52	58	52	58	51	49	47	—	—
Animal Health	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
Other Agricultural and Food Services[2]	—	—	1	1	2	1	2	—	—
Support for the Fishing Industry[2]	1	—	1	1	1	1	1	—	—
Total Domestic Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	53	59	54	60	54	51	50	—	—
Total Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	62	79	79	87	96	89	85	90	90

[1] Includes national supplement to EC market support.
[2] Includes projects assisted by EC.

Capital Expenditure

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he will publish proposals for the reform of capital expenditure control.

Mr. Peter Walker: I hope to publish proposals shortly for the future control of local authority capital.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will publish the capital allocation to each local authority, within each expenditure block and in total, in 1987-88 and 1988-89, showing the percentage change for each authority between the two years in their total allocation;

(2) if he will publish the capital allocation in total to the local authorities within each region, by expenditure block, in 1987-88 and 1988-89, showing the percentage change for each region.

Mr. Peter Walker: The information requested is shown in the following table.

With the exception of housing, capital allocations are not separately identified. The "All Other Services" block includes projects of regional and national importance, special projects, TSG-related transport schemes and urban programme, together with a formula based allocation.

No meaningful year-on-year comparison can be made at an individual local authority level as £69 million (20·4 per cent. of the total) remains to be allocated for 1988-89. Wales is not split into regions other than local authority areas.

Capital allocations by authority

(£000)

	1987-88			1988-89			Change in total allocation per cent.
	Housing	All other services	Total	Housing	All other services	Total	
Alyn and Deeside	1,925	2,013	3,938	1,797	657	2,454	—
Colwyn	1,798	923	2,721	1,662	585	2,247	—
Delyn	1,424	1,656	3,080	1,326	644	1,970	—
Glyndwr	1,237	666	1,903	1,159	400	1,559	—
Rhuddlan	1,479	2,732	4,211	874	1,756	2,630	—
Wrexham Maelor	5,526	2,191	7,717	3,825	1,571	5,396	—
Carmarthen	3,545	887	4,432	2,361	526	2,887	—
Ceredigion	2,383	1,111	3,494	1,991	767	2,758	—
Dinefwr	1,260	607	1,867	1,047	348	1,395	—
Llanelli	2,428	1,491	3,919	2,179	687	2,866	—
Preseli Pembs	1,842	1,464	3,306	1,616	737	2,353	—
South Pembroke	3,417	1,650	5,067	1,542	547	2,089	—
Blaenau Gwent	11,023	1,847	12,870	6,956	1,270	8,226	—
Islwyn	6,876	1,332	8,208	3,320	600	3,920	—
Monmouth	3,081	1,076	4,157	1,973	730	2,703	—
Newport	5,978	2,884	8,862	4,988	1,287	6,275	—
Torfaen	5,112	1,888	7,000	3,568	840	4,408	—
Aberconwy	1,538	1,027	2,565	1,301	671	1,972	—
Arfon	2,165	1,246	3,411	2,021	602	2,623	—
Dwyfor	1,100	1,439	2,539	814	686	1,500	—
Meirionnydd	920	808	1,728	881	458	1,339	—
Ynys Mon	3,528	1,319	4,847	1,835	790	2,625	—
Cynon Valley	4,829	1,964	6,793	3,405	614	4,019	—
Merthyr Tydfil	3,821	2,258	6,079	3,182	852	4,034	—

	1987-88			1988-89			Change in total allocation per cent.
	Housing	All other services	Total	Housing	All other services	Total	
Ogwr	5,633	2,860	8,493	3,742	1,294	5,036	—
Rhondda	10,814	1,924	12,738	5,634	724	6,358	—
Rhymney Valley	8,564	2,084	10,648	4,507	974	5,481	—
Taff Ely	6,182	1,514	7,696	3,943	874	4,817	—
Brecknock	1,876	1,394	3,270	1,414	1,105	2,519	—
Montgomeryshire	1,425	694	2,119	1,440	494	1,934	—
Radnor	921	505	1,426	777	410	1,187	—
Cardiff	16,300	4,760	21,060	11,474	2,735	14,209	—
Vale of Glamorgan	3,509	2,471	5,980	2,693	1,102	3,795	—
Port Talbot	3,069	1,299	4,368	2,415	479	2,894	—
Lliw Valley	2,963	1,106	4,069	2,562	534	3,096	—
Neath	3,217	1,200	4,417	2,341	598	2,939	—
Swansea	8,426	4,137	12,563	7,173	2,366	9,539	—
Clwyd	0	16,612	16,612	0	16,311	16,311	—
Dyfed	0	16,645	16,645	0	15,208	15,208	—
Gwent	0	21,466	21,466	0	18,169	18,169	—
Gwynedd	0	9,197	9,197	0	7,685	7,685	—
Mid Glamorgan	0	24,077	24,077	0	20,553	20,553	—
Powys	0	7,111	7,111	0	6,053	6,053	—
South Glamorgan	0	32,858	32,858	0	28,498	28,498	—
West Glamorgan	0	20,124	20,124	0	18,144	18,144	—
Yet to be allocated	440	3,498	3,938	39,418	29,500	68,918	—
Total Wales	151,574	214,015	365,589	145,156	192,435	337,591	−7·7

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will publish the estimated outturn net and gross capital expenditure, in total, by region, for each year from 1981-82 to 1986-87, with the comparable planned figures for 1987-88 and 1988-89;

(2) if he will publish the planned, budgeted and outturn net and gross capital expenditure, in total, for each year from 1981-82 to 1988-89.

Mr. Peter Walker: Planned and outturn local authority capital expenditure is provided in the following table. This excludes law and order services falling within the responsibility of the Home Office. No information is available for budgeted expenditure and no regional breakdown is available.

	Planned (£ million)		Outturn (£ million)	
Year	Net	Gross	Net	Gross
1981-82	220	259	182	248
1982-83	275	344	238	346
1983-84	305	396	315	415
1984-85	237	346	258	365
1985-86	249	349	264	347
1986-87	268	368	323	416
1987-88	298	410	350	450
1988-89	288	416	n/a	n/a

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table similar to table 17.1 in "The Government's Expenditure Plans 1988-89 to 1990-91" showing the outturn expenditure in 1986-87, and estimated expenditure for each year in that table, at constant prices for each such year.

Mr. Peter Walker: It is misleading to make comparisons between the planned level of provision for one year and the outturn (or estimated outturn) for other years.

Table 1 shows in real terms the planned provision within the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Wales for each of the years 1982-83 to 1990-91 as published in successive volumes of the Government's expenditure plans.

Table 2 sets out the comparable outturn figures for the years 1982-83 to 1987-88 in real terms.

Due to changes in the definition and classification of public expenditure and to increases in the repsonsibility of the Secretary of State for Wales over the period, the figures shown in both tables are not strictly comparable in every case. Also, the public expenditure provision for the Secretary of State for Wales for the years 1982-83 to 1984-85 did not include regional development grants.

Expenditure within the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Wales in real terms (1986-87 base year)[1]

£ million

	1982-83 plans	1983-84 plans	1984-85 plans	1985-86 plans	1986-87 plans	1987-88 plans	1988-89 plans	1989-90 plans	1990-91 plans
Agriculture, fisheries and food	79	89	102	83	77	79	78	80	80
Industry, energy, trade and employment	103	90	85	152	157	132	178	160	150
Other services:									
Tourism	6	7	7	7	8	8	8	10	10
Roads and transport	346	341	314	295	300	306	296	300	300
Housing	202	163	129	130	140	159	153	150	150

	1982-83 plans	1983-84 plans	1984-85 plans	1985-86 plans	1986-87 plans	1987-88 plans	1988-89 plans	1989-90 plans	1990-91 plans
Other environmental services	328	335	310	280	293	310	305	300	300
Education	769	778	726	715	730	812	846	840	840
Arts and libraries			31	31	31	36	35	40	40
Health and personal social services	1,014	1,044	1,057	1,066	1,115	1,170	1,221	1,230	1,240
Other public services	43	35	35	33	37	36	39	40	40
Total other services	2,709	2,703	2,609	2,557	2,655	2,837	2,902	2,900	2,910
National industries' EFL									
National Bus Company			28	28	—	—	—	—	—
Welsh Water Authority					16	12	10	10	10
Total Nationalised industries external financing			28	28	16	12	10	10	10
Total expenditure within the Secretary of State's responsibility	2,890	2,883	2,824	2,819	2,904	3,062	3,168	3,150	3,150

[1] Cash figures adjusted for general inflation as measured by the GDP deflator at market prices.

Expenditure within the responsibilty of the Secretary of State for Wales in real terms (1986-87 base year)[1]

	1982-83 outturn	1983-84 outturn	1984-85 outturn	1985-86 outturn	1986-87 outturn	1987-88 estimated outturn
Agriculture, fisheries and food	74	90	86	89	96	85
Industry, energy, trade and employment	233	162	162	160	170	162
Other services:						
Tourism	6	6	7	8	8	8
Roads and transport	334	354	290	277	293	311
Housing	149	223	149	132	172	173
Other environmental services	308	305	292	288	314	308
Education	765	774	762	731	786	838
Arts and libraries	31	32	32	33	33	39
Health and personal social services	1,025	1,045	1,078	1,084	1,131	1,200
Other public services	29	35	34	35	37	37
Total other services	2,647	2,774	2,643	2,587	2,774	2,914
Nationalised industries' EFL						
National Bus Company	8	8	7	7	—	—
Welsh Water Authority	27	21	27	22	17	13
Total nationalised industries external financing	35	29	34	29	17	13
Total expenditure within the Secretary of State's responsibility	2,989	3,055	2,925	2,865	3,058	3,174

[1] Cash figures adjusted for general inflation as measured by the GDP deflator at market prices.

Cardiology

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of general hospitals in Wales that do not have a physician with a specialist interest and training in cardiology.

Mr. Grist *[holding answer 18 January 1988]:* There is no general hospital in Wales which is without a consultant physician who will have had higher training in all aspects of general medicine including cardiology. Cardiology training has developed over time with changing technologies and therapies and general physicians with a practising interest can be expected to have a range of training backgrounds and experience consistent with their professional clinical practice. There are an increasing number of consultants with a special interest and with specialist training in cardiology in posts throughout Wales and the Department is encouraging this progress.

Social Workers

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has as to how many social workers are employed in each of the eight counties of Wales; and what is the average number of social workers per 100,000 head of population for the latest date and for each of the last four years.

Mr. Grist [*pursuant to his reply, 15 January 1988, c. 424*]: The hon. Member will wish to note that two figures were shown incorrectly, due to typing errors. The number of whole-time equivalents for Gwent for 1982 should have read 210·6 (instead of 210·5) and the rate per 100,000 population for Wales for 1984 should have read 50·4 (instead of 0·4). The amended table is as follows:

Social workers employed at 30 September

Local Authority	1982		1983		1984		1985		1986	
	Number of W.T.E	Rate per 100,000 population	Number of W.T.E	Rate per 100,000 population	Number of W.T.E	Rate per 100,000 population	Number of W.T.E	Rate per 100,000 population	Number of W.T.E	Rate per 100,000 population
Clwyd	141·8	36·0	159·3	40·3	169·0	42·6	161·0	40·5	165·0	41·3
Dyfed	134·1	40·2	144·0	42·9	149·0	44·5	148·0	44·1	159·1	46·9
Gwent	210·6	47·8	209·6	47·6	213·6	48·6	205·6	46·7	225·6	51·1
Gwynedd	97·9	42·2	97·9	42·2	101·5	43·6	107·7	46·1	110·4	47·0
Mid Glamorgan	278·0	51·6	294·5	54·9	311·8	58·4	324·3	60·7	331·0	61·9
Powys	44·5	40·2	44·0	39·8	43·7	39·5	43·8	39·3	41·1	36·6
South Glamorgan	217·5	55·8	230·9	58·9	243·3	61·7	236·1	59·8	250·1	63·2
West Glamorgan	171·5	46·6	179·0	48·8	184·0	50·5	197·0	54·1	194·5	53·5
WALES	1,295·9	46·2	1,359·2	48·4	1,415·9	50·4	1,423·5	50·6	1,476·8	52·4

Free Milk

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many children under five years of age and cared for by registered childminders are currently in receipt of free milk; and how many childminders are involved.

Mr. Grist: There were 5,571 places with 2,361 registered childminders in Wales at 31 March 1987. Information is not available centrally on the number or age of children using these places or on the number of children in receipt of free milk.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 26 January 1988

WALES

Battery Hens

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what guidance he has given, or intends to give, to egg producers in Wales as to the time at which they should comply with the provisions of the Welfare of Battery Hens Regulations 1987, in the light of the further review to be undertaken in 1993.

Mr. Peter Walker: The regulations came into force on 1 January 1988. As from that date all new cages must conform: for existing cages the space allowance must be achieved by 1 January 1995. Within the seven-year lead-in period for existing cages, the timing of any change will largely be a matter for the individual producer. The Government will maintain close links with the industry on both their ongoing review and the scientific report due from the Commission by 1 January 1993.

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make representations to the European Communities Council of Ministers to ensure full compliance within Europe with the provisions of European directive 86/113 on the welfare of battery hens.

Mr. Peter Walker: Compliance with EEC directives is a matter for individual member states and for the European Commission. In this instance, article 7 requires the Commission to undertake inspection programmes within member states to ensure that the directive is complied with and uniform standards applied. The Commission is also required to produce reports on those inspections.

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy that cage sizes for battery hens should be increased by 1993 to allow greater space and height for the welfare of the birds.

Mr. Peter Walker: The Government believe that a European standard of about 600 sq cm per bird would be more appropriate in welfare terms and will be seeking improvements when the review of the directive, due in 1993, takes place.

Cardiology Service (North Wales)

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will increase the finance available to the cardiology service provided by Liverpool health authority for north Wales patients.

Mr. Grist: The Mersey RHA is historically funded to provide cardiac services for patients in north Wales. A review of cardiac services provided by Liverpool RHA is currently under way and its outcome will be discussed with the Welsh Office in due course. In the meantime, in an effort to increase the number of cardiac patients in north Wales being treated, arrangements have been made by Clwyd DHA, with funding from the Welsh Office, for individuals to be referred to a private hospital in Manchester. The need for this arrangement will be reviewed regularly.

Surgery

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list in order of frequency the 10 most common forms of surgery for which patients are admitted to hospitals in Wales.

Mr. Grist: The information requested is shown in the following table:

Ten Most Common Forms of Surgical Operation in National Health Service Hospitals in Wales in 1986

OPCS Operation Codes	*Type of operation*	*Number*
703-706	Dilation, curettage, biopsy and excision of lesion of cervix	9,384
770-779	Post-Natal or post-abortion operations	8,866
607,608	Cystoscopy (with destruction of lesion)	8,027
752,753,758-762	Other delivery operations	7,347
780-789	Treatment of fracture by operations	7,160
230-239	Tonsillectomy and Adenoidectomy	4,636
742	Termination of pregnancy	4,592
400-409	Operations on abdominal wall, peritoneum and mesentary	4,311
764-769	Caesarean Section	4,107
170-179	Operations on lens	4,094

Hospital and Health Services

Sir Raymond Gower: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has any change to announce in the cash limit for class XVII vote 8.

Mr. Grist: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate, the cash limit for class XVII, vote 8 (Hospital and Community Health Services, etc, Wales) will be increased by £3,800,000 from £716,836,000 to £720,636,000. My right hon. Friend announced this increase in his written answer of 16 December 1987, at columns *512* and *513*, which should ensure that current levels of patient services are maintained without carrying forward a large burden of expenditure liabilities to 1988-89.

This increase will be charged to the reserve and therefore does not add to the public expenditure planning total.

Infants (Spinal Curvature)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures have been taken by his Department to ensure that all children born with spinal curvature are screened for non-spontaneously resolving scoliosis within two to three months of birth in all Welsh health authority areas.

Mr. Grist *[holding answer 15 January 1988]:* Guidance on the medical examination of the new born baby and the care of babies born with a malformation or risk of handicap, and their subsequent follow-up, has been published in the third report of the maternity services advisory committee to the Secretaries of State for Social Services and for Wales.

The report, published in 1985, was endorsed by the perinatal mortality initiative survey group in its report to the Secretary of State for Wales in 1986. Both reports were distributed to general managers of district health authorities, administrators of family practitioner committees, secretaries of community health councils and health professionals working in the maternity and neonatal services. The Department issued a circular, WHC(86)69, in December 1986 to all health authorities in Wales asking them to review their service provision and examine their performance in the light of the guidance in these two reports. Copies of the two reports are available in the Library. A copy of the circular will be placed in the Library of the House.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Social Security Commission (Cardiff Office)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Attorney-General if he will list the bodies with which consultations took place, and over what period, prior to the decision being made by Her Majesty's Government to close the Cardiff office of the social security commissioners.

The Attorney-General: Consultations on the proposal to close the Cardiff office of the Social Security Commissioners took place between 4 December 1985 and 31 January 1986.

The following individuals and organisations were invited to comment:

The Welsh Office.
The Department of Health and Social Security.
National Association of Citizens Advice Bureau (South Wales Regional Office).
Child Poverty Action Group.
Council on Tribunals.
Chief Social Security Commissioner.
Mr. Roderic Bowen QC (the former Resident Welsh Social Security Commissioner).
Lord Chancellor's Department Trade Union Side.
The Staff of the Cardiff Office.

In addition, representations were received from the following:

Mr. Griffith Owen George (Resident Welsh National Insurance Commissioner 1950-1967).
Institute of Directors (Wales Division).
Wales Trade Union Congress.

Bail

Mr. A. Cecil Walker: To ask the Attorney-General how the Northern Ireland Court Service ensures that the minimum amount of time elapses between bail requirements being completed and the papers being returned to the prison in order to ensure the speedy release of the person to whom bail was granted.

The Attorney-General: In almost all cases, completed documents are given to the police for delivery to the prison.

Occasionally, if prison warders are in the courts, they effect delivery. Court staff have also delivered documents and, in the provincial areas, recourse has been made to the first-class postal system.

Mr. A. Cecil Walker: To ask the Attorney-General what has been the maximum length of time which has elapsed in any individual case relating to a male held on remand in Her Majesty's prison, Crumlin road, between bail requirements being completed and the actual release of the person who was granted bail.

The Attorney-General: This information is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost. If the hon. Member has a particular case in mind, I would be happy to look into it.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Population Component

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will list in the *Official Report* the eight requests for assistance for projects with a population component on which preparatory work was in hand at 31 December 1987.

Mr. Eggar: The information is as follows:

India:
Orissa Family Welfare Project Phase II.
Gujarat Integrated Rural Development and Family Welfare project; possible extension of population component.
Population components in three slum improvement projects.

Kenya:
World Bank Third Population Project; proposed ODA co-financing.

Tanzania:
Technical co-operation input to 1988 Population Census.

Pakistan:
Possible new phase of support for population activities.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Murderers and Rapists

Mr. Dover: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many murderers and rapists have been released over the last 10 years and have committed the same crime again.

Mr. John Patten: In the period 1977 to 1986 four offenders originally convicted of murder and later released on licence from prisons in England and Wales have subsequently been reconvicted of murder.

The only information readily available on rape relates to a sample of adult males discharged from prison department establishments in 1981 and is for those discharged from a sentence for any sexual offence. About 3 per cent. of those so discharged were convicted of another sexual offence within two years. Results of this study were published in tables 8(h) and 8(i) "Prison Statistics, England and Wales, 1984" (Cmnd. 9622), copies of which are in the Library.

Horses and Ponies

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Home Department if he proposes to take any action in the light of the report on stray, tethered and abandoned horses and ponies in England and Wales, issued by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, a copy of which has been sent to him; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It is already an offence under the Protection of Animals Act 1911 and the Abandonment of Animals Act 1960 to cause unnecessary suffering to domestic or captive animals, or to abandon them without reasonable excuse in circumstances likely to cause unnecessary suffering. The maximum penalty for such offences has recently been substantially increased, and proposals to extend the power of disqualification from keeping an animal have been introduced. We believe that with these changes the existing legislation provides adequate remedies for offences of cruelty.

Firearms

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he intends to take to reduce the costs incurred by the Metropolitan police in the administration of the issuing of firearms and shotgun certificates, down to a level comparable with other police forces.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No sample survey of costs incurred by police forces in issuing firearm and shotgun certificates has been undertaken since 1981. A comparison of costs on the basis of the most recent Metropolitan police assessment of costs for the period 1 April 1985 to 31 March 1986 is not therefore possible. This assessment was accepted for consideration by the working party on the review of fees which we intend should resume its work in the light of the proposed new firearms legislation.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action has been taken by police officers to locate, document or seize the 45 calibre Thompson and 9 mm Bergann pistol held by the late Michael Ryan without a firearms certificate.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the chief constable that extensive investigations carried out by the Thames Valley police since the Hungerford shootings into the weapons held by Michael Ryan have not disclosed any substantive evidence that Ryan was ever in possession of the firearms indicated.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of firearms in circulation in each category have been reported as stolen in each of the past 10 years or for any lesser period for which records are readily available.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested is not available. The number of burglaries and thefts recorded by the police in which firearms were reported to have been stolen, by principal weapons, is published in table 3.12 of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, 1986" (Cm. 233). The number of firearms and shotgun certificates on issue at the end of each year is published in tables 1 and 3 of Home Office statistical bulletin issue 2/88. Copies of both publications are in the Library. Information is not collected centrally at present on the number of firearms stolen in each offence nor of the numbers of weapons held on certificates. The information collected on these subjects is under review.

Community Radio

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what guidelines he will be giving to community radio stations in Wales when granting their licences with regard to the proportion of time they will broadcast in Welsh and English; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: Under the legislative proposals that my right hon. Friend will bring before Parliament it will be for the radio authority and not the Home Secretary to award radio broadcasting licences, having regard to criteria which will reflect paragraph 7.23 of our Green Paper.

Animal Experiments

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list, by species, the number of animals involved in experiments at Porton Down, in universities and other establishments of higher education, for each year 1979 to 1987; and how many of each were killed.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The number of experiments which were started on animals, in each year from 1977 to 1986, at universities and polytechnics in Great Britain is given in table 20 of "Statistics of Experiments on Living Animals 1986" (Cm. 187), copies of which are in the Library. The records are kept in terms of experiments begun each year on animals and do not show how many of these died as a result or were subsequently killed. A breakdown by species is not readily available; I will write to the hon. Member with this information.

It is not our practice to make available detailed information on the usage of particular species in animal experiments at the Chemical Defence Establishment, Porton Down.

B2 Division, Lunar House

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is *(a)* the average, *(b)* the median and *(c)* the maximum casework backlog in B2 division at Lunar house; what are the causes of such backlogs; and what measures are being taken to reduce them.

Mr. Renton *[holding answer 19 January 1988]:* On 18 January there were 269 cases which had been in B2 division for at least a month without initial action being taken. This largely reflects staff absences for a number of reasons, including leave over the Christmas period. The highest number on any one case-working officer's desk was 68, the average 7·5 and the median 0.

PRIME MINISTER

RAF Molesworth

Q68. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Prime Minister when she next expects to pay an official visit to RAF Molesworth.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

St. Philip's Marsh, Bristol

Q133. **Mr. Sayeed:** To ask the Prime Minister whether she plans to visit the St. Philip's Marsh area of Bristol.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Engagements

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list the time, duration and nature of her engagements on Monday 18 January.

The Prime Minister: During the morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. I gave a lunch at 10 Downing Street for the United Kingdom/Japan 2000 Group. In the afternoon I had further meetings, and in the evening I attended a dinner at the Guildhall.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 January.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 January.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 January.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 January.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 January.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others, including one with the President of Egypt. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today.

Cabinet Committees

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a further statement on her practice in answering questions on the numbers and names of the Cabinet Committees and Sub-Committees.

The Prime Minister: There continue to be four Standing Committees of the Cabinet: a Defence and Overseas Policy Committee and an Economic Strategy Committee under my chairmanship; and a Home and Social Affairs Committee and a Legislation Committee under the chairmanship of my right hon. Friend the Lord President of the Council. Attendance at these Committees will vary according to the subject under discussion. Sub-Committees of the Standing Committees will be continued or established as appropriate. Membership and terms of reference of the Standing Committees and their Sub-Committees will remain confidential.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Teacher Training (Report)

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will identify those institutions included in Her Majesty's inspectorate's report "Quality in Schools: The Initial Training of Teachers" of which the inspectors reported that teaching accommodation showed serious deficiencies;

(2) if he will identify those few institutions described in Her Majesty's inspectors' report "Quality in Schools: The Initial Training of Teachers" as ones in which the British education degree course contained a method course designed for students to consider the application of their specialist subject to childrens' learning;

(3) if he will identify those institutions described in her Majesty's inspectors' report "Quality in Schools: The Initial Training of Teachers" of which the inspectors reported that they gave considerable time and emphasis to preparing students for work in a multi-ethnic society;

(4) if he will identify those institutions described in Her Majesty's inspectors' report "Quality in Schools: The Initial Training of Teachers" of which the inspectors reported that attention was given to preparing students for work in a multi-ethnic society;

(5) if he will identify those institutions and courses included in Her Majesty's inspectors' report "Quality in Schools: The Initial Training of Teachers" where the inspectors reported that specialist subject method courses in the British education and the post graduate certificate in education had serious difficulties;

(6) if he will identify the small number of institutions included in Her Majesty's inspectors' report "Quality in Schools: The Initial Training of Teachers" of which the inspectors reported that there was some imaginative coverage of the world of work and the industrial and commercial relevance of the school curriculum;

(7) if he will specify the number of instances covered by the reference in Her Majesty's inspectors' report "Quality in Schools: The Initial Training of Teachers" to cases where students were exposed to poor practice during their time in schools;

(8) how many of the institutions surveyed in Her Majesty's inspectors' report "Quality in Schools: The Initial Training of Teachers" had libraries which contained a minimum of 90,000 volumes in the main collection, together with subscriptions to 400 or more periodicals.

Mrs. Rumbold: It is not the practice to identify the individual institutions concerned as regards references made to particular aspects of their provision in reports of general surveys by HMI. Individuals HMI reports on each of the institutions have been published over the last three years.

Students

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are the latest available figures for numbers of students for every university and polytechnic by *(a)* full-time and *(b)* part-time status.

Mr. Jackson: The information is shown in the following tables:

University student numbers in 1986

Thousands

Universities (Great Britain)	*Full-time*	*Part-time*
Aston	3·6	0·4
Bath	3·7	0·3
Birmingham	9·3	1·0
Bradford	4·4	0·6
Bristol	7·1	0·5
Brunel	2·9	2·1
Cambridge	12·2	1·1
City	3·2	1·0
Durham	5·1	0·4
East Anglia	4·2	0·6
Essex	3·1	0·2

Universities (Great Britain)	Full-time	Part-time
Exeter	5·0	0·4
Hull	4·8	0·7
Keele	2·8	0·2
Kent	4·2	0·5
Lancaster	4·6	0·4
Leeds	10·3	0·7
Leicester	4·9	0·5
Liverpool	7·7	0·8
London Business School	0·3	0·2
London	40·1	8·4
Loughborough	5·2	0·5
Manchester Business School	0·2	0·1
Manchester	11·3	1·4
Manchester Institute of Science and Technology	4·1	0·3
Newcastle	7·8	0·6
Nottingham	7·3	0·9
Oxford	12·2	1·9
Reading	5·8	0·5
Salford	3·7	1·0
Sheffield	8·2	0·5
Southampton	6·5	0·6
Surrey	3·4	0·7
Sussex	4·5	0·3
Warwick	5·9	0·7
York	3·7	0·2
Aberystwyth University College	3·2	0·3
Bangor University College	2·8	0·3
Cardiff University College	5·7	1·0
St. David's Lampeter	0·7	0·0
Swansea University College	4·5	0·3
University of Wales College of Medicine	0·8	0·1
UWIST	2·9	0·2
Aberdeen	5·6	0·5
Dundee	3·3	0·2
Edinburgh	10·1	0·8
Glasgow	10·5	2·6
Heriot-Watt	3·5	0·5
St. Andrews	3·6	0·1
Stirling	2·9	0·4
Strathclyde	7·6	1·3
TOTAL GREAT BRITAIN	301·3	39·4

Polytechnic students in 1986

Thousands

Polytechnics (England)[1]	Full-time AFE	Full-time NAFE	Part-time AFE	Part-time NAFE
North-East London	5·0	—	2·7	0·0
Middlesex	7·0	0·2	1·7	0·2
Kingston	5·6	0·1	1·4	—
Birmingham	5·0	0·1	4·7	0·6
Lanchester	5·8	0·1	1·3	0·0
Wolverhampton	4·8	0·0	3·0	0·1
Liverpool	7·1	0·1	3·2	0·1
Manchester	9·7	0·3	5·1	0·4
Sheffield	7·9	0·1	3·8	0·3
Huddersfield	4·7	0·1	2·1	0·2
Leeds	5·9	0·1	3·8	1·5
Newcastle	6·9	0·0	3·3	0·3
Sunderland	4·2	0·0	1·6	0·1
North London	4·8	0·0	2·0	0·2
South Bank	5·0	0·3	3·6	0·3
City of London	3·2	0·2	5·0	2·4
Central London	4·3	0·1	3·6	2·0
Thames	4·8	0·0	1·9	0·6
Bristol	5·5	0·1	3·9	0·4
Teesside	3·5	0·1	1·8	0·0
Plymouth	4·7	0·2	0·6	0·1
Brighton	5·7	0·1	1·2	0·8
Portsmouth	6·4	—	0·7	—
Hatfield	4·1	0·0	1·5	0·0
Preston	4·1	0·1	2·3	0·4
Leicester	6·4	0·1	2·0	0·1
Trent	7·9	0·0	3·1	0·1
Oxford	4·5	0·0	1·3	—
North Staffordshire	5·0	0·1	1·8	0·4
Total Polytechnics	159·6	2·6	73·8	11·7

[1] AFE (Advanced Further Education) courses are courses of higher education. NAFE (Non-advanced Further Education) courses are lower level courses. Some students may be enrolled on both a full-time and a part-time (evening) course or on more than one part-time course. In the figures shown they are counted once for each course on which they are enrolled.

Figures may not sum due to rounding.

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are the latest available figures on the number of students by age, over 21 years and under 21 years, and by gender in *(a)* universities and *(b)* polytechnics.

Mr. Jackson: The information is as follows:

Student numbers in 1986

thousands

	Full-time	Part-time
Universities (GB)		
Aged under 21		
Men	97·5	0·5
Women	73·0	0·9
Total	170·4	1·4
Aged 21 and over		
Men	82·1	23·8
Women	48·8	14·2
Total	130·9	38·0

	Full-time AFE	Full-time NAFE	Part-time AFE	Part-time NAFE
Polytechnics (Eng)(1)				
Aged under 21				
Men	46·5	0·6	6·5	1·0
Women	36·3	0·8	3·0	0·7
Total	82·8	1·5	9·5	1·7
Aged 21 and over				
Men	45·0	0·5	40·1	4·7
Women	31·9	0·7	24·2	5·3
Total	76·8	1·2	64·3	9·9

(1)—AFE (Advanced Further Education) courses are courses of higher education. NAFE (Non-advanced Further Education) courses are lower level courses. Some students may be enrolled on both a full-time and a part-time (evening) course or on more than one part-time course. In the figures shown they are counted once for each course on which they are enrolled.
(2)—Ages as at 31 August.
(3)—Figures may not sum due to rounding.

Persian Studies

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received about the future funding and future location of Persian studies in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: My hon. Friend wrote to me on 18 January on this subject, and I am making inquiries. I have received only one other recent representation. Persian studies fell within the scope of the review of Asian and African languages and area studies conducted by Sir Peter Parker for the University Grants Committee, which has accepted and is now implementing his recommendations.

Achievement Profiling

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) whether the commitment to the target of 1992 for the completion of achievement profiling for all pupils in maintained schools still stands;

(2) how many pupils in maintained schools at *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools are currently thought to be covered by achievement profiling;

(3) what records his Department keeps of progress on achievement profiling; and what information it requires on profiling from local education authorities;

(4) what study his Department has made, or proposes to make, of additional resources whether human or material, required in the introduction of achievement profiling.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Government's objective is to agree and establish by 1990 national arrangements under which all young people in secondary schools will have a record of achievement. Education support grants are being used to support development work in nine pilot schemes in England and Wales, to cast light on the best ways to record pupils' achievement, including consideration of the resource implications.

A national steering committee has been set up to oversee the work of the pilot schemes and to report this autumn on experience gained and the implications for introducing records of achievement nationally. The schemes have made annual reports on progress to the committee and will make their final reports in March. A national evaluation team is evaluating progress for the committee.

Information about the number of pupils involved in records of achievement schemes throughout the country is not collected centrally. The pilot schemes receiving education support grant funding involve 22 local education authorities in England and Wales and some 250 secondary schools. Records of achievement are also being developed in many schools and local education authorities outside these areas.

Universities

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will provide for each of the eight Scottish universities a table showing, for all academic staff, the location of their first degrees as between Scottish universities, other United Kingdom universities and foreign universities, only the totals being required in each case;

(2) if he will provide a table showing for all academic staff at each of Oxford and Cambridge universities the location of their first degrees, as between Oxford and Cambridge, Scottish universities, other United Kingdom universities and foreign universities, only the totals being required in each case.

Mr. Jackson: The "Commonwealth Universities Yearbook", a copy of which is in the Library, lists staff, by name, at each university and includes information on the university at which first degrees were obtained.

Modern Languages

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when the final version of the policy statement on modern languages in the school curriculum will be published.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I have today published the policy statement "Modern Languages in the School Curriculum". Copies have been placed in the Library of the House and are being sent to all local education authorities and secondary schools, and to other interested bodies within and beyond the education service.

The main messages of the policy statement are that pupils should study a modern foreign language throughout compulsory secondary education, and more should continue with a language into the sixth form; there should be a greater diversification of first foreign language provision into languages such as German, Italian, Spanish or Russian; and more emphasis should be placed on communication skills.

The policy statement complements our proposals for a national curriculum, which include a modern foreign language as a foundation subject for all secondary school pupils.

TRANSPORT

Night Flying

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement concerning his review of night flying restrictions at London's airports.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department is considering the many helpful responses to the recent consultation. My right hon. Friend expects to be able to announce new night restrictions for Heathrow and Gatwick in the next few weeks.

London Dial-a-Ride

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about funding levels for London Dial-a-Ride in 1988-89.

Mr. David Mitchell: I have received a number of letters from Members of Parliament, private individuals and others concerning Dial-a-Ride. I have made it clear that as there is evidence that current resources are not in all cases being used cost-effectively, decisions on future levels of funding must depend on further efficiency improvements by some Dial-a-Ride organisations.

Roads

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to reappraise future road requirements.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We shall continue to develop the trunk road network to meet future traffic needs in a timely fashion. We have a large new construction and improvement programme which is regularly reviewed and to which further schemes are added as required. Each scheme within the programme undergoes continuous assessment to ensure that, when constructed, it will meet its required objectives. Responsibility for local roads rests with local highway authorities.

London Regional Transport

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he next expects to meet the chairman of London Regional Transport to discuss problems facing London Regional Transport.

Mr. David Mitchell: My right hon. Friend next expects to meet the chairman of London Regional Transport on 4 February 1988.

London Underground

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the total number of stations covered by the station modernisation of London Underground Limited as described in paragraph 15 of the annual business plan of London Regional Transport, together with *(a)* expenditure already incurred *(b)* expenditure already committed and *(c)* the total sums paid to each to the five contractors, respectively, receiving the highest global sums together with the number of stations contracts awarded to each.

Mr. David Mitchell: The latest reported information shows that expenditure to date on the station modernisation programme, begun in 1981, is £73 million, with a further £32 million committed (1987 prices). The figures include additional maintenance and repair work undertaken during modernisation. The programme affects 138 stations in whole or in part. Information on the value of contracts placed respectively with individual contractors since 1981 is not readily available.

Lorry Drivers (Refreshment Facilities)

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what plans he has to encourage the provision of adequate resting and refreshment facilities for commercial lorry drivers on Britain's roads, in the light of the decline in such provision;

(2) what steps are being taken to encourage the building of refreshment establishments on Britain's trunk roads that cater for the drivers of heavy goods vehicles.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We are shortly to have meetings with representatives of the local authority associations and the private sector about steps to stimulate further provision of facilities.

Our general policy on provision of service areas on English trunk roads was set out in answer to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) on 1 July 1987 at column 88.

On motorways, our aim is to provide service areas at approximately 30-mile intervals. They are required to provide, for 24 hours of the day, toilets, refreshments, telephones and fuel for all motorway travellers, including drivers of heavy goods vehicles. Operators are free to agree parking stays of over two hours and may charge a fee. HGV drivers frequently rest overnight in their sleeper cabs. Operators are providing overnight accommodation blocks on many of the sites.

On all-purpose trunk roads, the provision of services, including those for heavy goods vehicles, is primarily for the private sector within the framework of local planning policies. We want to see the needs of HGV drivers met.

Responsibility for roads other than trunk roads lies with the local highway authority.

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce legislation to outlaw the display of signs at refreshment establishments which refuse admittance to drivers of heavy goods vehicles.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We could not reasonably ban display of any road traffic sign which indicates that a particular service area is not for heavy goods vehicles. Some service areas off motorways do not have the capacity to take such vehicles. We have no jurisdiction over signs displayed by proprietors on their own property.

Cattle Creep (A52 Bypass)

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what would be the cost of providing a cattle creep under the A52 bypass at Bottesford, Leicestershire.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The cost would be £260,000 at Barkestone lane and £220,000 at Easthorpe/Muston lane had they been included in the design. Work on the bypass has started and it would cost considerably more to incorporate them now.

Underpasses

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will list the bypasses of trunk roads constructed by his Department over the last three years which have *(a)* cattle creeps, *(b)* pedestrian under-passes and *(c)* pedestrian bridges provided as part of the construction work; and what was the cost of the provision in each case.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I will write to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what would be the approximate cost of constructing underpasses under the new A52 by-pass at Bottesford, Leicestershire, at Easthorpe/Muston lane and Barkestone lane; and how that would compare with the construction cost of the by-pass itself.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: If they had been included in the design, the cost of constructing the two underpasses would have been £480,000. Construction of the bypass is estimated to cost £2·76 million.

Provision of a cattle creep or underpasses was ruled out because of the costs involved. They would necessitate raising the level of the bypass over a distance of 1 km to achieve the required height.

At the public inquiry in April 1986, the Department gave evidence to show that, over a 10-hour period, between 8 am and 6 pm in September 1983, only 15 cyclists and 12 pedestrians used Easthorpe/Muston lane. Numbers may have increased slightly, but it is not considered that they warrant the provision of an underpass. Barkestone lane has become a dead end. No counts were taken, but we would expect the number here to be even less. Very few residents are served by it.

Coal Imports

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consultations have taken place on the creation of new port facilities, or the expansion of existing port facilities, to land imported coal; and with whom.

Mr. David Mitchell: The provision of port facilities for unloading coal is a matter for users and port operators. The Central Electricity Generating Board has recently asked officials in my Department about the statutory procedure for seeking powers to construct a jetty for seaborne coal for its proposed new power station at Fawley.

London Hackney Cabs

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many personal accidents to passengers in the new London hackney cabs have been reported, with injuries arising from contact with the metal frame of the occasional seat; and if he will ask the Public Carriage Office to investigate and to make recommendations on necessary modifications.

Mr. David Mitchell: I have received no reports of accidents of this kind. The Department would be prepared to investigate any complaints and consider whether any design modifications are desirable.

Heathrow (Night Movements)

Dr. Glyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many of the scheduled night movements from and to Heathrow are *(a)* landings and *(b)* take-offs.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 25 January 1988]:* The figures provided by Heathrow Airport Limited are:

	Landings		*Take-offs*		*Total*	
	Number	*Percentage*	*Number*	*Percentage*	*Number*	*Percentage*
Winter 1986-87	2,256	82	490	18	2,746	100
Summer 1987	1,348	67	654	33	2,002	100

Dr. Glyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to ascertain from the airlines concerned the justification for the night movements in and out of Heathrow attributable to these airlines, and the extent to which such flights could be made in daytime; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 25 January 1988]:* The Department consulted airlines about night restrictions at Heathrow in 1986. We consulted again in November on our proposals for future night restrictions. It is clear from their replies that the effectiveness of Heathrow as a major international airport would be seriously impaired if flights now operated at night were required to be by day.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Financial Services Act 1986

Dr. Blackburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he intends to make an order under section 191(3) of the Financial Services Act 1986.

Mr. Maude: I have today laid before Parliament an order exempting trustees who are members of certain small self-administered pension schemes and the members of certain other small schemes in certain circumstances for the requirement in section 191(1) to obtain authorisation because of their investment management activity.

Steel

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the total output of steel, the percentage exported and the share of the domestic market taken by imports in 1958, 1960, 1965, 1970, 1975 and each year from 1979 to 1987.

Mr. Butcher: The figures are as follows:

Year	*UK Crude Steel Production '000 tonnes*	*Per cent. of Production Exported*[1]	*Imports as per cent. of Total Deliveries to Home Market*[2]
1958[3]	19,880	16·0	3·5
1960	24,695	16·0	7·7
1965	27,421	17·7	3·0
1970[3]	28,291	18·5	5·5
1975[3]	20,098	20·6	20·6
1979	21,464	27·0	20·6
1980	11,277	29·4	32·6
1981[3]	15,573	31·0	23·0
1982.	13,704	31·2	26·6
1983	14,986	33·2	24·7
1984	15,121	33·3	24·3
1985	15,722	37·8	26·2
1986	14,726	44·6	30·2
1987[3,4]	17,420	na	na

[1] Calculated on a "crude steel equivalent" basis.

[2] Imports exclude conversion materials, except in the years 1958 and 1960 for which only total imports are available. Total deliveries

are net deliveries by UK producers to home market plus imports.
[3] 53-week period.
[4] Provisional.

Ships

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the number and total deadweight of *(a)* vessels completed and *(b)* vessels in construction in British shipyards in 1958, 1960, 1965, 1970, 1975 and each year from 1979 to 1987.

Mr. Atkins: The available information is shown in the table.

Merchant vessels completed and under construction in United Kingdom shipyards

	Completed		[1]Under construction	
	Numbers	[2]Gross tonnage: 000's	Numbers	[2]Gross tonnage: 000's
1958	270	1,464	310	2,234
1960	263	1,298	258	1,694
1965	176	1,282	184	1,388
1970	139	1,327	146	1,649
1975	114	1,170	145	1,880
1979	86	691	79	514
1980	68	427	58	644
1981	46	213	67	815
1982	59	435	71	793
1983	60	497	52	567
1984	46	445	40	236
1985	35	172	40	337
1986	37	101	31	255

[1] Figures are at the end of the year.
[2] Figures in deadweight are not available.
Source: Lloyd's Register of Shipping.

Cars

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the total output of cars in *(a)* Britain, *(b)* West Germany and *(c)* France, the percentage exported and the share of the domestic market taken by imports in 1958, 1960, 1970, 1975 and in each year from 1979 to 1987.

Mr. Atkins: The available information is shown in the tables.

Trends in United Kingdom Car Output
United Kingdom

	Production of Cars (units: thousands)	Exports as Percentage of Total	Importers share of United Kingdom Market Percentage
1958	1,052	50	n/a
1960	1,353	57	n/a
1970	1,641	44	14·3
1975	1,268	42	33·2
1979	1,070	37	56·3
1980	924	38	56·7
1981	955	32	55·7
1982	888	25	57·7
1983	1,045	23	56·9
1984	909	21	57·5
1985	1,048	20	58·1
1986	1,019	18	56·0
1987	[1]1,143	[2]25	51·7

n/a = Not Available.
[1] = Provisional.
[2] = Estimated.
Source: DTI and Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders Ltd.

Trends in West German Car Output
West Germany

	Production of Cars (units: thousands)	Exports as Percentage of Total	Importers share of West Germany Market Percentage
1958	1,307	48	n/a
1960	1,817	48	n/a
1970	3,528	55	n/a
1975	2,908	52	n/a
1979	3,933	58	24
1980	3,521	60	28
1981	3,578	61	27
1982	3,761	67	26
1983	3,878	65	27
1984	3,790	68	30
1985	4,167	67	31
1986	4,311	66	32

n/a = Not Available.
Source: Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders Ltd.

Trends in French Car Output
France

	Production of Cars (units: thousands)	Exports as Percentage of Total	Importers share of French Market Percentage
1958	969	33	n/a
1960	1,175	42	n/a
1970	2,458	43	n/a
1975	2,546	48	n/a
1979	3,220	48	22
1980	2,939	47	23
1981	2,611	48	28
1982	2,777	43	31
1983	2,961	40	32
1984	2,713	41	36
1985	2,632	49	37
1986	2,773	47	36

n/a = Not Available.
Source: Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders Ltd.

Imports

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the percentage of home demand taken by imports in the latest available year and in 1987 for *(a)* metal manufacturing, *(b)* chemicals, *(c)* man-made fibres, *(d)* mechanical engineering *(e)* electrical and electronic engineering, *(f)* motor vehicles and parts, *(g)* other transport equipment, *(h)* instrument engineering, *(i)* footwear and clothing, *(j)* other manufacturing and *(k)* manufacturing (revised definition).

Mr. Atkins: The most recent information, relating to the year ended September 1987, was published in " British Business" on 15 January 1988, page 20.

Iran

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) what percentage of EEC exports to Iran, by value was accounted for by exports from the United Kingdom in 1977, 1978, 1984, 1985, 1986 and 1987;

(2) what rank, among the current members of the EEC, the United Kingdom held in value of exports to Iran in 1977, 1978, 1984, 1985, 1986 and 1987.

Mr. Alan Clark: Figures for the whole of 1987 are not yet available.

United Kingdom exports to Iran

	Percentage of EC exports	*Rank as EC exporter*
1977	18·2	2
1978	18·4	2
1984	16·9	3
1985	16·7	2
1986	16·0	3
1987[1]	13·0	3

[1] January to May.
Source: OECD Series 'A'.

Sheffield

Mr. Patnick: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many Government initiatives have been taken since 1979 to deal with urban dereliction and inner-city decay in Sheffield, by means of encouraging development and raising business confidence; if he will list them, indicating the amounts expended under each heading; if he will also indicate any grants available which were not taken up; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Since 1979, the Government have developed a range of initiatives to deal with urban dereliction and inner-city decay by encouraging development and raising business confidence, as I outlined in answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle) on 19 January 1988, *Official Report*, columns *598-600*.

The following table gives details of the initiatives which have been undertaken in Sheffield since 1979 and the level of Government support:

	£ million
Urban Programme	38·0
Urban Development Grant	0·9
Derelict Land Grant	1·3
Estate Action	1·1
European Regional Development Fund	23·1
Regional Selective Assistance	9·2
Business Improvement Scheme	1·7
Industrial Development Act	3·0

In addition, the Government have given support under various schemes to assist local enterprise and innovation through the Sheffield enterprise agency and joint ventures with the private sector.

We have directed over £75 million towards these initiatives in Sheffield since 1979, which represents a substantial commitment to the area. There has been an increasing level of interest and take-up across the range of initiatives available to encourage development and raise business confidence.

High Technology Audits

Mr. Bruce: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many visits he has authorised, to United Kingdom companies by United States of America officials, pursuant to his agreement with the United States of America relating to high technology audits; when these visits took place; which companies were visited; and what reasons were given.

Mr. Alan Clark: None.

Trade Mission (South Africa)

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is his policy on the forthcoming United Kingdom South Africa Trade Association trade mission to South Africa; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: Officials both in the United Kingdom and overseas provide information and advice on the market to business visitors to South Africa, whether they travel there as individuals or as members of a trade mission. Such assistance is not contrary to any of our undertakings on South Africa.

Textile Industry (False Labelling)

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if, in the light of the report by the trading standards sub-committee of Nottinghamshire county council, dated 16 November 1987, submitted to his office on 13 January, if he will indicate what steps his Department will take to protect the textile trade from unfair competition and loss of value to consumers by false labelling of goods, with particular reference to garments labelled as wool, and found to be either deficient or containing no wool at all.

Mr. Maude: I have noted the recent report of the trading standards sub-committee of the Nottinghamshire county council. Enforcement of United Kingdom legislation governing fibre content labelling of textile products rests, as does much other consumer protection legislation, with individual local authorities. I know, however that the EC Commission has been investigating whether there are particular problems concerning the importation of fabric with overstated wool content. It has not yet announced the outcome.

Deregulation

Mr. Grylls: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will give details of the progress made by his Department in implementing the policy of deregulation in the last 12 months.

Mr. Maude: Deregulation is one of the DTI's prime objectives and central to the enterprise initiative we launched earlier this month. In the last 12 months, substantial progress has been made in the areas listed in the report "Encouraging Enterprise" published last May, particularly in relation to reducing burdens imposed by company law, the Consumer Credit Act 1974 and the Weights and Measures Act 1985. Legislation to amend those Acts and implement the proposed changes in company law will be introduced at the first opportunity.

My hon. Friend can be assured that we will continue to devote every effort to simplifying those regulations which are necessary and removing those which are not.

Regional Aid

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will publish in the *Official Report* the names of all those companies which have received moneys from the regional development grant and regional selective assistance in excess of £25,000 since 1978-79 in the borough of Sunderland.

Mr. Kenneth Clark: The information requested is only available at disproportionate cost. However, details of

grant recipients above certain thresholds are published in *British Business*. The dates of publication of regional development grant payments were as follows:

Publication date	
1978-79	
11 August 1978	Q1
3 November 1978	Q2
16 February 1979	Q3
18 May 1979	Q4
1979-80	
19 October 1979	Q1
7 December 1979	Q2
22 February 1980	Q3
6 June 1980	Q4
1980-81	
29 August 1980	Q1
28 November 1980	Q2
13 February 1981	Q3
15 May 1981	Q4
1981-82	
7 August 1981	Q1
6 November 1981	Q2
12 February 1982	Q3
7 May 1982	Q4
1982-83	
13 August 1982	Q1
29 October 1982	Q2
4 February 1983	Q3
6 May 1983	Q4
1983-84	
29 July 1983	Q1
4 November 1983	Q2
3 February 1984	Q3
25 May 1984	Q4
1984-85	
31 August 1984	Q1
9 November 1984	Q2
15 February 1985	Q3
10 May 1985	Q4
1985-86	
16 August 1985	Q1
17 January 1986	Q2
11 April 1986	Q3
20 June 1986	Q4
1986-87	
19 September 1986	Q1
5 December 1986	Q2
10 April 1987	Q3
10 July 1987	Q4
1987-88	
4 September 1987	Q1
18 December 1987	Q2

Notes: Details published are:
(i) original RDG scheme: individual payments which exceed £25,000;
(ii) revised RDG scheme: payments to individual undertakings in a Travel-to-Work-Area which cumulatively exceed £25,000 in any one quarter.

Offers of Regional Selective Assistance were published in the following editions of British Business:

Date	
1978-79	
18 August 1978	Q1
24 November 1978	Q2
9 March 1979	Q3
15 June 1979	Q4
1979-80	
14 September 1979	Q1
21 December 1979	Q2
29 February 1980	Q3
11 June 1980	Q4
1980-81	
15 August 1980	Q1
5 December 1980	Q2
6 March 1981	Q3
24 July 1981	Q4
1981-82	
25 September 1981	Q1
4 December 1981	Q2
26 March 1982	Q3
28 May 1982	Q4
1982-83	
24 September 1982	Q1
17 December 1982	Q2
15 April 1983	Q3
24 June 1983	Q4
1983-84	
18 November 1983	Q1
17 February 1984	Q2
6 July 1984	Q3
13 July 1984	Q4
1984-85	
14 September 1984	Q1
23 November 1984	Q2
22 February 1985	Q3
28 June 1985	Q4
1985-86	
30 August 1985	Q1
29 November 1985	Q2
28 February 1986	Q3
6 June 1986	Q4
1986-87	
26 September 1986	Q1
28 November 1986	Q2
27 March 1987	Q3
19 June 1987	Q4
1987-88	
28 August 1987	Q1
22 November 1987	Q2

Note: Details show offers of £5,000 or more and are published after a first payment has been made.

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will publish the amount of regional development grant and regional selective assistance grants made in *(a)* county of Tyne and Wear *(b)* new town industrial estate of Washington and *(c)* Sunderland borough council area for each year 1978-79 to the latest date available.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The information is not available in the form requested but the following data can be provided:

£ million

	1978-79	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	[1]1987-88
Regional development grants										
Tyne and Wear County	8·6	8·2	12·6	18·0	23·4	16·5	13·1	13·6	27·7	21·2
Houghton/Washington[2]	0·8	0·9	0·6	0·9	0·8	1·3	8·7	3·3	7·2	2·5
Sunderland[3]	2·1	2·4	2·2	3·6	3·7	3·9	3·3	4·5	9·8	4·3
Regional selective assistance										
Tyne and Wear County	3·6	3·3	5·3	8·2	10·6	5·5	4·0	4·7	5·3	5·9
Houghton/Washington[2]	0·4	0·3	0·2	0·6	0·5	0·6	0·9	0·9	1·5	0·7
Sunderland[3]	1·2	0·7	0·6	1·1	1·0	0·8	1·4	1·4	1·7	1·4

[1] Provisional to end-December 1987.

[2] Defined as the Parliamentary Constituencies of Houghton and Washington, except in respect of the original regional development grants scheme for which constituency level data are not available. Instead data have been given for the employment office areas of Houghton and Washington for this scheme.

[3] Defined as the Local Authority District of Sunderland, except in respect of the original regional development grant scheme for which district level data are not available. Instead data have been given for the employment office areas of Houghton, Southwich, Sunderland and Washington for this scheme.

Planning and Expenditure

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the implications for his Department's *(a)* planning and *(b)* spending on job reinforcement of recent projections published by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys that East Anglia will have in the next 13 years the greatest proportionate population increase of both people moving in and of new births of any English region.

Mr. Butcher *[holding answer 25 January 1988]:* The high population growth forecast for East Anglia reflects the economic buoyancy of the region. It is to the credit of East Anglian enterprise that GDP per head in East Anglia grew from being the eighth highest in the United Kingdom in 1975 to second highest in 1985. My Department wishes to encourage wealth creation in East Anglia, as elsewhere, and is ready to work with the private sector, local authorities, and the standing conference of East Anglia local authorities to achieve this end. In particular, the enterprise initiative, soon to operate in East Anglia from a DTI office in Cambridge, will be a vital factor in encouraging the growth of real jobs throughout the region.

Regional Selective Assistance

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if there are any proposals to change the criteria for granting regional selective assistance or the ceilings of such aid as a result of the ending of automatic grants.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 25 January 1988]:* As the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster said in the House on 12 January 1988 at column *160*, there are no proposals to change the essential criteria for granting regional selective assistance. We shall ensure that the criteria—particularly additionalityy, ie whether assistance is necessary to enable a project to proceed—are applied rigorously in the interests of securing maximum value from the resources devoted to the scheme.

The present ceilings on regional assistance are expressed in terms of the total amount of assistance which can be provided for a project. With the ending of regional development grant it will be possible in development areas for the same amount to be provided in RSA as could previously be provided in RDG and RSA combined. The amount actually offered in individual cases is the minimum needed for the project to proceed.

Mr. Blair: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many successful applications for regional selective assistance are forecast for 1988-89, 1989-90 and 1990-91.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 25 January 1988]:* The number of successful applications for regional selective assistance will depend on the number and quality of applications which come forward. It is estimated that in England there will be approximately 1,600 applications during 1987-88 resulting in RSA offers. It is not possible to provide a forecast for future years with any degree of confidence, but the number is likely to increase.

Mr. Blair: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will forecast the level of regional selective assistance for 1990-91.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 25 January 1988]:* The planned level of provision for expenditure on regional selective assistance in England in 1990-91 is approximately £150 million, of which some £130 million is for industrial and training grants. Residual commitments under the business improvement services scheme, and expenditure under the exchange risk guarantee scheme account for the remainder. These amounts are net of recoveries and other domestic receipts, but gross of receipts from the European regional development fund.

Associated British Foods

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list any Government assistance which has been given to Associated British Foods, specifically in relation to its Pendleton's factory in Kirkby.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 25 January 1988]:* The Department of Trade and Industry has no record of an application from Associated British Foods for assistance for the Pendleton's factory in Kirkby.

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will meet a deputation from the work force of Associated British Foods to discuss the proposed closure of the Pendleton's factory in Kirkby with the consequent loss of 185 permanent jobs and a further 200 seasonal jobs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 25 January 1988]:* I see no point in meeting a deputation from the work force of

Associated British Foods at this time. The company has taken a commercial decision to close Pendleton's factory at Kirkby. This decision was taken on the basis of substantial losses incurred at the plant over the last four years.

European Regional Development Fund

Mr. Blair: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the latest forecast outturn for 1987-88 in respect of money obtained for the United Kingdom from the European regional development fund.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 25 January 1988]:* United Kingdom receipts from the European regional development fund in the nine months to December 1987 were £255 million. The total for the current financial year should be about £340 million.

BP Shares

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has as to the latest level of shareholding in BP by Kuwaiti interests.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 25 January 1988]:* The level of shareholding stood at 18·88 per cent. as at close of trading on 22 January.

ENERGY

Coal Industry

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he will list the opencast coal workings currently operating in the United Kingdom, by region, and *(a)* the annual output in each site and *(b)* the expected life and total output of each site;

(2) if he will list all proposed new developments of opencast coal workings for each part of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The British Coal Corporation is responsible for both its own opencast mining operations and the issue of licences to private opencast operators. I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Coal Imports

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list *(a)* the amount of coal imports into the United Kingdom by country of origin, for the latest year for which figures are available, *(b)* the ports in which they are being landed and the amounts each year and *(c)* the names of the companies which are registered to import coal.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Details of imports of coal into the United Kingdom by country of origin in 1986 (the latest year available) are in table 20 of the "Digest of United Kingdom Energy Statistics" published by HMSO. A copy is in the Library of the House.

In 1986 the ports into which coal was being imported and the amounts landed were as follows:

Port	*Quantity thousand tonnes*
Middlesbrough	2,610
Port Talbot	1,558
Immingham	1,349
Greenock	1,301
Trent	778
Medway	661
London (including Tilbury)	404
Hartlepool	295
Cardiff	247
Sunderland	243
Colchester	196
Belfast	176
Liverpool	143
Avonmouth	96
Newport (Gwent)	83
Others (38 ports)	413
	10,554

Source: Her Majesty's Customs and Excise.

Details about coal importing companies are commercially confidential.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what discussions there have been with importers of coal on the future levels of imported coal; and what was the outcome.

Mr. Michael Spicer: None.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Savings

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish the latest figures for savings on both a per capita basis and as a percentage of gross national product; and what comparable figures he has for other members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

Mr. Lilley: The latest annual figures are for 1986, when, according to the United Kingdom national accounts, total saving (by persons, companies and Government) in the United Kingdom (after providing for stock appreciation but before providing for depreciation) amounted to £70·8 billion, or £1,247 per head of the population, or 18·7 per cent. of the gross national product.

International comparisons in money terms are difficult because of the difficulties in measuring according to some common standard, the different purchasing powers of different currencies. (Current exchange rates are not always a good guide.) The following table gives 1985 figures compiled by the OECD for gross saving as percentages of gross domestic product for each OECD country.

Gross saving as a percentage of GDP in 1985[1]

	Percentage
United States	16·5
Japan	31·7
Germany	22·2
France	18·0
United Kingdom	19·2
Italy	17·7
Canada	19·0
Australia	19·3
Austria	24·4
Belgium	15·9
Denmark	14·9
Finland	23·8
Greece	12·2

	Percentage
Iceland	16·3
Ireland	18·1
Luxembourg	65·3
Netherlands	24·1
Norway	30·0
Portugal	23·1
Spain	21·0
Sweden	17·8
Switzerland	30·0
Turkey	18·7
New Zealand	20·9

Source: OECD Historical Abstracts (1987).
[1] Gross saving by persons, companies and government before providing for depreciation but after providing for stock appreciation.

Publicity

Mr. Butler: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much was spent on Government publicity in free newspapers in the last three available years; and if he will make it his policy to increase the proportion of Government publicity expenditure through this medium.

Mr. Brooke: Information is not readily available in the form requested. The criterion used by the Central Office of Information in the selection of publicity media is, and must remain, cost-effectiveness in reaching the audience required to meet the specific objectives of each campaign.

Exchange Rate

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will set out in tabular form the relationship between the three-monthly change for the period 1975 to 1987 in the real exchange rate and the three-monthly change in *(a)* exports (volume), *(b)* imports (volume), *(c)* profits, *(d)* the retail prices index, *(e)* gross national product growth, *(f)* the level of domestic economic industry and *(g)* unemployment, all one year later.

Mr. Major: The figures requested are all readily available from published sources. The volume of exports and imports, industrial and commercial company gross trading profits, the retail prices index, industrial production and the level of unemployment may all be found in *Economic Trends*. Figures for the gross national product may be found in the monthly digest of statistics. There is no unique measure of the real exchange rate. Figures for the sterling exchange rate index and various measures of United Kingdom competitiveness are published in *Economic Trends*.

Interest Rates

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the correlation between interest rates and the public sector borrowing requirement from 1979 to 1987.

Mr. Major: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor has made no estimate. United Kingdom interest rates are influenced by numerous factors including interest rates abroad, inflationary expectations, financial innovation and private sector borrowing, in addition to public sector borrowing. Consequently, simple correlations between interest rates and the public sector borrowing requirement are uninformative.

Customs Clearance Station (Armagh)

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether the existing customs clearance station near Armagh city has facilities to handle *(a)* the importation of live cattle from the Republic of Ireland and *(b)* the importation of live cattle from the United Kingdom into the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Lawson: The existing customs clearance station near Armagh city does not have facilities to handle the regular importation and exportation of live cattle between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. It does have a limited facility for the temporary holding of cattle which on occasion may have been detained for customs purposes. The facility is only very occasionally used as the Armagh customs station is not linked to a Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland cattle pen. There are no proposals for such a link.

Industrial Building Allowances

Mr. David Howell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will now take steps to remove the restrictions imposed on the use of industrial building allowances which distinguish between manufacturing and service industries and limit their utilisation to buildings in the former category.

Mr. Lawson *[holding answer 25 January 1988]:* I have noted my right hon. Friend's suggestion.

THE ARTS

Business Sponsorship

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he has plans to continue the business sponsorship incentive scheme for 1988-89; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: The business sponsorship incentive scheme continues to be highly successful. Since it began in 1984 it has raised £16·4 million of new money for the arts and has attracted over 600 first time sponsors. Seventy per cent. of the awards have gone to arts groups outside London.

I believe that the scheme should be strengthened and extended in 1988-89. I am therefore making provision to increase the amount available from £1·75 million to £3 million per annum, an increase of 70 per cent., to reflect the existing and anticipated growth in sponsorship. I am also restoring the maximum limit of £25,000 which was temporarily reduced following an exceptional run of awards in 1987-88. In addition, so as to safeguard the interests for arts organisations obtaining sponsorship for winter events, the budget will be operated in two six-monthly periods, on the basis of allocations reflecting the take-up pattern of previous years.

I believe that this increase in funding and the change to six-monthly operation will provide adequate resources for the scheme to operate throughout the financial year. However, the scheme is cash-limited and may be exhausted by exceptional demand in either six-month period. In such unlikely circumstances I shall not introduce reduced awards.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Conventional Stability

97. **Mr. Allen Adams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on her Majesty's Government's latest position in the talks on conventional stability in Europe.

98. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's latest position in the talks on conventional stability in Europe.

99. **Mr. Stott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's latest position in the talks on conventional stability in Europe.

100. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's latest position in the talks on conventional stability in Europe.

Mr. Mellor: The position was set out in my reply to the hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Garrett) and others on 8 December. I repeat it here: the Government fully support the launching of conventional stability talks covering the Atlantic to the Urals, first called for in the NATO Brussels declaration of December 1986. To this end, the Government are playing an active part in the informal discussions taking place in Vienna between NATO and Warsaw pact representatives to find a mandate for formal conventional stability negotiations. We hope these can begin in the course of this year. The Government's—and NATO's—primary objectives in these talks will be the establishment of a stable and secure balance of forces in Europe at lower levels together with the elimination of disparities in force levels and of the Warsaw pact's capability for surprise attack and offensive action.

Arms Verification

101. **Mr. Thorne:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made in arms verification negotiations with the Soviet Union which have implications for the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Significant progress in the area of verification was made at the Stockholm conference on confidence-building which concluded in September 1986 with agreement on a substantial package of measures including provision for verification of compliance through on-site "challenge" inspection. The INF treaty signed on 8 December between the United States and Soviet Union also contains stringent verification provisions, including provisions for on-site inspections. The United Kingdom signed an exchange of notes with the Soviet Union on 21 December which granted the Soviet Union the right to conduct inspections at RAF Greenham Common and RAF Molesworth, the only United Kingdom bases covered by the INF agreement. In return, the Soviet Union agreed to comply with British laws and procedures.

The negotiations for a comprehensive ban on chemical weapons will contain extensive verification arrangements, including the need to monitor certain activities of the civil chemical industry. Good progress has recently been made. However, many important details remain to be settled and early agreement is unlikely.

COCOM

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has decided to join the internal COCOM trading community.

Mrs. Chalker: The United Kingdom is a member of COCOM (the Co-ordinating Committee for Multilateral Export Controls) at which the 16 member countries meet to co-ordinate the export of strategic equipment to Warsaw pact countries and China. COCOM is not a trading community.

Mr. Douglas Forsyth

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response the Egyptian Government have made to diplomatic representations with regard to Mr. Douglas Forsyth's property in Cairo; and whether, having regard to the low level of the compensation payment mentioned in his reply of 18 November 1987, *Official Report*, column *598*, he is satisfied that the requirement for Mr. Forsyth, in common with other British subjects, to sell his property under duress of enforced Egyptian occupation is consistent with the letter and spirit of the 1959 United Kingdom Egyptian agreement.

Mr. Mellor: No formal reply to our representations have yet been received but further hearings have taken place of both Mr. Forsyth's appeals with one being found in his favour. With regard to the compensation accepted by Mr. Forsyth's late fater, this was judicially determined by the Foreign Compensation Commission. There is no requirement under the 1959 agreement for Mr. Forsyth to sell his property, but this remains an option open to him.

Middle East

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a further statement on the peace progress in the middle east and any current Government initiatives in that regard.

Mr. Mellor: We shall continue to work for an international conference under United Nations auspicies as the framework for negotiations between the parties directly concerned.

European Commission

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met the President of the European Commission; and what subjects were discussed.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend's most recent meeting with the President of the European Commission was in Brussels on 25 January when they discussed a number of issues, notably the negotiations on the control of Community spending.

Central America

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his policy towards central America, in the light of the recent meeting of Presidents of the five central American countries.

Mr. Eggar: We note that at their summit on 15-16 January, the Presidents of central America declared that they were not entirely satisfied with the implementation thus far of the Esquipulas II undertakings, and that they agreed to fulfil these unconditionally and unilaterally. We have consistently supported efforts to restore peace and promote democracy in the region and appeal to all the central American countries, and especially Nicaragua, to comply with their obligations under the agreement, especially those relating to democratisation.

Sri Lanka

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Government of Sri Lanka concerning human rights violations in the Jaffna peninsula.

Mr. Eggar: None. We deplore terrorist violations of human rights in the Jaffna peninsula and elsewhere.

Ireland

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Ireland; and what matters were discussed.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend last met the acting Foreign Minister of the Republic of Ireland on 25 November at a meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council. Their discussion was confidential. My right hon. and learned Friend was to have met the Foreign Minister on 18 January in London but, he is at present indisposed.

United Nations

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the impact the current financial situation of the United Nations is having on its policies.

Mr. Eggar: While individual programmes are kept under constant review and the Secretary-General has instituted some cost-saving measures, including a recruitment freeze, reductions in staffing and savings in travel expenses, the current financial difficulties being experienced by the United Nations have not so far had any major impact on United Nations policies.

Contra Rebels (Funding)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has made to the State Department of the United States concerning the continued funding of the Contra rebels in Nicaragua; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: We regularly discuss central America with the United States Administration, and they are well aware of our support for a peaceful rather than a military solution to the problems of that region.

Cultural Diplomacy

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking in order to consolidate and expand the work of United Kingdom cultural diplomacy.

Mr. Eggar: The needs of cultural diplomacy, like all aspects of diplomacy, are subject to continuous review. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the British Council are working closely together to agree the range of global priorities and objectives and the most efficient means of achieving these. The importance that we attach to cultural diplomacy was made clear in our reply to the Foreign Affairs Committee's report, and was reaffirmed by my noble Friend the Minister of State in another place on 20 January.

Youth Exchange Schemes

Mr. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the total budget for youth exchanges between Britain and Europe; and if he will make a statement on the effect on this total of contributing to the Youth for Europe scheme.

Mr. Eggar *[pursuant to his reply, 18 January 1988, c. 498]:* The total amount spent by us on youth exchanges with western Europe for 1986-87 was £387,198. Of this £365,233 was spent on exchanges with our EC partners. The Community's Youth for Europe programme is not yet ready for adoption. It will not be possible to estimate its effect, if any, on the United Kingdom's youth exchange programme until a budget for it has been agreed.

Mr. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many people are covered by youth exchange programmes between Britain and Europe; how many schemes there are; how many of these are administered by the British Council; within the total how many places relate to each of Scotland, Northern Ireland and the North of England; and how many places relate to each of *(a)* the disabled and *(b)* ethnic minorities.

Mr. Eggar *[pursuant to his reply, 18 January 1988, c. 498.]*: In 1986/87, 12,604 young people were funded by the Government to participate in 692 youth exchanges with our west Europen neighbours. The funding of such schemes was administered by the British Council. Out of this total, 1,100 young people were funded from Scotland, 554 from Northern Ireland, 1,468 from the North of England (ie from the Scottish border to south Yorkshire). A total of 822 disabled young people were also funded from the United Kingdom and Western Europe. Statistics for ethnic minorities are not available for 1986-87. They will be available for 1987-88.

EMPLOYMENT

Small Firms

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what advice his Department gives to small firms which are owed money by overseas suppliers or contractors and which are unable to secure payment; what representations he has received on this subject from LAMDEC of Frodham, Warrington, Cheshire,; what response he has made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: The booklet "Payment on Time" issued by my Department in conjunction with the CBI and other organisations gives general advice on payment problems. Where small firms cannot resolve payment disputes with customers they should seek legal advice, whether the customer is in the United Kingdom or overseas.

A letter from LAMDEC outlining its payment problems was received on 19 January, in addition to representations recently made by my hon. Friend. The specific points raised in these representations are involved in a current High Court action and I cannot comment on them. I will reply to the representations to comment on the general issue of late payment in industry shortly.

Benefits (Adjudication Officers)

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his reply of 10 December, *Official Report*, column *230*, in which offices the additional 90 staff in support of adjudication officers have been located; what is the number of adjudication officers in each unemployment benefit office; what is the number of new unemployment benefit claims at each office in the last financial year; and what is the current number of unemployment benefit claimants at each office.

Mr. Lee: Adjudication officers are not attached to individual unemployment benefit offices. They work in groups which cover a number of offices. The additional 90 support posts were allocated in the two years to August 1987, on the basis of regional assessments of need. Since the creation of the employment service, adjudication officers have been reorganised into new regional groups and the additional 90 posts cannot be specifically identified.

The number of adjudication officers and their support staff in post on 21 January 1988 in each employment service region was as follows:

Employment Service Region	*Adjudication Officers*	*Support Staff*
Northern	32	20
Yorkshire and Humberside	50	44
East Midlands	48	42
London and South-East	133	91
South-West	53	43
Wales	34	21
West Midlands	51	37
North-West	72	62
Scotland	51	40
Total	524	400

Regional statistics on new claims to unemployment benefit are collected by the Department of Health and Social Security. These could only be disaggregated by local benefit office at disproportionate cost. The regional totals are as follows:

DHSS Region	*New Claims to Unemployment Benefit 1986-87*
South-East	1,495,823
East Anglia	166,936
South-West	399,868
West Midlands	458,209
East Midlands	331,212
Yorkshire and Humberside	500,444
North-West	670,064
Northern	347,324
Wales	277,672
Scotland	613,181
Total	5,260,733

DHSS and Employment Service regions are not conterminous. Details of the number of people claiming unemployment benefit at each office are also collected by DHSS and published in "Unemployment Benefit Statistics —Quarterly Analysis of Unemployment Claimants" a copy of which is in the Library.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the number of persons in employment and the number unemployed in Derbyshire in each year from 1983.

Mr. Lee: Unemployment figures can be given but information about employment in counties and smaller areas is available only for years when censuses of employment are conducted. The available information is given in the table.

County of Derbyshire[1]

Year	*Number of: unemployed claimants*[2] *(annual average)*	*Employees in employment*[3]
1983	45,604	[4]
1984	47,208	330,200
1985	48,936	[4]
1986	49,799	[4]
1987	46,911	[4]

[1] The county is defined in terms of ward boundaries as at 1981.
[2] The numbers are affected by changes in the coverage of the count.
[3] The figure relates to a September date and excludes the self-employed and members of Her Majesty's forces.
[4] Not available.

Trade Union Elections

Mr. John M. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received on the conduct of ballots for union elections.

Mr. Nicholls: In addition to comments on the proposals contained in chapter 5 of the Green Paper "Trade Unions and Their Members", my Department continues to receive letters and requests for meetings about the conduct of ballots for union elections.

Deregulation

Mr. Grylls: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give details of the progress made by his Department in implementing the policy of deregulation over the last 12 months.

Mr. Cope: The Department of Employment group has continued in the last 12 months to review existing regulations and seek new opportunities for deregulation, including further reductions in burdens on small firms. The progress report on deregulation, "Encouraging Enterprise", which the then Secretary of State for Employment made to Parliament in May 1987, described action being taken on a number of proposals for reducing the burden of employment protection and health and safety legislation on employers, while maintaining necessary protections. Since then the Department has issued a consultative document on the restrictions on the employment of young people and the removal of sex

discrimination in legislation. The Health and Safety Commission has issued a consultative document with proposals to replace the existing requirements to post up abstracts of the Factories Act and Office, Shops and Railways Premises Act with a simpler and more effective requirement to provide information to employees by means of a poster or leaflet. Work has also continued on simplifying and speeding up administrative procedures which affect business and on improving means of communicating information and advice to employers about the DE group's services, programmes and responsibilities. Since "Encouraging Enterprise" we have, for example, speeded up the process of making decisions on loans to small firms under the loan guarantee scheme. The group has won two Plain English awards—one for DE's series of fact-sheets explaining employment law in clear and simple language; the other for ACAS's handbook for small firms, "Employing People". We have issued staff with guidelines on good buying practice and introduced training to help ensure that contacts with firms are dealt with efficiently.

Small Firms

Mr. Grylls: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the measures introduced by the Government to encourage small firms since 1979.

Mr. Cope *[pursuant to his reply, 18 December 1987, c. 830]:* In my earlier reply at the above reference I promised to write to my hon. Friend and place a copy of my reply in the Official Report. The full text of that letter is as follows:

On 18 December you asked for a list of the measures introduced by the Government since 1979 to encourage small firms. I am now able to let you have the information you requested. A copy of this letter will appear in the Official Report.

In 1979 responsibility for the small firms sector resided with the Department of Industry. Responsibility was transferred from the amalgamated Department of Trade and Industry to the Department of Employment on 3 September 1985 to give a sharper focus to the promotion of enterprise and its potential for job creation. Government policy throughout has been to concentrate on tackling the particular disadvantages faced by people setting up a new business or wishing to expand an existing small firm.

Finance

The availability of finance to small firms has been improved by:

The Loan Guarantee Scheme, introduced in 1981 to facilitate the supply of finance to viable small firms where conventional loans are not available, possibly due to lack of security or track record. The Scheme was extended for a further 3 years in the 1986 Budget. The premium paid by borrowers was reduced from 5 per cent. to 2·5 per cent. of the guaranteed proportion of the loan, which remains at 70 per cent. To date 18,741 guarantees have been issued with a total loan value of £627·42 million.

The Business Expansion Scheme, introduced in 1983, provides income tax relief on new equity investment in unquoted trading companies. The life of the scheme was extended indefinitely in the 1986 Budget. In the first two years of the scheme's operation some 1,500 companies raised £252 million, half of which were small enterprises seeking to raise amounts below £50,000. The figures include 88 companies which raised finance in both years.

The Venture Capital Scheme encourages the provision of finance by enabling individuals and investment companies to set capital losses on disposal of shares in unquoted trading companies against income.

The Enterprise Allowance Scheme was inroduced on a pilot basis in 1982 and nationally from 1983 to assist people who have been unemployed and in receipt of benefit to start their own business. Over 300,000 unemployed people have been helped by the Scheme. Provision for 102,500 entrants has been made for 1987-88 and 110,000 places in 1988-89. Greater emphasis is now being placed on counselling and training for applicants.

Premises

The Small Workshops Scheme stimulated private sector investment in small industrial premises. From March 1980 to March 1985, a 100 per cent. initial building allowance was given for capital expenditure on the contruction of small workshops.

English Industrial Estates Corporation (EIEC) has concentrated on providing premises for small businesses (up to 2,500 sq. ft.). Special rental and tenancy agreements have been devised to meet the needs of small businesses and entrepreneurs. EIEC works with a number of public sector agencies—the Department of Trade and Industry, the Development Commission and universities. Similar programmes are undertaken by the Scottish and Welsh Development Agencies. The Department of Trade and Industry announced on 12 January 1988 that they will be paying special attention to increasing managed work-spaces in inner city areas.

Training

The Manpower Services Commission has developed a range of training programmes and has particularly refocussed its adult training provision to take greater account of small firms' training needs.

The Training For Enterprise programme (TFE) aims to equip potential and existing entrepreneurs with the skills and knowledge required to successfully launch, manage and develop a small business. The TFE budget has increased greatly since 1979/80; in that year 120 people were helped by the programme at a cost of £0·42 million, in 1986/87 67,000 people benefitted at an expenditure of £18·6 million. Estimates for the current financial year are for £19·3 million and 68,000 people.

Government Purchasing

The Government has improved small firms' access to information about purchasing departments, their procedures, requirements and points of contact. A Department of Employment booklet on "Tendering for Government Contracts" has been supplemented by some individual departments' own publications and information published on Prestel. Tendering and approval procedures have been simplified by exempting suppliers to most Government departments from normal approval procedures for contracts under £10,000, by allowing non approved firms to tender for non-urgent contracts subject to subsequent approval and by encouraging Departments to make regular reviews of tender lists to encourage new suppliers.

The Ministry of Defence launched a small firms' initiative at the end of 1986 to increase competitive opportunities for small firms. This included the creation of the Small Firms Advice Division within the Procurement Executive to supervise the initiative, to advise on the development of MOD policy towards small firms and to offer a variety of advice and information to small firms wishing to obtain contracts. Another part of the initiative is aimed at enabling innovative small firms to obtain a greater share of MOD's research funds.

Innovation

The Small Firms Merit Award for Research and Technology (SMART) was run for the first time in 1986 to encourage small firms and potential entrepreneurs to put forward innovative ideas that cannot attract existing sources of funding. The scheme is to be expanded.

The Support for Innovation Scheme was introduced in 1981 by the then Department of Industry to offer firms

assistance with Research and Development projects. The programme was reviewed in 1985 and the emphasis shifted towards collaborative research, advisory services and improving skills. Small firms are subject to a simplified appraisal process and so far 50 per cent. of participants in the scheme have been small firms. A change in emphasis was announced by DTI on 12 January 1988 to switch support from single companies to support for collaborative research and technology transfer particularly between industry and higher education institutions.

The Teaching Company Scheme was set up by the Science and Engineering Research Council and the Department of Trade and Industry in the mid-70s. The Scheme promotes close active partnership between Higher Educational Institutions and companies to work on major industrial problems such as the application of new technology. There are currently about 275 programmes and in 1986-87 total funding for the Scheme was £10 million split between DTI, the Research Councils and Industry. United Kingdom industry has a high regard for the scheme and it had led to the recruitment and satisfactory integration of high quality graduates into small companies, especially those with no graduate employees. On 12 January 1988 the Department of Trade and Industry announced that the scheme is being substantially increased and that it will put greater emphasis on the projects of small and medium sized firms.

Taxation

Both small companies and unicorporated businesses are benefiting from tax reductions. The basic rate of income tax and the "small companies" rate of corporation tax have been reduced to 27 per cent. The highest rates of income tax have been substantially reduced.

The capital gains tax exemption limits have been increased to £6,600. Retirement reliefs have been extended to cover retirement at 60, retirement through ill health and disposal of shares in family holding companies of trading groups. In 1987 the ceiling for retirement relief was raised to £125,000. Indexation has been improved and extended as have rollover reliefs. Reliefs have also been introduced to facilitate the incorporation of businesses, and losses on loans made for business purposes can now be offset against capital gains tax.

Significant changes to capital transfer tax were introduced between 1979 and 1985 to increase thresholds from £25,000 to £67,000 and increase rate bands. From 1981, only transfers within the preceding ten years were taken into account in assessing cumulative total CTT liability. In 1985, the charge on lifetime gifts was abolished and the tax renamed inheritance tax with the threshold increased to £71,000 with further increases in rate bands. In 1987 business relief was increased from 30 per cent. to 50 per cent. for minority holdings over 25 per cent. in unquoted companies, the threshold was increased to £90,000 and the rate bands reduced from seven to four. These changes will further facilitate the transfer of business from one generation to the next without the need to dilute assets to meet the consequent tax liability.

Income tax relief is available on personal borrowings raised to make investments in partnerships, close companies, co-operatives and employee buy-outs. Relief is also available for interest on loans to partners buying plant and machinery for use in their partnership business.

Losses incurred in any of the first four years of trading by a new business carried on by an individual can qualify for special income tax relief. This can be obtained against earnings during a three-year period before the new trade started.

Expenses incurred in the process of setting up a new business are now deductible from subsequent trading profits so long as the expenditure is undertaken in the three years prior to start-up.

In 1987 a package of measures was introduced to lighten the VAT burden on small businesses including the option of cash and annual accounting for businesses with turnover up to £250,000, the registration threshold has been increased to £21,300, the period in which businesses are obliged to register extended to 30 days and simpler schemes have been introduced for small and medium-sized retailers.

Deregulation

Over the past three years, reducing the burden of administrative and legislative burdens on business — particularly on small businesses—has been established as a major part of the Government's efforts to promote enterprise.

Although prime responsibility for deregulation lies with the individual departments, work is co-ordinated centrally by the Enterprise and Deregulation Unit (EDU), which is now located in the Department of Trade and Industry. The EDU also helps with the development of policies across Whitehall to encourage enterprise more generally.

Achievements to date are set out in the White papers "Lifting the Burden" (July 1985 Cmnd. 9571) and "Building Businesses . . . Not Barriers" (May 1986 Cmnd. 9794) and the report to Parliament "Encouraging Enterprise" (May 1987).

This Department has produced a simplified guide to employment legislation for small firms' advisors, along with a model employment form and notice board kit aimed to help small firms in particular. In March the Department published a cartoon leaflet and series of fact sheets on employment law, designed to help those employing people for the first time. In addition, the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service has published a booklet for small firms with information on various aspects of employing people.

Advice

A major priority has been to make information and advice more accessible to small businesses and the self-employed through the Small Firms Service, Local Enterprise Agencies (LEAs), the Employment Service's Jobcentres and the publications "Action for Jobs" and "Guide to Enterprise".

The Small Firms Service is a nationwide service which offers free information and impartial and confidential counselling on all aspects of starting running and developing a small business. During the 1986-87 financial year the Small Firms Service dealt with 310,000 enquiries in Great Britain and over 38,000 counselling sessions in England alone. The first three counselling sessions for a business are free, a modest charge of £30 (including VAT) is made for any subsequent sessions.

To encourage the development of LEAs the Local Enterprise Agency Grant Scheme (LEAGS), a five year scheme of financial assistance designed to establish a network of viable self-supporting enterprise agencies, was introduced on 1 April 1986. LEAGs aims to encourage greater private sector support for the agencies (by being prepared to match it, up to a limit, with Government support). Approximately £2·4 million in grants was made available in the first year to about 170 agencies. A further £2·75 million is being made available in 1987-88. To encourage private sector support for LEAs, the government made provision in the 1982 Finance Act (Part III section 48) for tax relief on contributions to approved agencies by a company or unincorporated business.

The Council for Small Industries in Rural Areas provides rural small businesses with advice through 33 offices on local opportunities and conditions, business management, marketing and technical advice, skills training and financial service.

Until recently outside consultancy advice was subsidised through the Business and Technical Advisory Services (BTAS) run by the Department of Trade and Industry. BTAS provided subsidised consultancy to small and medium sized firms on design, marketing and quality management. Advice on advanced manufacturing technology was also available.

The Business Improvement Services package of schemes run by the Department of Trade and Industry, aimed to help small firms in areas affected by job losses in particular industries—steel, textiles, ship building, deep sea fisheries and tin-mining areas. Grants were available for consultancy advice on marketing, financial management, the application of computers and licensing in of products and processes, as well as for common services for groups of small firms and investment projects. Comparable schemes were operated by the Secretaries of State for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

On 13 January 1988 the Department of Trade and Industry launched the "Enterprise Initiative", which offers access to and financial support towards the cost of specialised consultancy in a number of key management functions. This is targeted at firms with fewer than 500 employees.

Marketing

Throughout 1987, this Department, together with the Manpower Services Commission, Lloyds Bank and the Institute of Marketing sponsored a series of workshops designed to show managers of small firms how to improve their competitiveness by the implementation of practical marketing techniques. In addition, with funds provided by the Department of Employment, CoSIRA is currently offering grants to assist small rural businesses to improve their marketing and sales to trade buyers.

Health and Safety

The Health and Safety Commission's Small Firms Working Group, chaired by a CBI nominated Commissioner, has special responsibility for the interests of small firms. A number of publications aimed specifically at small firms, have been produced and distributed — for example, the leaflet "500 dead" and a model guidance document designed to help small firms prepare their policy on identifying and controlling the risks within their businesses. The Health and Safety Executive is also preparing a general guidance handbook on health and safety aimed particularly at small businesses, which will be available shortly.

Support in particular sectors

The Government sponsors the Co-operative Development Agency. The Co-operative Development Agency and Industrial Development Act 1984 provided additional funding, effectively extending the Agency's mandate for a further six years, and gave it limited additional powers.

The Small Engineering Firms Investment Scheme (SEFIS) was a short term scheme set up by the Department of Industry which closed for applications in September 1983. It operated in two phases to help small engineering firms to invest in particular types of advanced capital equipment.

ENVIRONMENT

Ordnance Survey

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the implications for the Government's policy on fair competition of the lack of a direct or notional payment to the Exchequer by the co-publisher of a joint Ordnance Survey venture for the use of the Ordnance Survey logo and the goodwill associated with the name of the Ordnance Survey.

Mr. Moynihan: The value of the Ordnance Survey's name and logo is recognised in any negotiation with a publishing house on a joint-venture proposal. When considering partnership, Ordnance Survey is looking not only at the financial soundness of the project but also at the benefits in editorial design, marketing and selling skills that the proposed partner will bring to the venture. These internal skills, which play a major part in the success of any co-publication, will not be charged as a cost to the product by the commercial partner but have a value against which Ordnance Survey sets the value of its name and logo.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to the answer of 17 November 1987, *Official Report*, column *569*, whether the Ordnance Survey commercial interest guidelines require the cost of drawing the maps used in the production of joint commercial ventures to be taken into account in the pricing of such publications.

Mr. Moynihan: The commercial interest guidelines as they apply to co-publishing require Ordnance Survey to act fairly and follow normal commercial practices in respect of setting prices and sharing all relevant production costs, along with the charging of royalty as a contribution to the use and maintenance of the mapping archive in line with that applied to other publishers. Relevant costs include those incurred by Ordnance Survey to produce the specific map components incorporated in co-publication.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply of 20 November 1987, *Official Report*, columns *681-82*, whether the confidential information, concerning their future plans, which the private map-maker is required to provide to the Ordnance Survey, is seen by the publication division.

Mr. Moynihan: The information on map content and print run required from publishers by the copyright branch of Ordnance Survey to provide for prior permission to be given for the use of Ordnance Survey material and for the correct assessment of the royalty rate due, is not seen by Ordnance Survey's publication division.

Pollution

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many reportings were made, and by whom, of the chemical smell which affected a wide area of the north of England on Friday 3 April 1987; what subsequent reports have been compiled; what caused the smell; which body within the area of responsibility of his Department had responsibility for dealing with it; whether there was any evidence to connect it with the dumping of chemical waste in the North sea; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: Local authorities, the gas board, the emergency services, the Health and Safety Executive, Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution and the media all received telephone inquiries about the smell from members of the public. Her Majesty's district inspector of pollution reported on the incident. I am also aware of a report in June 1987 by the chief environmental health officer of Leeds city council to the council's health committee. No action was required of this Department, other than the monitoring of the incident undertaken by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution. It has not been possible to identify the origin of the smell, but given the prevailing wind at the time and the extent of the area affected, it has been concluded that it may have been caused by illegal tank washing by a ship in the North Sea or an offshore chemical spillage.

Planning Appeals

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on how many occasions since 1974 he has overruled his inspector's advice on planning appeals.

Mr. Waldegrave: The information requested is available on an annual basis. The table shows the number of occasions on which the Secretary of State made decisions on planning appeals contrary to the inspectors' recommendation, following a public inquiry.

Year	Total number of appeals decided	Appeals recovered for decision by the Secretary of State	
		Number decided after inquiry	Number of decisions contrary to inspectors' recommendation
1974	12,198	1,216	71
1975	11,486	1,397	57
1976	9,253	1,263	52
1977	8,366	953	36
1978	8,952	882	41
1979	8,933	861	17
1980	13,130	845	15
1981	14,451	919	34
1982	12,915	596	20
1983	11,221	370	13
1984	11,643	253	16
1985	14,639	289	23
1986	14,823	383	23
1987 (January to September)	12,614	329	17

Official Posts

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the *Official Report* the official posts, paid and unpaid, that are in his gift; and for each post, if he will state the level of remuneration where appropriate.

Mr. Ridley: The appointments to public bodies for which my Department is responsible are shown in the HMSO publication "Public Bodies 1987", which gives information on the numbers of posts and the levels of remuneration. These appointments are made under a variety of arrangements, and I and my Department are involved in the appointments to varying extents.

In addition I make appointments to the following other bodies:

Architectural Heritage Fund:
Five members—Unpaid

National House Building Council:
Chairman—Unpaid

National Park Planning Boards and Committee:
One third of the Members—Unpaid

Sutton Housing Trust:
Four Trustees—Honorarium, £1,575

Dartmoor Steering Group:
Chairman (appointed jointly with Secretary of State for Defence)—Unpaid

Parliamentary Boundary Commission:
One Member—Unpaid

Building Research Establishment Panel of Visitors:
Up to 15 members—Honorarium, £1,000

The Chequers Trust:
One Trustee—Unpaid

Environmental Assessment

Mr. Madel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures Her Majesty's Government propose to take to comply with European Economic Commission directive 85/337 on the assessment of the affects of certain public and private projects on the environment.

Mr. Waldegrave: A consultation paper on the implementation of the European Community's directive on environmental assessment was issued by my Department in April 1986. In the light of the responses received to that paper, we are today issuing a further consultation document about the detailed legal and other mechanisms by which the directive will be implemented. Copies are being placed in the Library.

A further paper includes a draft departmental circular which sets out proposed procedures for projects subject to planning control, including procedures for determining whether individual projects of the types listed in annex II to the directive should be subject to environmental assessment. The draft circular gives guidance on the scale and character of projects which might require assessment under the directive.

The consultation document also includes proposals for applying the requirements of the directive to types of project listed in annexes I and II to the directive for which planning permission is not required, including certain agriculture fisheries and forestry projects, highways and other transport projects, and power stations and overhead electricity lines.

I believe that our proposals will make a positive contribution to the effectiveness of our environmental decision making, but the proposals have been designed to ensure that the requirements of the directive are met without placing unnecessary burdens on developers or unnecessarily complicating the planning process. The planning systems in Great Britain already ensure that the environmental implications of new development are considered before permission is granted. For major projects likely to have significant environmental effects, environmental assessment can be a valuable technique for drawing together information so that those effects are taken fully into account in planning the project and deciding whether it should proceed.

Member states are required to take the measures necessary to comply with the directive before 3 July 1988.

Similar consultation papers will be issued by the Scottish the Welsh Office and by (DOE) Northern Ireland Office.

Sport (Drugs Testing)

Mr. John Carlisle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department will make funds available to support the Sport Council's new drugs testing regime.

Mr. Moynihan: The Department has decided to make an additional allocation of £180,000 to the Sports Council to complete the total financial package required to fund the new testing regime in its first year—1988-89. The council and the Government expect that private sector sponsorship will make a substantial contribution to funding the scheme in future years.

SCOTLAND

Electorate

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the Scottish regions in order of percentage growth in electorate since 1982; and what has been the percentage growth and the actual figures in each case.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information for the Scottish regions and islands areas for the period 1982-87 is set out in the table.

Region/Islands area	*Local government electorate 1982*	*1987*	*Increase*	*Percentage increase*
Grampian region	365,445	391,115	25,670	7·0
Highland region	142,964	151,641	8,677	6·1
Orkney Islands area	14,310	14,975	665	4·6
Dumfries and Galloway region	109,534	113,970	4,436	4·0
Western Isles Islands area	22,830	23,685	855	3·7
Fife region	257,088	266,585	9,497	3·7
Shetland Islands area	15,835	16,357	522	3·3
Border region	79,456	81,963	2,507	3·2
Central region	206,392	211,944	5,552	2·7
Lothian region	586,116	599,036	12,920	2·2
Tayside region	299,708	303,808	4,100	1·4
Strathclyde region	1,813,832	1,819,132	5,300	0·3

Mentally Disordered Prisoners

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consideration his Department has given to the problems presented by mentally disordered prisoners in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) of 11 January at column *150-151*.

School Management

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, under the Government's school management proposals whether school boards will be responsible for issues of non-attendance at school.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Government have concluded that it should not be one of the basic duties of a school board to be responsible for attendance issues. It will be possible for functions related to school attendance to be delegated subsequently by the education authority.

Education Reform

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the total cost incurred by his Department in carrying out the consultative process on school management and the role of parents, showing how these were accrued in *(a)* printing, *(b)* distribution, *(c)* general administration costs, *(d)* circulation of material to the press and media, *(e)* foreign and domestic travel by the Minister responsible for education and *(f)* any other costs.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is given in the table. Where actual costs have not yet been received, or cannot be calculated, best estimates have been used. Distribution costs relate to bulk contracted distribution and exclude postage charges for copies issued in response to individual requests received by the Department; these charges cannot be estimated with sufficient accuracy.

Printing and Distribution

	£	£
Consultation Document:		
School Management and the Role of Parents		
Printing	8,314	—
Booklets		
Parents, Teachers and School Boards		
Printing	15,762	—
Distribution	7,879	—
School Management—the Government's Conclusions		
Printing	9,650	—
Distribution	978	—
Miscellaneous Printing	179	—
	42,762	42,762
Publicity		
Paid Publicity	17,708	—
Circulation of media releases	702	—
	17,780	17,780
General Administration		
Stationery	731	—
Photocopying of submissions for libraries	1,000	—
Casual Staff and Overtime	1,150	—
	2,881	2,881
Travelling (Minister and Officials)		2,386

	£	£
Total		65,809

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will set out a list of the powers of the school boards under the Government's new proposals.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: We propose that all school boards should have common basic functions, the main features of which are set out in "School Management: The Government's conclusions" which was published on 18 January. A Bill to give effect to these proposals will be published shortly.

We propose that all school boards should have common basic functions, including: a right to seek information and initiate discussion on any matter to do with the running of the school; a right to approve the headteacher's plans for spending on books and materials; involvement in the appointment committees for assistant head teacher, deputy head teacher and head teacher; a right to add or delete names from the shortlist for the head teacher appointment; power to raise funds for the benefit of the school; control of out of hours use of school premises (but excluding power to set charges); power to set occasional holidays for the school within statutory limits; responsibility for encouraging liaison between parents and school; a duty to report to parents on the board's own activities.

Boards would be able to request that further powers were delegated to them by the education authority. If the authority was unwilling to grant the power request, the board is able to seek parental support in a ballot and if got that support to appeal to the Secretary of State.

Departmental Expenditure

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table similar to that on page 285 of "The Government's Expenditure Plans 1988-89 to 1990-91", volume II (Cm. 288-II) for each year since 1979-80, at constant 1986-87 prices.

Mr. Rifkind: The information is as follows:

Expenditure within the Secretary of State's responsibility in real terms (1986-87 base year)[1]

£ million

	1979-80 Outturn	*1980-81 Outturn*	*1981-82 Outturn*	*1982-83 Outturn*	*1983-84 Outturn*	*1984-85 Outturn*	*1985-86 Outturn*	*1986-87 Outturn*	*1987-88 Estimated Outturn*	*1988-89 Plans*	*1989-90 Plans*	*1990-91 Plans*
Agriculture, fisheries and food	201	216	193	181	187	199	209	177	187	183	190	180
Industry, energy, trade and employment	166	170	160	524	337	290	299	336	247	244	230	230
Other services:												
Tourism	12	11	12	13	13	14	13	13	13	13	10	10
Transport	578	546	574	573	563	549	555	575	591	563	590	580
Housing	1,222	1,097	918	820	817	717	634	637	670	586	620	620
Other environmental services	656	619	597	582	600	578	545	575	630	636	630	630
Law, order and protective services	408	431	458	475	509	530	522	553	595	624	610	610
Education	1,886	1,946	1,990	1,995	1,957	1,918	1,844	1,994	2,044	2,006	1,970	1,970
Arts and libraries	62	77	79	76	73	75	77	82	81	81	80	80
Health and social work	2,053	2,188	2,266	2,282	2,322	2,384	2,387	2,444	2,577	2,597	2,610	2,640
Other public services	100	104	102	93	109	108	107	110	113	115	110	120
Local authority current expenditure not allocated to services	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	37	40	40
Total Other Services	6,975	7,020	6,995	6,869	6,964	6,872	6,685	6,983	7,314	7,258	7,280	7,310
Nationalised industries external financing	235	153	121	190	316	410	240	235	130	123	−70	−160
Total expenditure within the Secretary of State's responsibility	7,577	7,558	7,469	7,764	7,803	7,771	7,432	7,732	7,877	7,808	7,640	7,560

[1] Cash figures adjusted for general inflation as measured by the GDP deflator at market prices.
Source: 1985, 1986, 1987 and 1988 Public Expenditure White Papers (Cmnd. 9428, Cmnd. 9702, Cm. 56 and Cm. 288).

Museums and Galleries Commission (Report)

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he intends to announce his response to the Museums and Galleries Commission's report on museums in Scotland published in September 1986.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: An announcement will be made shortly.

Scottish Museums Council

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he intends to announce the level of the 1988-89 grant to the Scottish Museums Council.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Scottish Museums Council will receive notification of a provisional grant allocation for 1988-89 in the next week or so, pending the announcement of the Government's response to the Miles report.

Rating Reform

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his estimate of the number of single parents who will pay the poll tax; and, of those, how many will be subject to full rebate.

Mr. Lang: The Green Paper "Paying for Local Government" estimated that there are about 100,000 one-parent family tax units in Scotland; the number receiving community charge rebates will depend on personal circumstances. Details of the community charge rebate scheme are now the subject of consultation with the local authority associations and are a matter for my hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what estimates he has made of how many people will receive poll tax rebates; and at what level.

Mr. Lang: The details of the community charge rebate scheme are now the subject of consultation with the local authority associations, and are a matter for my hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services.

Education Expenditure

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the average expenditure per pupil in (i) primary and (ii) secondary schools in Scotland; and what information he has on comparable expenditures in *(a)* Belgium, *(b)* Denmark, *(c)* France, *(d)* the Federal Republic of Germany, *(e)* Holland and *(f)* Sweden.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: In 1985-86, the latest year for which information is available, net expenditure per pupil in Scotland, at outturn prices, was £961 for primary and £1,567 for secondary. Comparable expenditure figures are not readily available for the other countries listed.

Vacant Dwellings

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the latest figures for vacant dwellings in Scotland owned *(a)* by Government Departments or agencies, *(b)* local authorities and *(c)* private owners.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: At 31 March 1987, approximately 21,300 dwellings owned by local authorities were vacant. Up-to-date figures for the other groupings requested are not available.

Blood Donations

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much blood was donated in *(a)* Scotland and *(b)* Greater Glasgow health board area in each month in 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986 and 1987; and in each year for both areas, by how much the amount donated was above or below self-sufficiency for those areas.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer, Monday 2 January 1988]:* Greater Glasgow health board is one of six boards covered by the West of Scotland region of the Scottish national blood transfusion service and statistics relating to that board could be separately identified only at disporportionate cost. The following table shows the requested information for the West of Scotland region as a whole, and for Scotland. The information is aggregated quarterly: a monthly breakdown is not readily available.

Blood collected in Scotland is for use wherever it is needed, shortages where they arise in a particular area being met from surpluses in other areas. Scotland has been self-sufficient in blood and all normally requires blood products since the end of 1983.

	Donations Collected			*Donors Bled*	
	1983	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
(a) Scotland					
January-March	69,594	73,392	74,441	79,074	75,931
April-June	72,450	73,881	76,183	76,097	72,066
July-September	71,795	72,102	75,269	74,274	69,315
October-December	72,155	73,987	73,355	74,959	70,902
Total	285,994	293,362	299,248	304,404	288,214
(b) West of Scotland Region					
January-March	37,713	39,357	39,171	39,577	38,585
April-June	36,814	37,011	38,016	37,564	35,490
July-September	35,392	35,180	37,382	37,921	33,074
October-December	36,025	37,361	36,067	37,167	32,015
Total	145,944	148,909	150,636	152,229	139,164

Notes:
1. One donation is equivalent to 200 ml (approximately) of plasma.
2. The basis of recording changed (from 1985) from "donations collected" to "donors bled". The two figures are not totally comparable as some donors may not be able to complete the donation.

Illegal Drugs

Mr. Ron Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has as to how many vessels were seached for illegal drugs in the Firth of Forth area during 1984, 1985, 1986 and 1987, respectively; and what were the numbers of convictions.

Mr. Lilley: I have been asked to reply.

Vessels are not searched by Customs specifically for illegal drugs, but for smuggled goods in general (although the detection of drugs is, of course, a top priority). The numbers of vessels searched, drugs and other smuggled goods found, and convictions are as follows:

	Discovering of smuggled goods			*Convictions*	
Year	*Vessels*	*Drugs*	*Other goods*	*Drugs*	*Other goods*
1984	378	1	48	1	—
1985	520	—	92	—	1
1986	547	8	106	—	—
1987	612	3	77	—	—
Totals	2,057	12	323	1	1

In 10 of the 12 drugs cases the person smuggling the drug could not be traced. The non-drugs cases concerned mainly goods subject to excise duties, where smuggling offences are generally dealt with by payment of a compounded penalty rather than court proceedings.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

ADAS (Charges)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations he has received concerning charges made by the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service for routine visits to farms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I have received representations from individual farmers, from their Members of Parliament and from organisations such as the National Farmers' Union and Milk Marketing Board about the introduction of charges for work in connection with the milk and dairies regulations.

The decision to introduce charges reflects the need to reduce public expenditure and our view that the industry benefits from the strict enforcement of hygiene standards. I have no plans to review our policy on this point of principle, but the search for economies is continuing and any reduction in costs will be passed on to producers. In this connection my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I have decided, with the agreement of the Prime Minister's adviser on efficiency, that there should be a formal efficiency scrutiny to review the scope for further economies in the enforcement of the milk and dairies regulations. A member of the state veterinary service has been appointed as the examining officer responsible for undertaking the scrutiny. He will be consulting widely in the course of the study and is required to report by the end of May 1988.

Annual Review

Mr. Soames: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the outcome of the 1988 Annual Review of Agriculture.

Mr. MacGregor: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave on 25 January to the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. MacLennan).

Sheep (Radioactivity)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many sheep in the restricted area of Cumbria which had died from natural causes were monitored for radioactivity in each month from January 1987 to date.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 25 January 1988]:* The information requested is as follows:

	Number
February 1987	5
March 1987	5

Farm Woodland Scheme

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what extra provision, in terms of staff and resources, he is making for the Agricultural Development Advisory Service in order to meet the demands of the proposed farm woodland grant scheme.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 25 January 1988]:* The demand for advice is hard to predict with a new scheme of this sort, since it will depend upon the regional spread, the pattern of uptake during the year, the number of farmers who may wish to explore possibilities without necessarily joining the scheme, and the number who require more detailed advice. However, we shall be making available a number of ADAS advisers to deal with this work on a full or part-time basis and we shall be keeping the position under review in the light of demand for advice. The Forestry Commission is also allocating additional staff to the scheme.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what training is being given to Agricultural Development Advisory Service employees to deal with the proposed farm woodland grant scheme.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 25 January 1988]:* ADAS employs more than 100 chartered surveyors who have a sound basic training in forestry and the related questions of conservation and amenity in woodlands. Of these, 24 have already received further specialist training in these subject areas. Beyond this, ADAS's policy of continuing professional development will help to ensure that the proficiency of these officers is subject to continued improvement.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture Fisheries and Food what consultation procedures will precede the payment of grants under the proposed farm woodland grant scheme; whether they will apply to all applications; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 25 January 1988]:* Applications to join the farm woodland scheme will be subject to the prevailing consultation procedures operated by the Forestry Commission, for its forestry grant schemes. In drawing up the proposals for this scheme we have been concerned to try and simplify it as far as possible and to keep administrative costs to the minimum. To this end, we have decided to reduce the amount of consultation with local authorities on planting of small areas. However, in areas such as sites of special scientific interest, environmentally sensitive areas and national parks existing arrangements would continue to apply.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture Fisheries and Food how many Agricultural Development Advisory Service staff are presently employment to give specialist advice on the planting and management of farm woodland.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 25 January 1988]:* None are employed purely for this purpose. In practice, ADAS staff who give advice on woodlands have a wide range of qualifications and spend differing proportions of their time on this work.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture Fisheries and Food what special consideration will be given to applications for grants under the proposed farm woodland grant scheme to farmers in environmentally sensitive areas, sites of special scientific interest, areas of outstanding natural beauty and national parks, respectively.

Mr. Donald Thompson: *[holding answer 25 January 1988]:* In drawing up their applications for grant, farmers will be reminded of the need to take account of any such designations in the type of scheme they put forward.

Proposals in the above areas will then be scrutinised to ensure that they are compatible with the designation. They will also be subject to the Forestry Commission's consultation procedures where applicable.

Hedgerows

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to the reply of 12 January, if he will introduce legislation to make possible the allocation of grants to local authorities for the provision, replacement or improvement of hedgerows; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan I have been asked to reply.

Grants from the Countryside Commission are already available to local authorities and others towards the costs of replanting, reinstating or improving hedgerows, where these contribute to the landscape. The Nature Conservancy Council has power to pay grants to local authorities and others on expenditure relating to hedgerows which are an integral part of a site of nature conservation importance.

Irradiated Foodstuffs

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) how many instances there have been in each year since 1980 of irradiated foodstuffs imported into the United kingdom being returned;

(2) how many instances there have been in each year since 1980 of irradiated foodstuffs being imported into the United Kingdom for domestic consumption;

(3) if his Department has developed any method of testing imported foodstuffs in order to determine whether they have been subjected to irradiation for the purpose of preservation;

(4) how many prosecutions there have been in each year since 1980 for the importation of irradiated foodstuffs into the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Currie: I have been asked to reply.

Under the Food (Control of Irradiation) Regulations 1967, it is illegal to import irradiated food. Port health authorities are watchful for any indication of irradiation as evidenced by accompanying documentation or markings on the packaging. Only one well publicised, illegal, importation is on record. In the current financial year, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is providing £150,000 for research towards the development of detection tests.

DEFENCE

Royal Ordnance Factories

15. **Miss Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what action he has taken in respect of the criticisms made by the Comptroller and Auditor General of his Department in relation to the privatisation of Royal Ordnance factories; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: There is nothing in the Comptroller and Auditor General's report which is a criticism of the Department of a sort which requires any action. Therefore, no action has been taken.

Persian Gulf (Service Personnel)

16. **Mr. Patchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many non-Royal Navy forces personnel are currently engaged in operations in the Gulf.

Mr. Ian Stewart: It is not our general practice to give details of numbers of service personnel operationally deployed.

44. **Mr. McCartney:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current level of commitment of *(a)* operational units and *(b)* personnel to operations in the Gulf.

75. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current level of commitment of *(a)* operational units and *(b)* personnel to operations in the Gulf.

80. **Mr. Cabom:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current level of commitment of *(a)* operational units and *(b)* personnel to operations in the Gulf.

92. **Mr. Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current level of commitment of *(a)* operational units and *(b)* personnel to operations in the Gulf.

Mr. Ian Stewart: It is not our practice to comment on details of operational matters. However, I can say that there are currently three vessels of destroyer or frigate size, four mine counter-measure vessels, and associated afloat support in the Gulf area.

Nuclear Artillery

17. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the United Kingdom's latest plans for battlefield nuclear artillery systems.

87. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the United Kingdom's latest plans for battlefield nuclear artillery systems.

89. **Mr. Allan McKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the United Kingdom's latest plans for battlefield nuclear artillery systems.

Mr. Ian Stewart: As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said in his reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) on 23 July 1987, at column *390*, it has been decided to rationalise United Kingdom-operated battlefield nuclear weapon systems in BAOR by withdrawing from the 8 in. nuclear artillery role and concentrating resources on the 155 mm dual-capable gun which is already in service. This rationalisation process is now under way.

No decisions on modernisation as it affects British forces have yet been taken. A report on this aspect will be made to the House when the appropriate moment comes.

Dartmoor National Park

18. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what weight he gives when making decisions on future military activity on Dartmoor to the implications for public enjoyment of the Dartmoor national park of the continuing firing of live ammunition.

Mr. Freeman: The range danger areas cover only 10 per cent. of the Dartmoor national park. Moreover, there is no live firing on Dartmoor during August, on all public holidays or, so far as possible, at weekends, which are the times when most visitors would wish to enjoy the use of the national park. I shall naturally continue to give the fullest consideration to the question of public access to Dartmoor when making decisions about military activity commensurate with the overriding need to ensure the maintenance of training standards and operational effectiveness in the services.

French Defence Minister

19. **Mr. Benn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met his French counterpart; and what matters were discussed.

49. **Mr. John Garrett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met his French counterpart; and what matters were discussed.

79. **Ms. Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met his French counterpart; and what matters were discussed.

82. **Mr. Orme:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met his French counterpart; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Younger: I last met M. Giraud in mid-December. We discussed a range of subjects of mutual defence interest.

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on his plans in the current year for closer co-operation on defence matters with his opposite number, the French Minister of National Defence.

Mr. Ian Stewart: We will continue to seek opportunities for extending Anglo-French co-operation across a wide range of defence business with a view to developing further the close relationship that already exists between us.

Nuclear Tests (Radiation Victims)

20. **Mr. Snape:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects he receive the report of the National Radiological Protection Board on nuclear test veterans; when he will respond; and if he will make a statement.

28. **Mr. Clay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to receive the report of the National Radiological Protection Board on nuclear test veterans; when he will respond; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Members to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) earlier today.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he next proposes to meet representatives of the Nuclear Test Veterans Association to discuss their claim for damages to soldiers caused by British nuclear tests.

Mr. Sainsbury: My noble Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement, who is responsible for these matters, offered to meet members of the BNTV as early as March 1987. This offer has been reiterated several times, but has as yet to be taken up. The offer still stands.

Schoolchildren (Germany)

21. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to review the school psychological service and pre-school facilities available to the children of service men serving in Germany.

Mr. Freeman: The Service Children's Education Authority (SCEA) conducted a review of its special needs provision including that for pre-school children during 1987. Policy changes are currently under discussion within the Ministry of Defence.

The subject of pre-school facilities is kept under continous review. The Pre-School Playgroups Association in Germany was first established in 1980 and has proved most successful — the salary and expenses of the co-ordinator and full-time organisers, one for each division headquarters, are now met from public funds.

Low-flying Aircraft

22. **Mr. Geraint Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent consultations his Department has had with the National Farmers Union, the Scottish National Farmers Union and the Farmers Union of Wales concerning compensation for the effects of low-flying aircraft.

Mr. Freeman: Officials met representatives of the National Farmers Union, the Scottish National Farmers Union and the Farmers Union of Wales during 1987 as part of my Department's review of procedures for dealing with compensation claims from farmers whose livestock may have been affected by low-flying military aircraft. Discussions have continued since then, and regular contact is also maintained between my Department's officials and the farmers' unions on a case-by-case basis.

32. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about low-flying aircraft over East Anglia.

Mr. Freeman: As my hon. Friend will be aware, training in the crucial techniques of low flying is vital if we are to maintain an effective modern air force capable of maintaining our security by deterring any potential aggressor. None the less, we are acutely aware of the disturbance this essential activity may cause on the ground and will continue to do all we can to keep this to an absolute minimum. In fact, low-flying aircraft activity during 1987 was marginally lower than during 1986, a trend particularly marked in the low-flying administrative area which comprises most of East Anglia and parts of Lincolnshire, which experienced approximately 24,000 movements compared with just over 32,000 the previous year.

Nuclear Modernisation (Montebello Decisions)

23. **Mr. Frank Cook:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with his Dutch counterpart regarding interpretation of the nature of the recommendation and decisions on nuclear modernisation reached at Montebello in 1983.

27. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with his Dutch counterpart regarding interpretation of the nature of the recommendations and decisions on nuclear modernisation reached at Montebello in 1983.

58. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with his Dutch counterpart regarding interpretation of the nature of the recommendations and decisions on nuclear modernisation reached at Montebello in 1983.

84. **Mr. Marlew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with his Dutch counterpart regarding interpretation of the nature of the recommendations and decisions on nuclear modernisation reached at Montebello in 1983.

Mr. Ian Stewart: My right hon. Friend and his predecessors have discussed the 1983 Montebello decision with their Dutch colleagues on numerous occasions over the last five years, both bilaterally and in NATO fora.

European Fighter Aircraft

24. **Mr. Rogers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to reduce the Royal Air Force's current requirement for the European fighter aircraft.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross).

Royal Navy

25. **Mr. Soames:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the effectiveness of the Royal Navy.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The Government remain committed to a modern, effective and well-balanced Royal Navy. Since 1979 we have ordered no fewer than 61 ships and submarines worth over £6 billion at 1986-87 prices; these include seven new and highly capable classes of vessel. We also continue to pursue a substantial programme of enhancements to existing weapons and sensor systems and purchases of new ones to update our capabilities and to ensure that the effectiveness of the Royal Navy is maintained.

Frigates

26. **Mr. Rees:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on his plans for frigate construction over the next 12 months.

30. **Mr. Sayeed:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the frigate and destroyer building programme.

65. **Mr. Galloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on his plans for frigate construction over the next 12 months.

Mr. Sainsbury: The frigate-building programme is proceeding well with 10 frigates currently under construction, four of which are expected to enter service this year. In addition, on 6 October last year, my right hon. Friend announced that we were to seek tenders for up to four more type 23 frigates. We have received tenders and their evaluation has now begun.

Cruise Missiles

29. **Mr. Maxton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his latest estimate of the numbers of United States nuclear sea-launched cruise missiles *(a)* currently based in the Atlantic and *(b)* to be based there by 1995.

38. **Mr. Bidwell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his latest estimate of the numbers of United States nuclear sea-launched cruise missiles *(a)* currently based in the Atlantic and *(b)* to be based there by 1995.

53. **Mr. Boateng:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his latest estimate of the numbers of United States nuclear sea-launched cruise missiles *(a)* currently based in the Atlantic, *(b)* to be based there by 1995.

78. **Mr. Boyes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his latest estimate of the numbers of United States nuclear sea-launched cruise missiles *(a)* currently based in the Atlantic and *(b)* to be based there by 1995.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Nuclear sea-launched cruise missiles (SLCM) were introduced into service with US naval forces in 1984. These forces are deployed worldwide, including the Atlantic. The number of nuclear SLCM deployed in the Atlantic is classified United States Government information.

62. **Ms. Short:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his latest estimate of the number of United States nuclear air-launched cruise missiles *(a)* currently based in Europe and *(b)* to be based there by 1995.

74. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his latest estimate of the number of United States nuclear air-launched cruise missiles *(a)* currently based in Europe and *(b)* to be based there by 1995.

86. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his latest estimate of the number of United States nuclear air-launched cruise missiles *(a)* currently based in Europe and *(b)* to be based there by 1995.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I refer the hon. Members to the answer given earlier today by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo).

Uniforms and Equipment

31. **Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what basis it is decided when to update military uniform and equipment.

Mr. Freeman: I assume that my hon. Friend is referring to items of combat clothing and personal equipment. As a general principle, any necessary improvements to items already in service are proceeded with as and when they can be accommodated in the defence programme according to their relative priority. If my hon. Friend could specify the items of clothing or equipment which he is concerned about, I would be glad to reply in detail.

Territorial Army

33. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on progress made and current plans for the improvement and increase in size of the infantry units within the Territorial Army.

Mr. Freeman: Phase II of the Territorial Army expansion programme set out in "Defence Open Government Document 84/02" began formally in April 1986. The majority of planned new infantry units and sub-units have been formed and are recruiting.

76. **Mr. Conway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the manpower contribution to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation of the British Territorial Army; and what percentage of the defence estimates expenditure on the British Territorial Army this represents.

Mr. Freeman: On current plans some 55,000 Territorial Army soldiers would be assigned to NATO tasks in the event of war. The balance would be deployed on defence tasks in the United Kingdom, which also form a contribution to NATO's military strategy. The cost of NATO-assigned forces represents approximately 65 per cent. of defence estimates expenditure on the Territorial Army.

RAF Air/Sea Rescue Services

34. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many representations he has received in favour of maintaining Air/Sea rescue services as a function of the Royal Air Force.

Mr. Freeman: The Ministry of Defence has received a considerable number of inquiries concerning the future of the United Kingdom SAR service, of which about 45 have expressed support for the continuation of search and rescue helicopter services as a military function.

43. **Mr. Terry Fields:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement concerning the future of the Royal Air Force air/sea rescue services.

56. **Mr. Loyden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement concerning the future of the Royal Air Force air/sea rescue services.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Members to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) earlier today.

F-15E Strike Eagle

35. **Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if there are any plans to base the F-15E Strike Eagle equipped with *(a)* the joint tactical missile system or *(b)* nuclear weapons in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I have nothing to add to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Mr. Stanley) on 23 February 1987, at column *141*, to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strange).

South Rona

36. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are his long-term plans for his Department's site at South Rona.

Mr. Freeman: The shore facilities for the Royal Navy's Minches trial range are based on Rona. There are no long-term plans to change this use.

USSR Nuclear Forces

37. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what implications the modernisation of the Soviet Union's nuclear forces has for the United Kingdom's defence policy.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The Soviet Union is continually updating and improving the capabilities of both its conventional and nuclear forces. This is a major consideration in determining our own defence priorities.

Defence Programmes (Employment Implications)

39. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he makes of the employment implications in the defence industries after considering reductions in defence expenditure programmes.

88. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he makes of the employment implications in the defence industries when considering reductions in defence expenditure programmes.

96. **Dr. Moonie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he makes of the employment implications in the defence industries when considering reductions in defence expenditure programmes.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to my answer given to the hon. Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) earlier today.

Nuclear Weapons

40. **Mr. Galbraith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's latest plans to modernise their nuclear weaponry.

64. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's latest plans to modernise their nuclear weaponry.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I refer the hon. Members to the reply given earlier today by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery).

YTS

41. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many young people are now enrolled in YTS placements in each of the three services.

Mr. Freeman: In November 1987 a total of 543 trainees were serving on the armed services YTS. The numbers are broken down as shown in the table.

	Number
Royal Navy	6
Army	63
Royal Air Force	474

German Defence Minister

42. **Mr. Litherland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met his German counterpart; and what matters were discussed.

83. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met his German counterpart; and what matters were discussed.

85. **Ms. Mowlam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met his German counterpart; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Ian Stewart: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State regularly meets his German counterpart to discuss a wide range of subjects of mutual interest. The last such meeting was on 20 January.

Falklands Campaign Widows (Assistance)

45. **Mr. Sean Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what financial assistance is currently provided by his Department for Falklands war widows.

57. **Mr. Bradley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what financial assistance is currently provided by his Department for Falklands war widows.

63. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what financial assistance is currently provided by his Department for Falklands war widows.

71. **Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what financial assistance is currently provided by his Department for Falklands war widows.

Mr. Freeman: All Falklands war widows would receive benefits, as appropriate, from my Department under the terms of the armed forces pension scheme. For examples of the benefits payable I refer the hon. Members to the answer which I gave to the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) on 13 January 1988 at columns *323-24*.

In addition, my Department also meets the travel costs for the next-of-kin to make one visit to the graves of service men who are killed while serving overseas, and are buried there, within two years of burial. This provision applied to the next-of-kin of those killed in the Falklands.

Chemical Weapons

46. **Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the implications for United Kingdom defence policy of the resumption by the United States of America of a chemical weapons production.

67. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the implications for United Kingdom defence policy of the resumption by the United States of America of chemical weapons production.

68. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the implications for United Kingdom defence policy of the resumption by the United States of America of chemical weapons production.

94. **Mrs. Ann Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the implications for United Kingdom defence policy of the resumption by the United States of chemical weapons production.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The modernisation of the United States' limited retaliatory chemical weapons capability with binary munitions will underline to the Soviet Union the benefits of reaching early agreement in the negotiations in Geneva for a comprehensive and verifiable global ban on chemical weapons, which remains the Government's primary aim. In the absence of such an agreement, the production of binary munitions will contribute to the maintenance of NATO's deterrent strategy in the face of the massive Soviet chemical warfare capability.

Operational Requirements (Harmonisation)

47. **Sir Antony Buck:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent progress has been made towards harmonising operational requirements.

Mr. Sainsbury: Good progress has been made. Over the past three years the United Kingdom has subscribed to 18 staff requirements agreed in NATO's conference of national armaments directors (CNAD) and nine of the 13 agreed in the Independent European Programme Group (IEPG).

Strait of Hormuz (Armilla Patrol)

48. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many merchant ships the Armilla patrol accompanied through the Strait of Hormuz during 1987.

Mr. Ian Stewart: During 1987, the Armilla patrol accompanied 405 British merchant ships through the Straits of Hormuz.

Persian Gulf (Mines)

50. **Mr. John Townend:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many mines have been located and destroyed by Royal Navy minesweepers in the Gulf.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Since they commenced operations, the Royal Navy's mine counter-measures vessels in the Gulf have detected and destroyed a total of 10 mines.

Defence Exports

51. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what measures his Department is taking to assist United Kingdom defence exports.

Mr. Sainsbury: Through the Defence Export Services Organisation (DESO) the Ministry of Defence helps British firms to market and sell their defence products and

services overseas. It does this mainly by advising firms on defence market prospects on a worldwide, regional or country basis. Our defence representatives overseas also provide companies with a wide range of follow-up support and assistance.

Gartree Prison (Escape)

52. **Mr. Corbett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what requests were made by prison officers at Her Majesty's prison Gartree to Royal Air Force flight controllers at the time of the helicopter escape of John Kendall and Sydney Draper; and if he will make a statement.

55. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what requests were made by prison officers at Her Majesty's prison Gartree to Royal Air Force flight controllers at the time of the helicopter escape of John Kendall and Sydney Draper; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: On the afternoon of 10 December 1987, the Leicestershire police telephoned the London air traffic control centre at RAF West Drayton to inform it that a helicopter-assisted escape from Gartree prison had taken place and to ask for assistance. Under standing instructions, immediate steps were taken to provide all possible assistance to the police in apprehending the fugitives. Subsequently, a member of the staff at Gartree prison telephoned the control centre, making a similar request. By then action was already in hand, although the helicopter was airborne for too short a period for it to be tracked successfully.

Thames House, Millbank (Centralisation)

54. **Mr. Sedgemore:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the effect on the efficiency and effectiveness of his Department of the proposal to centralise parts of his Department at Thames House, Millbank.

91. **Mr. Stuart Holland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the impact on the efficiency and effectiveness of his Department of the proposal to locate parts of his Department at Thames House, Millbank.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Members to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) on 20 January 1988, at column *764*.

Small Firms (Contracts)

59. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what further steps he plans to take to assist small firms in tendering for defence contracts.

Mr. Sainsbury: Ministry of Defence procurement policy is based on securing value for money through greater competition. Small firms especially are encouraged to become defence contractors through the promotion of competition at the sub-contract level and by advertising contract opportunities more widely. The launch of the MOD small firms initiative in November 1986 gave impetus to these policies, through the creation of a new division specifically to advise small firms wishing to enter the defence market. Small firms have welcomed this new service and over 1,300 contacted the division directly in its first year. Some 1,100 firms have attended regional seminars conducted by the division and many have made contact at business exhibitions.

The division will continue to offer advice and assistance to small firms individually, to give presentations and to be represented at appropriate exhibitions. In addition, a new edition of the booklet "Selling to the MOD" will be published this year with information helpful to small firms. Finally, a further £1 million is being made available during 1988-89 to enable those small firms with the ability to generate new and innovative products and processes in a cost-effective manner to obtain a larger share of defence research funds.

DROPS

61. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps he has taken to satisfy himself that the tenders for the demountable rack offloading pickup system project were fairly assessed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Ministry's assessments of the original DROPS competition have been exhaustively examined by Ministers and senior officials over more than four years. No evidence of bias or impropriety has been revealed. Additionally, as my hon. Friend will be aware, the Department has co-operated fully in the Comptroller and Auditor General's review of DROPS procurement which is now the subject of consideration by the Public Accounts Committee.

Trident

66. **Mr. Page:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the latest estimate of the cost of the Trident programme.

77. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his latest estimate of the total cost of Trident.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer to the answer given by my right hon. Friend on 21 January at column *775*.

United States Bases

69. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give the number of United States bases *(a)* operational, *(b)* part operational and *(c)* available for use in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Sixty-six bases and facilities are currently made available for use by United States forces in the United Kingdom. There are also two armament depots run by United Kingdom civilians on behalf of NATO which provide a service for United States forces.

The 66 bases and facilities comprise seven main operating bases, two GLCM bases, 26 storage/support facilities and 22 communications facilities, all of which are fully operational, as well as two standby deployment bases and seven contingency wartime hospitals.

National Trust Land (Installations)

70. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what response he has received from the National

Trust to his request for permission to erect military installations on National Trust land in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) on 22 January 1988, at column 897.

SP-70 Programme (Replacement)

72. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what estimate he has made of the costs of the artillery programme intended to replace the cancelled SP-70 programme.

Mr. Sainsbury: A competition is currently in progress for 155mm self-propelled Howitzers for the British Army but no decisions have yet been taken and it would not be appropriate to disclose an estimated programme cost at this stage.

Contracts (Police Inquiries)

73. **Mr. Campbell Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which defence contracts have been the subject of his Department's police inquiries over the last two years.

Mr. Sainsbury: The MOD police have dealt with 32 cases of alleged contractual fraud, each involving different numbers of contracts, since January 1986. It would be inappropriate to specify the actual contracts involved.

Frigates and Destroyers

81. **Mr. Douglas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the number of frigates and destroyers which are currently operational and available for duties within the area of operations of NATO.

Mr. Ian Stewart: There are currently 48 destroyers and frigates in service with the Fleet, of which 41 are operational or engaged in preparing for service or trials or training. A number of these ships are at present deployed outside the NATO area but could be recalled for operations in support of NATO in the event of an emergency.

"Blundering Into Disaster"

90. **Mr. James Lamond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if his Department has obtained a copy of the book *Blundering Into Disaster*, by Robert McNamara.

Mr. Freeman: Yes.

Contracts

93. **Mr. Arbuthnot:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made towards extending the range of companies competing for his Department's contracts.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Department's policy of seeking competition at all levels wherever it is reasonable and practicable is bringing significantly better value for money for defence and for the taxpayer, and offers excellent opportunities for companies to compete for MOD business.

The number of companies seeking registration on the defence contractors list continues to increase significantly. About 38 per cent. more applications from companies wishing to join the list were received during the period October 1986 to September 1987, the last period for which figures are available, than in the preceding 12 months, and about 45 per cent. more were accepted. There are now just under 9,000 companies on the defence contractors list which are eligible to compete for direct MOD headquarters contracts. They cover a vast range of products and services.

In addition, our policy of requiring prime contractors to place subcontracts by competition wherever possible will have increased the range of companies competing at this level, although the Ministry compiles no statistics on this.

INF Treaty

95. **Mr. McLoughlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received about the implications for the United Kingdom of the intermediate nuclear forces treaty.

Mr. Ian Stewart: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has received some 58 representations from hon. Members and members of the public since 1 July 1987 concerning the INF treaty.

Blue Vixen Radar Programme

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to be able to authorise the Blue Vixen radar programme into full development and production.

Mr. Sainsbury: The contract for development and producion of the Blue Vixen radar was signed in October 1984.

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what slippages have occured in the Blue Vixen radar development programme.

Mr. Sainsbury: Nineteen months from the schedule established at the start of the project in June 1983.

Research Projects

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish in the *Official Report* all research projects funded by his Department currently under way in universities and other institutions including Ministry of Defence establishments; showing the cost of each and indicating which were experiments on animals.

Mr. Sainsbury: The defence research programme is made up of 1,200 work items covering the major fields described on pages 57 and 58 of the "Annual Review of Government-funded R&D 1987". The aggregate cost is £400 million a year. It is not our policy to describe in detail the content and methods of the work.

Anti-Air Warfare Missile System

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on progress in the development of a new naval anti-air warfare missile system.

Mr. Sainsbury: Development of the next generation AAW system is being pursued through two separate parallel international collaborative programmes; one led by the United States, the other being a European

programme with equal participation by four nations including the United Kingdom. The United States-led programme commenced in October 1987 with participants' signatures of the memorandum of understanding. We hope very shortly to be in a position to sign the MOU for the European programme.

Both collaborative programmes will commence with a feasibility study phase at the end of which a further decision will need to be made on the way forward.

The purpose of these programmes is to provide an AAW capability effective against the evolving air threat (including anti-ship missiles) for service in the late 1990s.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Health Authorities (Money Raising)

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if, in the light of Government proposals to encourage health authorities to raise money for themselves, he will make it his policy that any money so raised will not be deducted from present or future revenue or capital allocations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The overall planning of health services must, of course, take account of all resources available, including those from charges and land sales. We are however emphasising to regional health authorities the need for allocation arrangements which ensure that districts see clear benefit from successful income generation schemes.

Pesticides

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps Her Majesty's Government are taking to co-ordinate reports of illness in high intensity farming areas which may have been caused by pesticide or environmental illnesses.

Mrs. Currie: No arrangements exist to co-ordinate reports of illness specifically in high-intensity farming areas. Where ill health due to specific exposure to pesticides is suspected, the details can be reported to the Health and Safety Executive. All such cases are investigated, and a report which is seen by the statutory Advisory Committee on Pesticides is made to the Government. Similarly, all cases of acute poisoning from pesticides which involve hospital treatment, or a request to a poisons centre for advice, are recorded. The Government are considering how all this available though separate information can be co-ordinated.

There would be very great difficulties in studying populations in areas of high intensity farming so as to obtain general information on possible untoward effects from long-term exposure to pesticides. However, we will be discussing with the Medical Research Council, which is the main Government funded body supporting medical research from its grant-in-aid under the Science Vote of the Department of Education and Science, whether it would be possible to investigate the feasibility of such studies in order to increase public reassurance as to the safety of approved pesticides.

The Government have established a small area health statistics unit at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine under the direction of Professor Geoffrey Rose, to develop methods and undertake studies of illnesses which might be associated with local sources of environmental pollution.

Obstetric Units

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of each obstetric unit for each health authority showing for each year since 1979 the number of deliveries.

Mrs. Currie: I have arranged for the information requested to be placed in the Library.

Incontinence Advisers

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to increase the number of incontinence advisers in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: It is for individual health authorities to decide for themselves both the level of provision, and the pace and direction of further developments in their services, in the light of their local needs and circumstances.

We do, however, expect health authorities to provide appropriate services for incontinent people, and in 1977 the Department's chief nursing officer wrote to all health authorities advising them that the management of incontinence should be clearly identified as the responsibility of a designated special nurse, who should act as a "resource person" for nurses working in hospitals and the community services. Since then, most district health authorities have appointed at least one in continence adviser. Community nurses also provide advice and assessment as part of their nursing duties.

Blood Glucose Monitoring Strips

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he intends to make available the free blood glucose monitoring strips.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my replies to my hon. Friends the Members for Exeter (Mr. Hannam) and for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson) on 24 November 1987 at column *174* and on 12 January 1988 at column *247* respectively.

Surgery Statistics

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list in order of frequency the 12 most common forms of surgery for which patients are admitted to hospitals in the South East Thames regional health authority.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested is given in the table

Estimated number of the 12 most common forms of surgery (in order of frequency) performed in NHS non-phychiatric and non-maternity hospitals, South East Thames Regional Health Authority, 1985

Condensed[1] list operation number	*Operation*	*Estimated number of operations*
1. 080	Dilatation, Curettage, Biopsy and Excision of Lesion of Cervix	8,400
2. 093	Treatment of Fracture by Operations	7,550

Condensed[1] list operation number	Operation	Estimated number of operations
3. 061	Cystoscopy (With Destruction of Lesion)	7,320
4. 023	Tonsils and Adenoids	5,720
5. 032	Operations on Heart and Intrathoracic Vessels	5,260
6. 039	Inguinal Hernia Operations	5,260
7. 092	Post-Natal or Post-Abortion Operations	5,260
8. 078	Hysterectomy	4,870
9. 038	Operations on Abdominal wall, Peritoneum and Mesentery	4,760
10. 100	Arthroplasty	3,870
11. 014	Operations on Lens	3,850
12. 044	Operations on Appendix	3,640

Source: Hospital In-Patient Enquiry (HIPE)
[1] OPCS condensed list of surgical operations.

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list in order of frequency the 12 most common forms of surgery for which patients are admitted to hospitals in the Brighton health authority area.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested is given in the table

Estimated number of the 12 most common forms of surgery (in order of frequency) performed in NHS non-psychiatric and non-maternity hospitals, Brighton District Health Authority, 1985

Condensed[1] list operation number	Operation	Estimated number of operations
1. 061	Cystoscopy (With Destruction of Lesion)	1,030
2. 023	Tonsils and Adenoids	940
3. 080	Delatation, Curettage, Biopsy and Excision of Lesion of Cervix	730
4. 093	Treatment of Fracture by Operations	710
5. 038	Operations on Abdominal Wall, Peritoneum and Mesentery	590
6. 078	Hysterectomy	440
7. 014	Operations on Lens	400
8. 109	Operations on Veins	390
9. 100	Arthroplasty	370
10. 092	Post-Natal or Post-Abortion Operations	350
11. 044	Operations on Appendix	340
12. 087	Other Termination of Pregnancy	320

Source: Hospital In-Patient Enquiry (HIPE)
[1] OPCS condensed list of surgical operations.

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list in order of frequency the 10 most common forms of surgery for which patients are admitted to hospitals in the Wessex regional health authority.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested is given in the table.

Estimated number of the 10 most common forms of surgery (in order of frequency) performed in NHS non-psychiatric and non-maternity hospitals, Wessex Regional Health Authority, 1985

Condensed[1] list operation number	Operation	Estimated number of operations
1. 080	Dilatation. Curettage, Biopsy and Excision of Lesion of Cervix	7,350
2. 093	Treatment of Fracture by Operations	6,480
3. 061	Cystoscopy (With Destruction of Lesion)	5,420
4. 023	Tonsils and Adenoids	4,750
5. 039	Inguinal Hernia Operations	4,330
6. 078	Hysterectomy	4,070
7. 038	Operations on Abdominal Wall, Peritoneum and Mesentery	3,930
8. 100	Arthroplasty	3,930
9. 092	Post-Natal or Post-Abortion Operations	3,910
10. 014	Operations on Lens	3,860

Source: Hospital In-Patient Enquiry (HIPE)
[1] OPCS condensed list of surgical operations.

Mr. Grylls: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list in order of frequency the 10 most common forms of surgery for which patients are admitted to hospitals in the South West Thames regional health authority.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested is given in the table

Estimated number of the 10 most common forms of surgery (in order of frequency) performed in NHS non-psychiatric and non-maternity hospitals, South West Thames Regional Health Authority, 1985

Condensed[1] list operation number	Operation	Estimated number of operations
1. 080	Dilatation, Curettage, Biopsy and Excision of Lesion of Cervix	6,150
2. 093	Treatment of Fracture by Operations	5,500
3. 061	Cystoscopy (With Destruction of Lesion)	5,460
4. 023	Tonsils and Adenoids	3,910
5. 039	Inguinal Hernia Operations	3,750
6. 078	Hysterectomy	3,750
7. 092	Post-Natal or Post-Abortion Operations	3,670
8. 014	Operations on Lens	3,530
9. 038	Operations on Abdominal Wall, Peritoneum and Mesentery	3,460
10. 100	Arthroplasty	3,270

Source: Hospital In-Patient Enquiry (HIPE)
[1] OPCS condensed list of surgical operations.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list in order of frequency the 10 most common forms of surgery for which patients are currently admitted to hospitals in the North West Thames regional health authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested is given in the table.

Estimated number of the 10 most common forms of surgery (in order of frequency) performed in NHS non-psychiatric and non-maternity hospitals, North West Thames regional health authority, 1985

Condensed[1] list operation number	Operation	Estimated number of operations
1. 080	Dilatation, Curettage, Biopsy and Excision of Lesion of Cervix	8,270
2. 093	Treatment of Fracture by Operations	7,010
3. 061	Cystoscopy (With Destruction of Lesion)	5,970
4. 023	Tonsils and Adenoids	5,800
5. 039	Inguinal Hernia Operations	4,670
6. 092	Post-Natal or Post-Abortion Operations	4,550
7. 078	Hysterectomy	3,900
8. 032	Operations on Heart and Intrathoracic Vessels	3,730
9. 014	Operations on Lens	3,600
10. 038	Operations on Abdominal Wall, Peritoneum and Mesentery	3,540

Source: Hospital In-Patient Enquiry (HIPE)
[1] OPCS condensed list of surgical operations.

Mr. Waller: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list in order of frequency the 10 most common surgical procedures for which patients are admitted to hospitals in the Yorkshire regional health authority area.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list in order of frequency the 10 most common forms of surgery for which patients are admitted to hospitals in the Mersey regional health authority.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested is given in the tables.

Estimated number of the 10 most common forms of surgery (in order of frequency) performed in NHS non-psychiatric and non-maternity hospitals, Yorkshire Health Authority, 1985

Condensed[1] list operation number	Operation	Estimated number of operations
1. 080	Dilatation, Curettage, Biopsy and Excision of Lesion of Cervix	10,630
2. 093	Treatment of Fracture by Operations	8,770
3. 061	Cystoscopy (With Destruction of Lesion)	8,180
4. 023	Tonsils and Adenoids	7,750
5. 078	Hysterectomy	6,090
6. 039	Inguinal Hernia Operations	5,470
7. 092	Post-Natal or Post-Abortion Operations	5,400
8. 038	Operations on Adominal wall, Peritoneum and Mesentery	5,070
9. 014	Operations on Lens	5,030
10. 044	Operations on Appendix	4,630

Source: Hospital In-Patient Enquiry (HIPE)
[1] OPCS condensed list of surgical operations.

Estimated number of the 10 most common forms of surgery (in order of frequency) performed in NHS non-psychiatric and non-maternity hospitals, Mersey Regional Health Authority 1985

Condensed[1] list operation number	Operation	Estimated number of operations
1. 080	Dilatation, Curettage, Biopsy and Excision of Lesion of Cervix	6,090
2. 093	Treatment of Fracture by Operations	5,600
3. 092	Post-Natal or Post-Abortion Operations	3,550
4. 078	Hysterectomy	3,370
5. 023	Tonsils and Adenoids	2,980
6. 039	Inguinal Hernia Operations	2,890
7. 044	Operations on Appendix	2,870
8. 014	Operations on Lens	2,790
9. 061	Cystoscopy (With Destruction of Lesion)	2,700
10. 100	Arthroplasty	2,600

Source: Hospital In-Patient Enquiry (HIPE)
[1] OPCS condensed list of surgical operations.

Mr. Fry: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list in order of frequency the 10 most common forms of surgery for which patients are admitted to hospitals in the Oxford regional health authority.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested is given in the table.

Estimated number of the 10 most common forms of surgery (in order of frequency) performed in NHS non-psychiatric and non-maternity hospitals, Oxford Regional Health Authority, 1985

Condensed[1] list operation number	Operation	Estimated number of operations
1. 080	Dilatation, Curettage, Biopsy and Excision of Lesion of Cervix	5,850
2. 093	Treatment of Fracture by Operations	5,270
3. 023	Tonsils and Adenoids	4,390
4. 061	Cystoscopy (With Destruction of Lesion)	3,990
5. 078	Hysterectomy	3,820
6. 039	Inguinal Hernia Operations	3,430
7. 092	Post-Natal or Post-Abortion Operations	3,220
8. 038	Operations on Abdominal Wall, Peritoneum and Mesentery	3,150
9. 100	Arthroplasty	3,120
10. 044	Operations on Appendix	2,970

[1] OPCS condensed list of surgical operations.
Source: Hospital In-Patient Enquiry (HIPE)

Mr. Hind: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list in order of frequency the 10 most common forms of surgery for which patients are admitted to hospitals in the North Western regional health authority.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested is given in the table.

Estimated number of the 10 most common forms of surgery (in order of frequency) performed in NHS non-psychiatric and non-maternity hospitals, North Western Regional Health Authority, 1985

Condensed[1] list operation number	Operation	Estimated number of operations
1. 080	Dilatation, Curettage, Biopsy and Excision of Lesion of Cervix	14,510
2. 023	Tonsils and Adenoids	10,290
3. 093	Treatment of Fracture by Operations	10,150
4. 061	Cystoscopy (With Destruction of Lesion)	8,340
5. 038	Operations on Abdominal Wall, Peritoneum and Mesentery	6,980
6. 078	Hysterectomy	6,170
7. 092	Post-Natal or Post-Abortion Operations	6,160
8. 014	Operations on Lens	5,540
9. 044	Operations on Appendix	5,460
10. 039	Inguinal Hernia Operations	5,450

Source: Hospital In-Patient Enquiry (HIPE)
[1] OPCS condensed list of surgical operations.

Midwives

Mr. Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many staff midwives were in post on 30 September in each region, listed separately, in England and Wales in 1985, 1986 and 1987.

Mr. Newton: The information for each region in England for September 1985 and September 1986 is shown in the table.

Similar information for 1987 is not yet available.

The information for Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

NHS staff midwives in post[1]: England at 30 September Whole-time Equivalents[2]

Regional health authority	1985	1986
Northern	520	550
Yorkshire	510	560
Trent	590	620
East Anglian	290	320
NW Thames	450	450
NE Thames	620	640
SE Thames	530	600
SW Thames	440	420
Wessex	430	440
Oxford	330	350
South Western	410	440
West Midlands	650	640
Mersey	280	330
North Western	640	680
London post-graduate special health authorities	110	110
England	6,820	7,150

Source: DHSS annual census of NHS non-medical manpower.
[1] Excludes agency staff midwives.
[2] All figures are independently rounded to the nearest 10 whole-time equivalents.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the current level of midwife staff vacancies within the National Health Service and the trend of such vacancies on previous years; whether Her Majesty's Government has any plans to procure a reduction of these vacancies, by the recruitment and retention of more midwives; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I regret that information on vacancies is not collected centrally and no current information on vacancies is available. The results of the 1987 regional health authority chairmen's survey undertaken for the Nurses' Pay Review Body are expected shortly. However, the results of the previous surveys show that at 31 March 1986 2·7 per cent. of midwives' posts had been vacant for at least three months compared to about 3·0 per cent. a year earlier.

Nationally the number of midwives has increased by 16·0 per cent. since 1981. Action is being taken centrally where appropriate to improve recruitment and retention of such staff. For example, the new grading definitions recently agreed by the Nurses and Midwives' Negotiating Council will provide better career opportunities for those who develop their clinical skills and will improve incentives to remain in the Health Service.

Midwifery Students

Mr. Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many intakes of midwifery students were cancelled in 1985, 1986 and 1987 in each year ended 30 September; and what are the most recently available staffing figures.

Mr. Newton: I regret that information on the numbers of intakes cancelled is not collected centrally.

The latest available detailed staffing information is September 1986 and this shows:

National Health Service midwifery staff excluding agency staff at 30 September 1986: England

	Wholetime equivalents[1]
Qualified midwives	18,670
Student midwives	4,180

[1] Figures are independently rounded to nearest ten (10) wholetime equivalents.

AIDS

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the total number of AIDS tests undertaken by the public health laboratory service to the latest available date.

Mr. Newton: The public health laboratory service has carried out a total of 289,221 AIDS tests as at 30 November 1987.

Medicines Act 1968

Mr. Thornton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects the independent study carried out by Dr. John Evans and Mr. Peter Cunliffe into the operations of the Medicines Act 1968 to report; when he expects to make his decision on their recommendations; and when the results will be made publicly known to the interested parties.

Mr. Newton: The study, which I announced on 11 March last year, has been completed. Dr. Evans and Mr. Cunliffe submitted their report just before Christmas and I am placing a copy in the Library. Copies will also be generally available, price £4·75 from the DHSS leaflets unit, PO Box 21, Stanmore, Middlesex HA7 1AY. We are consulting the Medicines Commission on certain issues as

appropriate. In the light of its advice, we will take decisions and where necessary will enter into discussions with the bodies concerned.

Wessex RHA (Overspending)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will indicate the extent and the reasons for the overspend by the Wessex regional health authority on its computer system; whether there are any plans for his Department to attempt to resolve the problems; whether there are any implications for his Department's own central computerisation project; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I have been assured by officers of Wessex regional health authority that their computer programme is not overspent; that current expenditure on computer systems continues to be within the capital allocation approved by the regional health authority for computing up to 31 March 1989; and that the computer programme continues to be under regular review by the regional health authority.

Officials are monitoring the progress of this project as part of the normal accountability procedures. There are at present no known implications for any existing departmental central computerisation projects.

For further information the hon. Member may like to consult the Wessex regional health authority.

Family Planning Clinics

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in tabular form the proportion of funds directed to family planning clinics by each of the health authorities in England and Wales for each year for which figures are available since 1979.

Mr. Newton: I regret that this information is not collected centrally.

Professional and Linguistic Assessment

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the following information concerning the tests held under the auspices of the Professional and Linguistics Assessment Board: *(a)* how many/often the tests are held, *(b)* what is the average time taken from application for a test until the results are made available to districts health authorities and *(c)* how many places are available for each test; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Information obtained from the General Medical Council, which is the independent statutory body responsible for controlling the tests, shows that in 1987 there were 11 test sessions involving 1,734 candidates. Test sessions are held at approximately monthly intervals at different locations. No figures are available regarding the average time taken from application for a test to the results being made available, although because of the demand for places candidates are advised to apply six months in advance. The availability of places for each test is limited by the seating accommodation at each test location which I understand varies from about 110 to 200 places.

Free Milk

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many children under five years of age and cared for by registered childminders are currently in receipt of free milk; and how many childminders this involves.

Mrs. Currie: Information is not available in the form requested. It is estimated that some 200,000 children in England are receiving free milk at day nurseries, playgroups or childminders at any one time.

Medical Laboratory Scientific Officers

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many medical laboratory scientific officers have been newly appointed by each health authority in England in each year since 1982.

Mr. Newton: Information in the form requested is not held centrally. The total number of qualified medical laboratory scientific officers in post rose by 14 per cent. between 1982 and 1986.

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many medical laboratory scientific officers were newly appointed by the Sunderland, Durham and Hartlepool district health authorities in 1985-86, 1986-87 and 1987 to date.

Mr. Newton: Information in the form requested is not held centrally. The latest available staff in post figures are shown in the table.

Medical laboratory scientific officers in post at 30 September 1986

	Whole-time equivalent[1]
Sunderland District Health Authority	77
Durham District Health Authority	35
Hartlepool District Health Authority	31

Source: Department of Health and Social Services annual census of National Health Service non-medical manpower.

[1] Figures rounded to nearest whole-time equivalent.

For further information the hon. Member may wish to write to the chairmen of the health authorities concerned.

Departmental Local Offices

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the establishment figures of each local benefit office, distinguishing between short-term and permanent posts, and between contributory and non-contributory benefits sections, and showing the current case load per head at each office.

Mr. Portillo: I regret that information cannot be provided as requested. The table shows the current complement of each local social security office with the latest supplementary benefit caseload, which is based on a 100 per cent. count of liver cases. Although staff are designated as employed on either contributory benefits or supplementary benefits the totals will include staff employed on common services such as finance work. No figure comparable to supplementary benefit caseload exists for the range of contributory benefits.

The size of caseload is only one factor which determines complement. Other factors, such as activity on the caseload, play a more prominent role.

To provide a fuller answer would be disproportionately costly.

Integrated local offices	Contributory benefits complement 1987-88	Supplementary benefit complement 1987-88	Supplementary benefit caseload
North Eastern Region			
Ashington	43	69	7,097
Barnsley East	46	115	10,752
Barnsley West	39	81	7,939
Berwick	10	22	1,887
Bishop Auckland	62	130	14,762
Blyth	41	86	8,872
Bradford East	38	136	14,944
Bradford South	43	130	13,730
Bradford West	50	146	13,235
Bridlington	28	54	5,914
Chester-le-Street	31	68	6,794
Darlington	57	139	13,905
Dewsbury	54	143	14,973
Doncaster East	48	127	11,712
Doncaster West	65	144	14,559
Durham	42	60	6,174
Eston	26	86	8,445
Gateshead	80	206	23,898
Goole	19	46	4,833
Grimsby	74	210	21,856
Halifax	72	163	16,172
Harrogate	46	70	7,414
Hartlepool	46	130	12,365
Hemsworth	28	47	4,818
Hexham	21	26	2,865
Houghton le Spring	24	44	4,541
Huddersfield	69	164	16,567
Hull East	67	233	24,681
Hull West	71	203	23,084
Keighley	40	93	9,249
Leeds East	62	173	17,857
Leeds North	61	171	16,353
Leeds North West	58	164	14,999
Leeds South	41	98	9,248
Leeds West	48	117	12,361
Middlesbrough	73	253	23,121
Newcastle East	51	144	17,170
Newcastle St. James	58	162	17,303
Newcastle West	33	102	11,836
North Shields	42	109	11,462
Northallerton	36	51	5,362
Peterlee	62	71	7,396
Pontefract	31	61	6,413
Redcar	33	92	9,492
Rotherham North	27	54	5,671
Rotherham South	71	170	19,452
Scarborough	41	95	9,696
Scunthorpe	41	120	12,676
Seaham	19	31	3,154
Sheffield North East	54	185	20,970
Sheffield North West	55	188	19,353
Sheffield South East	43	129	14,057
Sheffield South West	51	156	17,738
South Shields	41	120	14,040
Stanley	47	93	10,502
Stockton	74	204	20,321
Sunderland North	67	206	20,612
Sunderland South	58	149	16,131
Wakefield	50	114	12,006
Wallsend	26	80	9,202
York	75	153	14,705
Midland Region			
Birmingham Edgbaston	45	165	18,573
Birmingham Erdington	47	141	16,331
Birmingham Handsworth	45	195	19,551
Birmingham Ladywood	55	123	12,470
Birmingham Northfield	41	145	16,818
Birmingham Perry Barr	41	109	15,467
Birmingham Ravenhurst	39	109	11,021
Birmingham South Yardley	78	176	23,828
Birmingham Sparkhill	31	69	8,414
Birmingham Washwood Heath	37	136	14,819

Integrated local offices	*Contributory benefits complement 1987-88*	*Supplementary benefit complement 1987-88*	*Supplementary benefit caseload*
Boston	46	73	8,282
Burton-on-Trent	30	60	6,346
Cannock	44	93	9,520
Chesterfield	103	146	19,271
Corby	25	67	5,461
Coventry East	63	195	22,352
Coventry West	51	151	17,619
Derby (Beckett Street)	50	124	13,120
Derby Heritage Gate	36	56	7,283
Derby London Road	58	134	14,824
Dudley North	69	150	20,249
Dudley South	43	84	10,070
Grantham	31	65	6,507
Hereford	54	98	10,195
Ilkeston	39	75	7,660
Kidderminster	36	87	9,839
Leamington	57	94	11,713
Leicester Burley's Way	40	77	8,199
Leicester Lower Hill Street	58	111	12,544
Leicester Norton Street	65	164	15,204
Leicester Yeoman Street	66	150	15,825
Lichfield	43	102	11,925
Lincoln Newland	37	90	10,455
Lincoln Orchard Street	57	128	13,526
Loughborough	35	93	9,288
Mansfield	85	124	13,419
Nottingham Castle Gate	48	137	13,676
Nottingham David Lane	49	118	12,543
Nottingham Shakespeare Street	53	146	15,420
Nottingham Station Street	71	150	17,353
Newcastle	51	79	9,036
Nuneaton	58	117	13,464
Redditch	48	101	11,015
Rugby	24	47	5,493
Shrewsbury	79	118	14,575
Skegness	25	58	5,335
Smethwick	62	155	19,762
Stafford	33	62	6,618
Stoke North	87	158	17,887
Stoke South	61	100	10,572
Sutton-in-Ashfield	47	77	8,755
Telford	53	149	16,375
Walsall East	59	117	13,567
Walsall West	51	126	15,747
Wellingborough	65	131	13,385
West Bromwich	56	162	21,149
Wolverhampton North	50	169	19,328
Wolverhampton South	63	157	19,679
Worcester	70	139	16,180
Worksop	48	90	9,888
London North Region			
Acton	56	134	15,258
Aylesbury	60	83	8,979
Banbury	34	63	5,919
Barking	56	137	17,333
Barnet	45	61	7,457
Basildon	95	194	23,447
Bedford	70	127	13,996
Braintree	40	79	9,154
Bury St. Edmunds	61	99	10,234
Cambridge	84	179	15,141
Canning Town	16	65	5,362
Chelmsford	53	74	9,452
Clacton-on-Sea	28	55·5	7,271
Colchester	73	121	11,711
Cricklewood	28	88	9,621
Dunstable	31	57	5,876
Ealing	63	141·5	16,073
Edgware	42	69	8,228
Edmonton	76	136	17,646
Euston	64	133	12,517
Finsbury Park	53	171	21,457
Grays	42	103	11,369

Integrated local offices	*Contributory benefits complement 1987-88*	*Supplementary benefit complement 1987-88*	*Supplementary benefit caseload*
Great Yarmouth	38	87	10,828
Hackney	51	159·5	17,550
Harlesden	43·5	127	12,450
Harlow	40	79	8,165
Harrow	62·5	96	11,247
Hemel Hempstead	41	62	6,298
Hendon	50·5	96	10,299
Hertford	32	69	8,195
High Wycombe	57	77	9,066
Highgate	68	181	19,598
Hoxton	41	122	13,129
Ilford	85	148	17,319
Ipswich	81·5	150	18,604
Kings Lynn	79	164	17,023
Leytonstone	40·5	100	11,292
Lowestoft	39	84	9,089
Luton	55	148	15,723
Milton Keynes	46·5	125	12,981
Neasden	58	134	13,393
Norwich Chantry	68	136	15,350
Norwich Mountergate	67	158	17,684
Notting Hill	26	99	10,608
Paddington	47·5	172	15,537
Peterborough	92	218	20,794
Plaistow	35	95·5	11,338
Poplar	41	143·5	16,499
Romford	42·5	122	13,517
Southall	58	106	11,383
Southend	75	161	19,741
St. Albans	41	71	6,930
Stevenage	55·5	108	12,455
Stoke Newington	46·5	95	10,264
Tottenham	45	167	17,235
Uxbridge	48·5	74	8,156
Walthamstow	50	121	13,987
Watford	65	82	8,958
Wood Green	50	84	9,240
Woodgrange Park	48·5	147	14,934
London South Region			
Aldershot	77	104	8,886
Andover	25	51	4,512
Ashford	27	54	5,808
Balham	38	167	15,322
Basingstoke	32	62	5,730
Battersea	28	139	14,018
Bexley	59	119	12,179
Bognor Regis	24	69	8,012
Bracknell	55	77	7,903
Brighton	64	168	17,447
Brixton	50	138	11,363
Bromley	50	81	8,895
Chatham	70	117	10,732
Chelsea	48	154	13,493
Chichester	30	49	5,134
Crawley	43	77	8,120
Croydon	62	167	18,602
Crystal Palace	39	117	12,077
Dartford	36	65	6,207
Dover	33	66	6,896
Eastbourne	61	104	11,188
Epsom	54	56	4,927
Fareham	52	107	10,263
Folkestone	29	72	7,878
Gravesend	28	67	6,817
Greenwich Park	38	160	14,671
Guildford	70	91	8,772
Hastings	102	116	14,262
Hounslow	80	148	16,297
Hove	36	88	9,593
Isle of Wight	47	106	11,651
Kennington Park	25	108	11,964
Kensington	34	139	10,540
Kingston Upon Thames	68	91	8,907

Integrated local offices	*Contributory benefits complement 1987-88*	*Supplementary benefit complement 1987-88*	*Supplementary benefit caseload*
Lewes	27	64	6,945
Lewisham	51	149	14,718
Maidstone	46	91	9,455
New Forest	46	81	8,112
Newbury	32	69	5,897
Orpington	38	59	5,790
Peckham	58	109	9,826
Portsmouth North	47	113	12,725
Portsmouth South	30	109	10,676
Reading	75	171	12,503
Redhill	49	78	7,352
Sittingbourne	32	79	8,600
Slough	85	141	12,179
Southampton	84	247	24,583
Southwark	44	129	12,108
Streatham	44	105	10,505
Thanet	43	131	14,533
Tunbridge Wells	55	77	9,603
Twickenham	40	59	5,801
Wandsworth	43	93	10,893
Westminster	42	113	5,518
Winchester	40	61	5,527
Woking	65	84	9,109
Woolwich	52	225	19,028
Worthing	66	103	11,729
Wales and South Western Region			
Aberdare	41	62	6,475
Abertillery	18	35	3,213
Aberystwyth	27	46	4,705
Ammanford	33	30	3,331
Anglesey	26	58	7,323
Bargoed	35	56	5,627
Barnstable	46	84	9,539
Barry	32	76	7,412
Bath	55	110	12,104
Blackwood	32	41	4,102
Bournemouth	79	186	18418
Bridgend	80	108	11,208
Bridgwater	42	70	7,389
Bristol Central	44	134	11,284
Bristol East	72	145	16,848
Bristol Horfield	26	72	7,337
Bristol South	52	155	14,830
Bristol West	49	78	8,179
Caernarfon	19	52	5,993
Caerphilly	32	58	6,758
Cardiff Central	58	101	11,300
Cardiff East	47	131	14,663
Cardiff West	40	108	12,428
Carmarthen	26	37	4,041
Cheltenham	51	96	10,234
Chippenham	33	55	5,998
Colwyn Bay	39	74	8,164
Cwmbran	59	118	13,157
Devonport	44	105	12,149
Ebbw Vale	42	74	7,145
Exeter	107	181	19,997
Gloucester	66	131	13,470
Haverfordwest	29	54	6,574
Launceston	31	55	5,854
Llanelli	57	84	8,657
Merthyr Tydfil	52	65	7,623
Morriston	44	80	8,721
Neath	39	62	6,252
Newport	78	176	20,680
Newtown	32	47	4,695
Pembroke Dock	17	41	4,252
Penzance	38	70	7,940
Plymouth	81	179	18,556
Pontypridd	47	62	7,690
Poole	77	118	14,674
Port Talbot	41	60	5,846
Porth	31	35	5,224

Integrated local offices	Contributory benefits complement 1987-88	Supplementary benefit complement 1987-88	Supplementary benefit caseload
Porthmadog	31	37	4,933
Rhondda West	57	65	6,069
Rhyl	70	129	15,157
Salisbury	41	70	6,935
St. Austell	45	93	10,638
Stroud	43	67	7,852
Swansea	82	167	19,610
Swindon	60	99	13,871
Taunton	57	138	10,315
Torbay	88	205	22,467
Trowbridge	31	51	4,954
Truro	54	117	13,431
Weston-super-Mare	41	86	8,822
Weymouth	52	86	9,349
Wrexham	91	183	18,950
Yeovil	41	66	7,267
North Western Region			
Accrington	45	77	7,380
Ashton under Lyne	50	112	12,434
Barrow	44	76	8,116
Birkenhead North	63	168	17,562
Birkenhead South	45	102	11,313
Blackburn	70	148	14,783
Blackpool North	89	156	19,785
Blackpool South	49	76	9,734
Bolton	92	195	23,405
Burnley	83	153	15,701
Bury	73	146	13,879
Buxton	16	23	2,092
Carlisle	43	79	8,430
Chester	48	92	10,864
Crewe	53	91	11,232
Ellesmere Port	29	75	7,138
Farnworth	41	88	9,882
Hyde	45	96	11,251
Kendal	23	28	2,732
Lancaster	54	115	11,514
Leigh	57	100	10,206
Liverpool Belle Vale	37	98	10,987
Liverpool Bootle	50	116	14,125
Liverpool Breckfield	49	127	16,818
Liverpool City	34	89	8,840
Liverpool Crosby	33	94	11,360
Liverpool Edgehill	26	93	9,857
Liverpool Garston	29	84	9,400
Liverpool Huyton	45	144	16,458
Liverpool Kirkby	57	165	17,773
Liverpool Toxteth	38	158	16,734
Macclesfield	27	45	4,438
Manchester Central	39	68	5,767
Manchester Cheetham	43	122	13,539
Manchester Chorlton	30	97	10,736
Manchester Failsworth	53	130	13,226
Manchester Longsight	35	127	12,051
Manchester Middleton	34	90	8,985
Manchester Openshaw	32	85	11,133
Manchester Rusholme	40	142	13,719
Manchester Sale	67	130	14,917
Manchester Wythenshawe	48	144	13,843
Northwich	34	69	6,579
Oldham	80	168	17,561
Penrith	15	22	2,043
Preston North	56	110	13,757
Preston South	64	93	11,137
Rochdale	58	125	12,501
Rossendale	27	51	5,000
Salford North	60	148	16,627
Salford South	45	107	11,897
Skelmersdale	42	99	10,283
Southport	46	82	10,173
St. Helens	99	166	19,056
Stockport North	56	107	12,204
Stockport South	51	93	11,291

Integrated local offices	Contributory benefits complement 1987-88	Supplementary benefit complement 1987-88	Supplementary benefit caseload
Wallasey	42	109	12,627
Warrington	87	139	17,786
Whitehaven	28	48	4,617
Widnes	53	141	15,727
Wigan	102	170	20,148
Wilmslow	20	31	3,424
Workington	28	56	5,755
Scotland			
Aberdeen North	54	105	9,638
Aberdeen South	54	110	9,925
Airdrie	27	95	8,305
Arbroath	26	70	6,694
Ayr	46	177	15,333
Bathgate	52	180	14,209
Campbeltown	7	19	1,630
Clydebank	22	75	7,716
Cowdenbeath	24	60	4,422
Cumbernauld	48	113	10,427
Dumbarton	25	86	8,229
Dumfries	40	88	8,011
Dundee East	47	152	11,613
Dundee West	38	112	10,979
Dunfermline	32	69	5,832
East Kilbride	29	70	6,506
Edinburgh City	56	132	12,071
Edinburgh East	38	128	11,695
Edinburgh North	31	137	11,047
Edinburgh South	49	133	11,265
Edinburgh West	49	120	11,207
Elgin	30	73	5,986
Falkirk	58	178	13,812
Fort William	11	30	2,619
Galashiels	34	68	6,374
Glasgow Anniesland	59	138	11,872
Glasgow Bridgeton	24	102	8,657
Glasgow City	49	115	9,335
Glasgow Craighton	33	134	12,646
Glasgow Laurieston	53	153	15,912
Glasgow Maryhill	36	115	10,488
Glasgow Parkhead	41	122	12,026
Glasgow Provan	32	198	14,513
Glasgow Rutherglen	42	181	14,762
Glasgow South Side	45	158	13,505
Glasgow Springburn	42	169	13,955
Greenock	49	126	12,338
Hamilton	68	161	16,338
Inverness	38	104	11,207
Irvine	39	147	12,974
Johnstone	29	84	7,899
Kilmarnock	33	108	9,246
Kirkcaldy	45	125	11,696
Lerwick	8	12	1,080
Leven	22	58	5,393
Motherwell	41	119	11,527
Oban	11	21	2,112
Paisley	67	185	16,726
Perth	39	89	8,323
Peterhead	24	56	4,348
Port Glasgow	19	62	5,369
Stirling	52	124	11,289
Stornoway	14	32	4,574
Stranraer	11	30	3,026
Wick	22	42	4,202

Area Offices	Supplementary benefit complement 1987-88	Supplementary benefit caseload
North Eastern		
Castleford	56	5,594
Jarrow	75	8,693
Skipton	26	2,426
Wath-on-Dearne	85	7,879

Area Offices	Supplementary benefit complement 1987-88	Supplementary benefit caseload
London North		
Diss	29	3,221
Oxford	180	16,884
Shoreditch	95·5	10,737
Stepney	100	10,291
Thames North	40	1,884
Midlands		
Birmingham Bradford st.	83	11,709
Northampton	181	19,531
North Western		
Morris Green	73	8,345
West Derby	94	10,525
Scotland		
Bellshill	77	6,874
Coatbridge	77	7,186
Glasgow Cranstonhill	43	2,082
Glasgow Partick	85	9,247
London South		
Bloomsbury	154	8,634
Camberwell	142	11,749
Canterbury	87	9,564
Eltham	34	2,988
Havant	84	8,393
Hither Green	46	4,464
Mitcham	74	7,768
Oval	134	11,976
Rochester	64	5,391
Surbiton	54	4,769
Sutton	60	5,238
Thames South	74	1,115
Wimbledon	77	8,245

National Insurance Offices

	Contributory Benefits complement 1987-88
North Eastern	
Castleford	31
Goldthorpe	21
Jarrow	25
Mexborough	21
Skipton	18
London North	
Abingdon	18
Bishops Stortford	16
Diss	11
Hatfield	27
Hornchurch	38
Oxford	73
Stepney	38
Wantage	11
Midlands	
Northampton	96
North Western	
West Derby	50
Scotland	
Coatbridge	37
Cumnock	15
Lanark	12
Shotts	13
Wishaw	35
London South	
Aldershot Benefits	74
Broadstairs Benefits	83
Canterbury	43
City	70
Eltham	29
Havant	38
Haywards Heath	32
Littlehampton	21
Portsmouth Conts	67
Richmond	24
Sutton	77
West End	58
Wimbledon	38

Hospital Waiting Lists (Derbyshire)

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the current hospital waiting list in Derbyshire, North-East for *(a)* urgent cases, *(b)* urgent cases which have been waiting for more than one month, *(c)* non-urgent cases and *(d)* non-urgent cases which have been waiting for more than one year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Due to the introduction of a new computer system on 31 March 1987, the data supplied by district health authorities in Trent region did not distinguish between in-patient waiting list cases classified by consultants as urgent or non-urgent. The available information for North Derbyshire health authority is that on 31 March 1987 there were 2,520 patients on the in-patient waiting list, 684 of whom had been waiting for more than one year. This is an improvement over the position at 31 March 1986 when the in-patient waiting list stood at 2,633 of whom 883 had been waiting over a year.

Cash Limits

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what assessment he has made of the extent to which, in order to remain within cash limits, district health authorities may be obliged to implement decisions that impose a real reduction in services on the population which they serve.

Mr. Newton: I announced on 16 December, an increase in health authority allocations across the United Kingdom of over £100 million in this financial year. This step was taken because our assessment of the financial pressures facing authorities showed that they would otherwise be required to take short-term measures that would not improve health care or efficiency.

General Practices (Inner Cities)

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he is taking to encourage the establishment of general practices in the inner cities.

Mr. Newton: The Government encourage the development of general practice in the inner cities mainly through payment of enhanced rates of improvement grant for practice premises and through the medical practices committee which takes into account the special needs of the inner cities in its control of the distribution of general

practitioners throughout the country. In addition, resources have been made available to encourage GPs to form group practices.

Proposals in the White Paper "Promoting Better Health" (Cm. 249), published last November, are designed to further improve general practice in the inner cities. These include relating the distribution of doctors more closely to medical and social needs; the introduction of new allowances especially related to working in areas of deprivation; increasing the assistance available to doctors in improvement grants and under the cost rent scheme; and strengthening the role of family practitioner committees generally.

Resources (Allocation)

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what criteria have been taken into account by the National Health Service resource allocation working party in assessing regional and district health needs; and if any changes are contemplated in future assessments.

Mr. Newton: The resource allocation working party formula measures the relative needs of each region by taking account of: population (and the use made of health services by people of different age groups and sexes); morbidity as indicated by standardised mortality ratios; patient flows between regions; and higher staff costs in London and the south-east. Separate allocations are made to take account of the costs associated with medical teaching. The assessment of the relative needs of health districts is a matter for regions, who are expected to follow the same principles as the national formula, but to have regard also to local needs and circumstances.

The NHS management board's review of the national RAWP formula is exploring the scope for improving the way in which the formula measures relative need. The review's programme of analysis and research is now almost complete, and any recommendations which may emerge will then be carefully considered.

1991 Census

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what assumptions he makes as to the percentage of misleading answers given during the next census which will result in the census being of little use for planning purposes; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: No such assumptions are made. Tests are being conducted to ensure that proposed census questions are as clear and acceptable to the public as possible.

Mersey RHA

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the percentage increase in medical and dental staff whole-time equivalents, in the Mersey region between 1978 and the latest available year.

Mrs. Currie: The percentage increase in hospital and community health services (HCHS) staff between 1978 and 1986 is 14 per cent. This is based on the information, as set out in the table.

HCHS medical and dental staff[1] at 30 September each year
whole-time equivalents

Mersey RHA

	1978	*1986*	*Percentage change*
All Staff	1,956	2,231	+14

[1] Includes permanent paid, honorary and locum staff.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* the information in table 15.1 of Cm. 288-II, expressed in constant 1986-87 prices.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is set out in the table. The figures for the last two years are, as in Cm, 288, rounded to the nearest £100 million.

Social Security

Table 15.1 (1) (in constant 1986-87 prices) *£ million*

	1982-83 outturn	*1983-84 outturn*	*1984-85 outturn*	*1985-86 outturn*	*1986-87 outturn*	*1987-88 estimated outturn*	*1988-89 plans*	*1989-90 plans*	*1990-91 plans*
Contributory benefits (ie those paid from the National Insurance Fund)									
Pension benefits									
Retirement pension									
basic element	16,115	16,597	16,583	16,938	17,552	17,683	17,381(2)	17,700	18,000
earnings-related component	48	68	95	145	219	278	346	400	500
Christmas bonus	122	117	115	108	107	103	99	100	100
Widows' benefits, etc									
basic element	854	862	829	790	785	751	735	700	700
earnings-related component	11	17	28	34	40	49	62	100	100
Unemployment, incapacity and other benefits									
Unemployment benefit	1,789	1,707	1,724	1,637	1,734	1,480	1,359	1,200	1,200
Sickness benefit	661	302	305	284	179	159	153	100	100
Invalidity benefit									
basic element	1,837	2,059	2,231	2,289	2,480	2,616	2,649	2,800	2,900
earnings-related component	63	76	109	131	193	248	298	400	400
Death grant	20	19	19	19	18	0	0	—	—
Industrial injuries benefit									

	1982-83 outturn	1983-84 outturn	1984-85 outturn	1985-86 outturn	1986-87 outturn	1987-88 estimated outturn	1988-89 plans	1989-90 plans	1990-91 plans
Industrial disablement benefit	409	421	416	419	440	428	403	400	400
Industrial death benefit	61	62	60	60	61	58	55	100	100
Other industrial injuries benefits	6	6	5	5	4	3	3	—	—
Family benefits									
Maternity allowance	181	161	176	169	168	64	39	—	—
Guardian's allowance and child's special allowance	2	2	2	1	2	2	1	—	—
Total contributory benefit expenditure	22,179	22,477	22,696	23,029	23,983	23,922	23,584	24,000	24,000
Non-contributory benefits (i.e. those met from voted expenditure or paid by local authorities etc.)									
Pension benefits									
Non-contributory retirement pension	48	47	43	42	45	42	40	—	—
Christmas bonus	7	7	7	7	8	8	6	—	—
War pension	601	598	594	599	589	565	543	500	500
Disability benefits									
Attendance allowance	481	565	629	707	779	814	835	900	900
Invalid care allowance	10	11	12	13	104	157	142	100	200
Non-contributory invalidity pension/severe disablement allowance	184	208	258	274	285	294	282	300	300
Mobility allowance	282	347	389	435	514	572	609	700	700
Supplementary benefit/income support/social fund									
Supplementary pension	1,726	810	972	1,039	1,178	1,209	—	—	—
Supplementary allowance	5,743	5,567	6,096	6,631	6,789	6,551	—	—	—
Income support	—	—	—	—	—	—	7,879	8,100	8,300
Social Fund	—	—	—	—	—	32	151	100	100
Family benefits									
Child benefit	4,366	4,548	4,671	4,603	4,513	4,420	4,156	4,200	4,200
One parent benefit	109	122	131	138	148	153	155	200	200
Family income supplement/family credit	112	140	138	134	161	158	375	400	400
Maternity grant	19	19	20	18	14	—	—	—	—
Housing benefit									
Rent rebate	1,108	2,258	2,343	2,363	2,421	2,459	2,497	2,500	2,600
Rent allowance	88	611	752	860	947	1,014	1,059	1,100	1,200
Total non-contributory benefit expenditure	14,883	15,854	17,055	17,862	18,496	18,477	18,730	19,200	19,500
Total benefit expenditure	37,063	38,332	39,751	40,892	42,479	42,369	42,315	43,200	44,000
Administration and miscellaneous services									
National Insurance Fund administration (collection of contributions and payment of contributory benefits)	874	791	883	821	727	765	823	820	820
Non-contributory benefit administration (payment of non-contributory benefits)	689	854	849	856	1,037	1,165	1,154	1,170	1,160
Housing benefit									
Local authority etc. administration	82	121	152	160	174	210	191	190	190
Total administration	1,646	1,765	1,883	1,837	1,937	2,140	2,168	2,180	2,180
Total Department of Health and Social Security—Social Security	38,710	40,097	41,634	42,728	44,416	44,509	44,483	45,300	46,100

[1] Footnotes to Table 15.1 of Cm. 288–II apply.
[2] Fall between 1987-88 and 1988-89 caused by their being one fewer encashment week in the latter year.

NHS (Trade Unions)

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has on the trade unions and professional organisations operating within the National Health Service and their membership numbers amongst doctors, nurses, administrative, ancillary and other staff.

Mrs. Currie: The trade unions and professional organisations recognised for the purpose of negotiating pay and conditions for staff in the NHS are as follows:

Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers (Technical, Administrative and Supervisory Section)
Association of Clinical Biochemists
Association of Dispensing Opticians
Association of NHS Officers
Association of Optical Practitioners
Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staffs
Association of Supervisors of Midwives
British Association of Occupational Therapists
British Dental Association
British Dietetic Association
British Medical Association
British Orthoptic Society
Chartered Society of Physiotherapy
Company Chemists Association Ltd
Confederation of Health Service Employees
Co-operative Union Ltd
Electrical, Electronic, Telecommunication and Plumbing Trades Union
General, Municipal, Boilermakers and Allied Trades Union
Health Visitors Association
Hospital Physicists' Association
National and Local Government Officers Association
National Pharmaceutical Union
National Union of Public Employees
Pharmaceutical Standing Committee (Scotland)
Royal College of Midwives
Royal College of Nursing of the United Kingdom
Scottish Association of Nurse Administrators
Scottish Health Visitors Association
Scottish Committee of Ophthalmic Opticians
Socialist Health Association
Society of Administrators of Family Practitioners Services
Society of Chiropodists
Society of Opticians
Society of Radiographers
Society of Remedial Gymnasts
Transport and General Workers Union
Union of Construction, Allied Trades and Technicians
Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers

Information about membership numbers is not held by the Department.

Infant Mortality

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the six health authorities with the highest percentage of post-neonatal deaths for each year since 1975.

Mrs. Currie: I shall let the hon. Member have such information as is available without incurring disproportionate costs as soon as possible.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will order an urgent inquiry into the causes of the increase of post-neonatal deaths.

Mrs. Currie: The increase in the infant mortality rate in the latest figures (1986), produced by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, is small and may not be sustained. None the less, I have arranged for the matter to be further examined with the help of medical experts.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the number of post-neonatal deaths for each year since 1975 as a percentage figure for each socio-economic group.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 25 January 1988]:* The exact information requested can be provided only at disproportionate cost. However, the tables show the numbers and rates for post-neonatal deaths, and percentage distribution by social class for legitimate births for 1975 to 1985, and for jointly registered illegitimate births for 1975 and 1985 only. These statistics are from data which link the infant death records to their corresponding birth records. Information on social class for illegitimate births as a whole is not shown as this is not collected on a comparable basis to that for legitimate births.

Post-neonatal mortality by social class (legitimate births only) England and Wales 1975-1985

Social class	*Number*	*Per cent. of total*	*Rate*
1975			
Total	2,500	100·0	4·6
I	127	5·1	3·0
II	324	13·0	3·3
IIIN	200	8·0	3·5
IIIM	949	38·0	4·4
IV	485	19·4	5·7
V	237	9·5	8·7
Other	178	7·1	7·5
1976			
Total	2,198	100·0	4·1
I	107	4·9	2·6
II	280	12·7	2·8
IIIN	171	7·8	3·1
IIIM	827	37·6	4·0
IV	431	19·6	5·1
V	211	9·6	8·4
Other	171	7·8	8·8
1977			
Total	2,079	100·0	4·0
I	120	5·8	2·9
II	305	14·7	3·0
IIIN	172	8·3	3·2
IIIM	712	34·2	3·7
IV	408	19·6	5·0
V	202	9·7	8·0
Other	160	7·7	8·7
1978			
Total	2,200	100·0	4·1
I	135	6·1	3·0
II	326	14·8	3·1
IIIN	177	8·0	3·2
IIIM	855	38·9	4·2
IV	374	17·0	4·3
V	181	8·2	7·1
Other	152	6·9	8·9
1979			
Total	2,326	100·0	4·1
I	129	5·5	3·3
II	341	14·7	2·8
IIIN	157	6·7	2·6
IIIM	813	35·0	3·9
IV	464	19·9	5·2
V	263	11·3	8·1
Other	159	6·8	9·0
1980			
Total	2,266	100·0	3·9
I	132	5·8	3·2
II	384	16·9	3·1
IIIN	212	9·4	3·4
IIIM	748	33·0	3·5
IV	424	18·7	4·8
V	204	9·0	6·2
Other	162	7·1	8·1
1981			
Total	2,167	100·0	3·9
I	128	5·9	3·1

Social class	Number	Per cent. of total	Rate
II	329	15·2	2·7
IIIN	181	8·4	3·0
IIIM	777	35·9	3·9
IV	384	17·7	4·8
V	223	10·3	7·1
Other	145	6·7	7·2
1982			
Total	2,131	100·0	4·0
I	107	5·0	2·6
II	390	18·3	3·3
IIIN	193	9·1	3·3
IIIM	734	34·4	3·9
IV	363	17·0	4·6
V	201	9·4	6·5
Other	143	6·7	7·1
1983			
Total	2,045	100·0	3·9
I	96	4·7	2·5
II	353	17·3	3·0
IIIN	166	8·1	2·9
IIIM	694	33·9	3·7
IV	393	19·2	5·1
V	182	8·9	5·8
Other	161	7·9	7·7
1984			
Total	1,793	100·0	3·4
I	88	4·9	2·2
II	305	17·0	2·6
IIIN	180	10·0	3·1
IIIM	593	33·1	3·2
IV	308	17·2	4·0
V	170	9·5	5·7
Other	149	8·3	6·7
1985			
Total	1,781	100·0	3·4
I	95	5·3	2·4
II	335	18·8	2·8
IIIN	144	8·1	2·6
IIIM	592	33·2	3·2
IV	301	16·9	4·0
V	158	8·9	5·2
Other	156	8·8	6·2

Note: Post neonatal mortality rate: deaths at age 28 days and over but under 1 year per 1,000 live births.

General Practice Finance Corporation

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services on what date the annual report of the General Practice Finance Corporation was *(a)* received by his Department and *(b)* made public, in each of the financial years 1966-67 to 1985-86.

Mrs. Currie: Information about the date that the corporation's report was sent to the Department is readily available only for the last two years, but I am able to supply the publication date in each of the years in question.

Financial Year	Date Annual Report sent to the Department	Date Annual Report published	
1966-67	—	23 October	1967
1967-68	—	3 December	1968
1968-69	—	13 October	1969
1969-70	—	21 July	1970
1970-71	—	26 July	1971
1971-72	—	31 July	1972
1972-73	—	25 July	1973
1973-74	—	19 November	1974
1974-75	—	28 July	1975
1975-76	—	5 August	1976
1976-77	—	28 July	1977
1977-78	—	20 July	1978
1978-79	—	23 July	1979
1979-80	—	29 July	1980
1980-81	—	28 July	1981
1981-82	—	26 July	1982
1982-83	—	26 July	1983
1983-84	—	25 July	1984
1984-85	17 June 1985	22 July	1985
1985-86	20 June 1986	22 July	1986

Private Patients and Clinics

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish for each district health authority the net income from private patients and clinics in 1986 under sections 65, 66 and 58 of the National Health Service Act 1977; if he will publish, for each district health authority, the amounts written off as bad debts under sections 65, 66 and 58 of the National Health Service Act 1977; and if he will give the regional totals for 1985.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 18 January 1988]*: A table giving the information requested has now been placed in the Library.

Income Support

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many gainers and losers he assesses there will be from the introduction of income support in April for *(a)* single pensioners under 80 years, *(b)* single pensioners over 80 years, *(c)* pensioner couples under 80 years, *(d)* pensioner couples over 80 years, *(e)* single unemployed under 25 years, *(f)* single unemployed over 25 years, *(g)* unemployed couples with children and *(h)* single parent families.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 18 January 1988]:* The information is in the table. It is comparable with tables 1A and 2A of the "Impact of the Reformed Structure of Income-Related Benefits", a copy of which is in the Library. The explanatory notes to those tables apply equally to this.

People on Income Support: Change in disposable income after meeting housing costs. Cash position at point of change.

	Increased	No change	Decreased
Single pensioners under 80 years	570,000	360,000	[1]—
Single pensioners under 80 years	210,000	190,000	[1]—
Pensioner couples over 80 years	140,000	130,000	[1]—
Pensioner couples over 80 years	20,000	20,000	[1]—
Single unemployed under 25 years	540,000	160,000	10,000
Single unemployed over 25 years	310,000	280,000	[1]—
Unemployed couples with children	460,000	40,000	[1]—
Single Parent families	380,000	220,000	[1]—

[1] Denotes figures of less than 5,000
Note: Boarders are not included: they cannot be categorised in this way.

Windscale (1957 Fire)

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether his Department retains any unpublished files, information and reports in connection with the 1957 Windscale fire; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 18 January 1988]:* National arrangements for dealing with the fire at Windscale and for subsequent action did not directly involve the then Ministry of Health; radiation protection advice at that time came from the Medical Research Council and the Department is in possession of no original papers on the subject.

Neighbourhood Nursing Schemes

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list those district health authorities which operate neighbourhood nursing schemes.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 18 January 1988]:* I regret that the information is not held centrally.

Infertility

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the names of *(a)* organisations and *(b)* individuals who responded to his Department's consultation document, Cm. 46, "Legislation on Human Infertility Services and Embryo Research", published in December 1986.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 20 January 1988]:* Detailed responses were sent to the Department by the 158 organisations listed as follows and by 40 individuals. The other health departments also received comments. The list indicates those organisations whose submissions have been placed in the Library. Clearance is being sought to make similar arrangements for the remaining organisations.

LIST OF ORGANISATIONS RESPONDING TO THE CONSULTATION PAPER: "LEGISLATION ON HUMAN FERTILITY SERVICES AND EMBRYO RESEARCH" (CM 46)
(The responses of organisations marked with an asterisk have been placed in the Library of the House)

Medical
Association of Clinical Cytogeneticists
Birmingham University, Department of Obstetrics & Gynaecology*
Bourn Hall Clinic, Cambridge*
British Fertility Society
British Medical Association*
British Medical Association, General Medical Services Committee*
British Pregnancy Advisory Service*
British Psychological Society
British Society for Developmental Biology
Brook Advisory Centres*
Committee of Directors of Polytechnics*
Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals*
Doctors who respect Human Life*
Family Planning Association*
General Medical Council*
Guild of Catholic Doctors*
Hallam Medical Centre*
Hammersmith Hospital Infertility Clinic*
Humana Hospital Wellington, IVF Unit*
Joint Coordinating Committee Medical Defence Unions*
Leeds University, Dept. of Obstetrics & Gynaecology*
Leicester University, Dept. of Obstetrics & Gynaecology*
London Independent Hospital*
Medical Research Council*
Medical Women's Federation*
National Association of Family Planning Doctors*
National Perinatal Epipemiology Unit
Oxford University, Nuffield Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology*
Paediatric Research Unit
Park Hospital, Nottingham*
Royal College of General Practitioners*
Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists*
Royal College of Physicians*
Royal College of Surgeons*
Royal Society*
Sandwell DGH, Obstetrics & Gynaecology Division
Sheffield University, Dept. of Obstetrics & Gynaecology*
University Grants Committee*
Voluntary Licensing Authority*
Wessex Regional Medical Advisory Committee (O&G)
York University, Dept. of Biology*

Nursing
Central Birmingham Health Authority (Nursing Staff)
Health Visitors Association*
Health Visitors Association (Thames Valley Branch)
Mid-Downs DHA (Nursing Staff)
Mid-Staffordshire Health Authority (Nursing Staff)
Royal College of Midwives*
Royal College of Nursing*
Southmead Hospital (Senior Midwives)
South West Surrey DHA (Nursing Staff)
South West Thames Regional Professional Advisory Committee for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting

Social Work
Association of Child Psychotherapists
British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering*
British Association for Social Work (BASW)
CHILD*
Child Care and Development Group (University of Cambridge)
Childcare*
Childrens Legal Centre*
Childrens Society
East Anglia Adoption and Family Care Association
Institute of Population Studies, Exeter*
Maternity Alliance*
MENCAP*
National Association for Maternal and Child Welfare*
National Association for the Childless*
National Association for the Childless (Norfolk Branch)
National Childrens Bureau
National Organisation for Counselling of Adoptees and Parents (NORC)*
Nottinghamshire County Council, Social Services Department
One Parent Families*
Parent to Parent Information on Adoption Services
Suffolk County Council, Social Services Department

Legal
Association of Lawyers for the Defence of the Unborn*
Council on Tribunals*
Family Division of the High Court of Justice*
Family Law Bar Association*
Solicitors Family Law Association*

Religious
Baptist Union*
Brownhill United Reform Church
CARE Campaigns
Catholic Bishops Joint Committee on Bio-Ethical Issues*
Catholic Womens League*
Christian Action Group, Leicestershire
Christian Concern for Plymouth/Peverell Community Church

Christian Medical Fellowship*
Church of England, Board for Social Responsibility*
Clinical Theology Association
Diocese of Chichester, Board for Social Responsibility
Diocese of Oxford, Board for Social Responsibility
Fellowship of Independant Evangelical Churches
Free Church Federal Council*
Ivy Cottage Evangelical Church
League of Jewish Women*
Methodist Church, Division of Social Responsibility*
Mothers Union*
National Board of Catholic Women
Order of Christian Unity*
Renewal Christian Centre
Saffron Walden Constituency Prayer Group
Salvation Army*
St. Boniface Church Parish Council, Southampton
St. Michaels RC Church Care Committee
St. Peters Parochial Church Council, Bucks
Stafford and District Council of Churches
Sunderland South Constituency Prayer Group
Surbiton Christian Response

NHS
Burnley Pendle and Rossendale CHC
Central Manchester Health Authority
Central Nottinghamshire CHC
Coventry CHC
East Anglian RHA*
Hammersmith SHA
Lancaster Health Authority
Mersey RHA*
Newcastle CHC
North Tyneside CHC
North Warwickshire Health Authority
North West Thames RHA*
North Western RHA*
Northern RHA*
Peterborough CHC
Preston CHC
Rochdale CHC
Sandwell DGH (Ethics Committee)
Solihull DGH
South East Thames RHA*
South Manchester Health Authority
South Western RHA*
Trent RHA*
Wessex RHA*
West Midlands RHA*
West Norfolk and Wisbech CHC

Other bodies
All-Party Parliamentary Pro-Life Group*
Association of Genealogists and Record Agents
Birmingham Reproductive Rights and Abortion Group
British Federation of University Women
British Federation of University Women (N.E. Association)
British Housewive's League
British Humanist Association
Campaign for Homosexual Equality*
Conservative Family Campaign
FINRRAGE
Lewisham Green Party
LIFE*
LIFE (N.E. Surrey Branch)
National Federation of Women's Institutes*
National Union of Townswomen's Guilds*
PROGRESS*
Sheffield Family Concern
Society of Genealogists
Soroptimist International (Hastings and Bexhill)
SPUC*
SPUC (Bradford Branch)
Tuberous Sclerosis Association of Great Britain
United Kingdom Federation of Business and Professional Women
Womens Health Information Centre
Womens Reproductive Rights Information Centre*
York Womens Reproductive Rights Campaign

Psychogeriatric Patients

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will give the levels of spending on psychogeriatric patients, of all the area health authorities in the Trent region for each year from 1979 to 1987, inclusive;

(2) if he will give the levels of spending on geriatric patients for all the area health authorities in the Trent region for each year from 1979 to 1987, inclusive;

(3) if he will give the levels of spending on the mentally handicapped of all the area health authorities in the Trent region for each year from 1979 to 1987, inclusive;

(4) if he will give the levels of spending on the mentally ill of all the area health authorities in the Trent Region for each year from 1979 to 1987, inclusive.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 15 January 1988]:* Information on health authority expenditure by type of patient is not collected centrally. Hospital cost returns submitted to the Department show expenditure on hospitals of different types and cost returns in respect of community health services show expenditure relating to the major areas of activity.

Hospital cost returns submitted by district health authorities in the Trent region, since their inception on 1 April 1982, show total current expenditure on hospitals categorised as geriatric, mental handicap and mental illness as follows (nil expenditure indicates that a district had no hospitals in that particular category during the year).

Type of hospital: Geriatric

Health district	*1982-83 (£s)*	*1983-84 (£s)*	*1984-85 (£s)*	*1985-86 (£s)*	*1986-87 (£s)*
North Derbyshire	1,938,369	1,891,141	2,060,668	2,110,109	2,162,757
South Derbyshire	4,227,006	4,491,060	4,594,986	4,791,763	4,973,201
Leicestershire	4,305,544	4,565,233	4,756,529	5,092,452	5,573,483
North Lincolnshire	179,473	50,482	—	—	—
South Lincolnshire	1,322,352	1,320,771	1,341,036	1,413,469	1,563,875
Bassetlaw	—	—	—	—	—
Central Nottingham	1,365,941	1,350,439	1,405,112	1,537,890	1,674,045
Nottingham	5,797,026	5,584,392	5,309,095	5,334,949	[1]1,433,782
Barnsley	1,728,603	1,894,737	2,002,620	2,017,793	2,219,033
Doncaster	1,228,744	1,313,241	1,378,398	1,410,566	1,506,579
Rotherham	1,814,795	1,959,563	2,186,568	2,360,767	2,508,066
Sheffield	1,045,420	1,300,031	1,441,894	1,540,155	1,659,115

[1] Expenditure reduced due to closure of hospital

Type of hospital: mental handicap

Health district	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*[1]1985-86*	*[1]1986-87*
North Derbyshire	3,760,460	3,854,884	3,978,758	4,128,160	4,681,143
South Derbyshire	4,202,289	4,225,978	4,626,664	4,690,461	4,937,146
Leicestershire	6,496,328	6,947,855	7,285,903	7,554,433	8,185,386
North Lincolnshire	4,650,608	4,765,020	5,111,489	[2]3,836,817	3,682,726
South Lincolnshire	2,292,253	2,820,998	3,034,981	3,239,575	3,787,246
Bassetlaw	—	—	—	—	—
Central Notts	4,506,470	4,740,308	4,850,758	9,682,446	10,428,017
Nottingham	—	—	—	—	—
Barnsley	—	—	594,870	1,066,991	1,314,513
Doncaster	3,542,812	3,551,173	3,728,446	3,756,358	3,610,210
Rotherham	818,942	886,983	794,973	790,732	875,333
Sheffield	5,219,160	5,183,987	5,603,047	7,186,103	7,383,766

[1] Includes expenditure on National Health Service Community Units for the mentally handicapped.
[2] Expenditure reduced due to transfer of a hospital to Grimsby Health Authority.

Type of hospital: Mental Illness

Expenditure (£s)

Health District	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
North Derbyshire	—	—	—	—	—
South Derbyshire	12,777,177	13,285,772	13,788,416	14,377,703	14,966,212
Leicestershire	13,174,162	14,320,593	13,823,662	13,633,952	15,026,698
North Lincolnshire	7,643,349	7,652,187	8,110,451	8,138,261	8,585,737
South Lincolnshire	4,510,549	4,262,967	5,830,970	5,024,503	5,199,335
Bassetlaw	—	—	—	—	—
Central Notts	—	—	—	—	—
Nottingham	14,674,232	14,957,211	14,615,781	14,561,423	15,232,277
Barnsley	1,230,817	1,221,006	1,456,774	1,775,115	1,894,087
Doncaster	1,186,001	1,274,749	1,338,424	1,679,227	1,734,360
Rotherham	485,542	505,659	[1]—	1,454,723	1,734,831
Sheffield	9,965,152	10,355,025	10,676,196	13,726,853	14,417,279

[1] Nil expenditure in 1984-85 due to closure of one hospital in 1983-84 and opening of new hospital in 1985-86.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Gibraltar

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has made to the Government of Gibraltar on behalf of Northern Ireland investors with International Investments Limited, Gibraltar; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: My right hon. Friend has made no representations. This matter is essentially one for the Government of Gibraltar. Certain aspects are the subject of inquiries by the RUC.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many district councils have been requested by the Department of the Environment to remove signs which express opposition to the Anglo-Irish Agreement; why this form of expression is being denied; what has been the cost of this work by the Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: Ten district councils have been requested to remove advertisements being displayed in contravention of the Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1973. In exercising its powers under these regulations the Department has regard solely to the suitability of the locations for the display of advertisements and does not take into account the content of the advertisements. It is not possible to identify the costs of dealing with particular unauthorised advertisements within the Department's overall action on such advertisements.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what consultations he has had or proposes to have with Nirex regarding nuclear waste disposal into or under the Irish sea.

Mr. Needham: UK Nirex Ltd. recently published a discussion document "The Way Forward" a copy of which is available in the Library, which sets out the options for future disposal of nuclear waste. Following receipt of comments it expects to be in a position in about a year's time to recommend to Government one or more sites worthy of further investigation. Consultations with UK Nirex Ltd. before it has made a recommendation would not be productive.

Amusement Machines

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will review the regulations relating to the establishment of amusement arcades in Northern Ireland containing fruit machines, slot machines and video machines, with a view to restricting their proliferation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: These regulations, which are contained in the Betting, Gaming, Lotteries and Amusements (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 and the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Northern Ireland) Order 1985, have been in operation only since 1986. I have no

plans to review them until there has been adequate experience of their operation, and there is a clear indication of a need to do so.

Domestic Assistance

Mr. Jim Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people were receiving domestic assistance additional requirements as part of their supplementary benefit in each year from 1981-82 to 1986-87.

Mr. Needham: Actual numbers are not known but, based on a 5 per cent. sample, it is estimated that some 213 people were receiving an addition for this purpose in May 1987. Reliable estimates are not available for earlier years.

Mr. Jim Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will provide a breakdown of the number of domestic assistance additional requirements paid by each social security office in Northern Ireland for each year from 1981-82 to 1986-87.

Mr. Needham: I regret that a reliable breakdown is not available.

Free Milk

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many children under five years of age and cared for by registered childminders are currently in receipt of free milk; and how many childminders are involved.

Mr. Needham: A total of 371 children and 148 childminders.

Single Payments (Abolition)

Mr. Jim Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the effect on the average income of pensioners in Northern Ireland in 1988-89 of the abolition of single payments.

Mr. Needham: Pensioners on income support will have access to the social fund when single payments are abolished in April 1988. As it is not known how many pensioners are likely to claim and receive social fund grants it is not possible to predict the effect on average income in 1988-89.

Mr. Jim Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the total savings he expects to make in benefit payments in 1988-89 from the abolition of single payments and the introduction of the social fund.

Mr. Needham: It is estimated that savings will amount to some £7·45 millions after taking account of partial recovery of loans.

Security

Mr. Yeo: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the current security position.

Mr. Tom King: During 1987 a total of 468 people were charged with serious offences including 28 with murder. In the same period 267 weapons, almost 20,000 rounds of ammunition and about 13,000 lbs of explosives were recovered. Six hundred and seventy-nine people were convicted during 1987 of offences related to terrorism. Security policy is continually kept under review but the threat remains high. On 21 January I announced new arrangements for the deployment of security forces in border areas. The courageous and determined efforts of the security forces are continuing to yield results.

Lignite

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what studies have been made or commissioned by his Department on the pollution caused by the burning of lignite coal.

Mr. Needham: There is ample precedent in West Germany and elsewhere for burning lignite as fuel in power stations. Any new power stations in Northern Ireland would be required to meet the emission standards for sulphur dioxide nitrogen oxides and particulates specified by the Northern Ireland alkali and radiochemical inspectorate. These standards would reflect the latest abatement technology, national policy, and the need for compliance with EC directives.

Security (Belfast)

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the security situation in central Belfast.

Mr. Tom King: Security policy in Northern Ireland is continually kept under review and the security forces are determined to prevent the terrorists from carrying out their campaign to disrupt life and destroy property in central Belfast and other major towns. The Provisional IRA carried out a bomb attack at the magistrates' court near the city centre on 9 January. The area had been cleared, damage to property was largely superficial and there were no injuries. The court resumed sitting as usual the following Monday morning.

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the future of the present supplementary benefit residence test.

Mr. Needham: From April 1988 the residence test will not feature in the income support scheme as it would not be fully consistent with EC law and with the European social charter. However, adequate measures will continue to be taken to safeguard against abuse of public funds.

Cross-border Co-operation

Sir John Biggs-Davison: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress has been made in obtaining cross-border co-operation with the Irish Army and Air Corps; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: Both the RUC and the Garda make use of the respective armed forces supporting them in working co-operatively to improve security across the border. A notable example of this occurred during the major search operation that was conducted in the Republic with support in the Province last December. Procedures also exist wherby in the course of clearing suspected or actual

explosive devices on or near the border ammunition technical officers from the British and Irish armies may by invitation cross the border to facilitate their duties.

Trawsfynydd Power Station, North Wales

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he was first advised of the proposed experimental shutdown on 12 February at Trawsfynydd power station in north Wales; what precautions are being taken in Northern Ireland; what are the implications of this experiment for Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 22 January 1988]:* This is a matter for which Northern Ireland Government Departments have no direct responsibility. I understand that a proposal has been submitted to the nuclear installations inspectorate by the Central Electricity Generating Board to carry out a test at Trawsfynydd power station.

In Northern Ireland there is continuous monitoring to identify potential radiological hazards, to determine appropriate remedial measures, and to provide advice and information to the public. The proposed test is not expected to have any particular implications for Northern Ireland.

As the Prime Minister indicated during Question Time in the House on 19 January the CEGB proposal would not involve the suspension of any safety mechanisms at the Trawsfynydd plant.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 27 January 1988

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Autistic Children

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) how many special places are available for autistic children at (i) primary and (ii) secondary level, by region;

(2) what is the total number of autistic children in maintained schools in England.

Mr. Dunn: The information is not available. Since 1983 neither special schools nor the pupils in them have been classified in accordance with categories of handicap.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what provision in (i) spend, and (ii) additional places, was made for schools for the autistic in the capital allowances for local education authorities for 1988-89.

Mr. Dunn: I refer the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. Friend gave on 18 December 1987 to my hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry) setting out the allocations in respect of prescribed expenditure made to local education authorities for 1988-89. Allocations are unhypothecated and it is up to each authority to decide how to use the resources available.

Rating Reform

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will increase Government grants to research councils to allow them to upgrade grants paid to postgraduate students sufficiently to compensate for liability for the community charge when this is introduced in 1989 and 1990.

Mr. Jackson: This is one of the factors that will be considered when the science budget is reviewed during the course of the 1988 public expenditure survey.

Common Seals (Scotland)

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent discussions his Department has had with the Natural Environment Research Council regarding the survey of common seals on the west coast of Scotland and the islands of Scotland in relation to the growth of numbers of salmonid fish farms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: None. The Natural Environment Research Council, through its responsibilities under the Conservation of Seals Act 1970, provides my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Home Department and Scotland with estimates of seal populations.

Student Awards

Mr. Maginnis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) how many students from England to whom covenants are made and who are also entitled, after means testing, to a full university or further education award, currently have a deduction made from their awards relative to the amount of the covenant;

(2) how many students from Wales to whom covenants are made and who are also entitled, after means testing, to a full university or further education award, currently have a deduction made from their awards relative to the amount of the covenant.

Mr. Jackson: The information requested is not available.

Computers

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what funding is given to the study of the psychology of the interface between computers and human operators with a view to redesigning computers; and what representations he has received from the Science and Engineering Research Council and Natural Environmental Research Council on this topic.

Mr. Jackson *[pursuant to his reply, 18 January 1988, c. 461]:* I regret that an error was included in my answer. The £11·5 million spent on collaborative research into studies of the interface between computers and human operators referred to the total under the Alvey programme, and not solely to expenditure by the Science and Engineering Research Council as my answer implied.

WALES

Sheep

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will take steps to ensure that no change which discriminates against those mountain sheep which do not normally bring lambs until they are two years old is made in the definition of those sheep which are eligible for premium payments under the proposals of the European Community for a single market by 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: The redefinition of an eligible ewe for the sheep annual premium scheme is one of a number of proposals which the Commission has put forward in its review of the sheepmeat regime. However, details of administrative and control procedures, which are important considerations in assessing whether a new definition would be beneficial or workable, are still awaited. Accordingly, no detailed assessment can yet be made of the Commission's proposal.

ENVIRONMENT

Hinkley Point A Power Station

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the relative ranking of Hinkley Point A as a polluter of the aquatic environment by the standards of European nuclear power stations; what proposals he has substantially to reduce this pollution; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: I refer the hon. Member to the ninth annual report on the activities of the Paris Commission from June 1986 to June 1987. I have arranged for a copy to be placed in the Library of the House.

Storm Damage

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will widen the remit of the Countryside Commission in disbursing grant for replanting trees following the October 1987 hurricane to include the clearance of fallen trees, remedial survey to damaged standing trees, assistance with timber marketing and surveys of overall damage to trees; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what representations he has received about the desirability of dedicating a substantial proportion of the grant, to be administered by the Countryside Commission, towards the cost of a tree-planting programme following the October 1987 hurricane, to remedial tree surgery, a damage survey, public information and future planting; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what representations he has received about the necessity for grants towards the cost of clearance and disposal of fallen timber prior to tree planting following the October 1987 hurricane; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: We are carefully considering the need for a programme of assistance in the long term, and we shall take into account various representations which have been received about the scope and nature of the assistance required.

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate his Department made of the cost per acre of clearing and disposing of fallen timber prior to allocating a grant of £2·7 million to be administered by the Countryside Commission towards the cost of a tree-planting programme following the October 1987 hurricane.

Mr. Moynihan: The purpose in making assistance immediately available through the Countryside Commission for tree planting was to assist in replacing the maximum practicable number of trees during the current planting season. The general principle is that clearance is the responsibility of the individual owner and the costs of clearing and disposing of fallen timber were not therefore directly relevant.

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much the Countryside Commission has provided for tree planting in each county since the October 1987 hurricane; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: The Countryside Commission has allocated the following sums for tree planting to the counties affected by the storm of 16 October:

County	*£000*
Bedfordshire	3
Berkshire	93
Buckinghamshire	20
Cambridgeshire	21
Dorset	9
East Sussex	293
Essex	151
Hampshire	204
Hertfordshire	33
Isle of Wight	55
Kent	350
Norfolk	34
Oxfordshire	6
Suffolk	139
Surrey	56
West Sussex	141
Greater London	800

These figures do not include amounts previously committed under the commission's existing schemes of aid for tree planting. Nor do they include allocations to be made from the further £250,000 for 1987-88 which the Government announced on 21 January, or amounts made available to certain trusts and other bodies which own land in more than one county.

London Docklands Development Corporation

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the London Docklands development corporation has any plans for affordable rented accommodation to attract teachers to docklands.

Mr. Trippier: LDDC is currently considering whether certain categories of employee, including teachers, should receive priority in the allocation of rented homes built on corporation sites.

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much the London Docklands development corporation has spent on advertising in each year of its existence.

Mr. Trippier: Details of the corporation's expenditure on promotion and publicity are given in its annual reports and accounts, copies of which are placed in the Library.

Homelessness

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the cost of housing homeless families in *(a)* Vale Royal and *(b)* Chester in each of the last five years.

Mr. Waldegrave: Information on the cost to individual authorities of accommodating homeless households other than in council dwellings is included in the series of annual publications by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy "Homelessness Statistics, Actuals". Copies are in the Library.

Bed-and-breakfast Accommodation

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the average weekly cost to local authorities of keeping a person in bed-and-breakfast accommodation.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) on 21 January, at column *826*.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with the leader of Wandsworth council on the number of empty council properties in the borough, in the light of the numbers on the housing waiting list or living in bed-and-breakfast accommodation.

Mr. Waldegrave: Neither my right hon. Friend nor I have had any such discussions.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people were in bed-and-breakfast accommodation in each of the 32 London boroughs on 31 October 1987.

Mr. Waldegrave: Information is available in the publication "Local authorities' action under the homelessness provisions of the 1985 Housing Act: England. Results for third quarter 1987. Supplementary tables", which is in the Library. It contains for each authority responding the number of households in bed-and-breakfast accommodation at the end of September 1987. The information is available only for the last day of each quarter.

Hedgerows

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many miles of hedgerow have been lost in Staffordshire through changing agricultural practices; and whether he has any plans to enable local authorities to introduce statutory controls to be applied to the removal of hedgerows.

Mr. Moynihan: The surveys so far completed have not provided information at the county level. On the national position, I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells) on 13 January, at column *271*.

It would be inappropriate to impose statutory controls on the removal of hedgerows. They need regular management, so the emphasis on conserving them must be on enlisting the voluntary co-operation of farmers and landowners. Grants are available from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the Countryside Commission or the Nature Conservancy Council, depending on the circumstances.

Football Clubs (Membership)

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with Football League clubs about their membership schemes.

Mr. Moynihan: Most league clubs have now either achieved the initial target of 50 per cent. coverage for their membership schemes agreed between the Government and the football authorities or have been advised by their local police that the present configuration of their grounds would make it dangerous for them to go beyond the level they have already reached. The president of the Football League and I will be holding meetings with the six clubs which have not done so on 4 February and 21 March. They are Wimbledon, Fulham, Southampton, Barnsley, Wrexham and Darlington.

Since my last meeting with the Football League on this subject, three further clubs, Chelsea, Scarborough and Tranmere, have received clear advice from their local police forces against extending their membership schemes. The league and the Association of Chief Police Officers have agreed with me that these clubs should not be invited to our meetings.

London Residuary Body

Mr. Chapman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to lay before Parliament the 1986-87 annual report and statement of accounts of the London Residuary Body; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The 1986-87 "Annual Report and Statement of Accounts of the London Residuary Body" were laid before Parliament today. A copy of the Secretary of State's direction under section 78(2) of the Local Government Act 1985 as to the content and structure of the accounts has been placed in the Library of the House.

The LRB's report shows good progress by the board members and staff in discharging the functions inherited from the Greater London council at abolition. It complements the equally encouraging 1986-87 annual report and accounts of the six metropolitan residuary bodies which were published on 25 November 1987.

During the first year after abolition the LRB reduced its staff numbers by 468. These totals will continue to fall as the LRB's functions are discharged or transferred to successor bodies.

LRB's progress in identifying and disposing of a mass of surplus land and property accumulated by the GLC has already been substantial. Of the total £90 million capital receipts generated in 1986-87, over £69 million was attributable to property disposal. These significant receipts enabled LRB to distribute to the London boroughs £32 million of capital money in addition to £89 million of revenue balances left by the GLC. Taken together these cash refunds represent good news for the ratepayers of London who had previously financed the GLC.

Toxic Waste

Sir Bernard Braine: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he is taking to prevent toxic waste originating from outside the European Community being reshipped for disposal to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Moynihan: Toxic waste originating outside the Community which is reshipped by another member state for disposal in the United Kingdom will be subject to the EC directive on transfrontier shipment of hazardous waste, which we expect to implement later this year. Shipments will need to be notified in advance to the disposal authority for the area containing the prospective disposal facility. There will be a power to object to shipments whose disposal would be contrary to United Kingdom law for the protection of the environment and human health.

Sir Bernard Braine: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what control is exercised to ensure that imported toxic waste is not dumped in Essex and other counties because of their close proximity to continental ports; and whether he will order a review of waste disposal practices to ensure protection of the environment.

Mr. Moynihan: Imported waste, which is subject to the same control as indigenous waste, is disposed of at facilities in various parts of the country. All such facilities must be licensed by waste disposal authorities to ensure that disposal does not damage public health, water supplies or is detrimental to local amenities.

Waste disposal practices are reviewed continually and my Department publishes waste management papers giving detailed guidance on best practice, to ensure protection of human health and the environment.

Rating Reform

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what criteria his Department will recommend using for the purposes of interpreting section 13(7)(6) of the Local Government Finance Bill, for the purpose of establishing if an unmarried couple are living together as husband and wife.

Mr. Howard: My right hon. Friend will consider the need for guidance on these matters in due course. Many such couples can be expected to acknowledge that they are living together as husband and wife; some will be receiving rebates on that basis.

Water Authorities (Membership)

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many *(a)* local authority councillors and *(b)* accountants served on each water authority in each year from 1979 to date.

Mr. Moynihan: Information about board members appointed since October 1983 is contained in the authorities' annual reports and accounts which are laid before Parliament each year. The reports for the period from 1979 to 1983 list members appointed by local authorities. Information is not readily available about the occupations or qualifications of members in office between 1979 and 1983.

Industrial Site, London SE2

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what application he has received for urban development grant in respect of the redevelopment of a former industrial site at 1A Eynsham drive, London SE2; how much is involved; and when a decision is likely to be forthcoming.

Mr. Trippier: No application has been received for urban development grant, but the Department's UDG appraiser for the London borough of Greenwich has had a recent informal discussion with a developer who is interested in purchasing the site for redevelopment.

Radioactivity (Monitoring)

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the proposed locations for the 35 stations which will complete the radioactive incident monitoring network.

Mr. Moynihan: I refer the hon. Member to the booklet "The National Response Plan and Radioactive Incident Monitoring Network (Rimnet). A Statement of Proposals" the publication of which by Her Majesty's Stationery Office was announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment on 21 January. This booklet outlines the initial proposals for the monitoring sites although their exact locations have yet to be confirmed. Copies of the booklet have been placed in the Library of the House.

Rate Support Grant

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has replied to the letter to him of 11 January from the chief executive of Leicestershire county council regarding a reduction of £2·968 million in rate support grant to Leicestershire in 1988-89; and if he will make a statement on the reasons for this reduction.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 26 January 1988]:* The council's letter of 11 January was a representation in response to the Department's consultation proposals for forthcoming supplementary reports for 1983-84, 1984-85 and 1986-87. It has been acknowledged and will be considered by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State before he makes final decisions on the supplementary reports. Under the consultation proposals, Leicestershire's rate support grant entitlements for the three years would not be reduced, but rather increased by about £600,000 in total. I shall write to my hon. Friend to explain why the council is wrong to assert that its grant is being reduced.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Rudolph Hess

Sir John Biggs-Davison: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if following the end of control of Spandau prison by the Allies of the Second World War, he will give the total cost to the United Kingdom taxpayers of the detention there of the late Rudolph Hess.

Mrs. Chalker: The costs of Hess's detention were not a charge to the United Kingdom taxpayer. All the costs of the three Western powers (UK, US, France) were borne by the German authorities.

La Belle Discotheque

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports he has received from the British Minister in west Berlin on the progress of police investigations into the bomb outrage at the La Belle Discotheque.

Mrs. Chalker: It is not our practice to publish details of reporting from our posts overseas.

Foreign Affairs Council

Mr. Yeo: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Foreign Affairs Council held on 25 and 26 January.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary and I attended the Foreign Affairs Council in Brussels on 25 January.

The Council discussed the financial situation in the European Community. My right hon. and learned Friend and I made it clear that there could be no overall agreement in the current negotiations without effective control on agricultural production and spending. We drew attention to the dangers in any approach which did not build on the package of measures which Heads of Government had discussed at Copenhagen. These issues will be discussed again at a special meeting of EC Foreign Ministers on 1 and 2 February.

The Council also discussed preparation for the EC/EFTA ministerial meeting on 2 February; and, meeting in political co-operation, Foreign Ministers exchanged views on the middle east, Afghanistan and East-West relations.

ENERGY

Electricity

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what was the total annual generation of electricity by standard measure in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* West Germany, *(c)* France, and *(d)* Japan, in 1958, 1960, 1965, 1970, 1975 and each year from 1979 to 1987.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The total annual generation of electricity in the following countries in the years indicated was:

TWh

	United Kingdom	*Federal Republic of Germany*	*France*	*Japan*
1958	114·6	97·5	64·4	85·4
1960	138·5	120·5	74·8	115·5
1965	196·2	172·3	106·1	192·1
1970	249·1	242·6	146·8	359·5
1975	271·9	300·5	185·3	475·6
1979	299·8	372·1	241·3	589·6
1980	285·3	368·7	257·9	576·3
1981	277·7	368·8	276·4	583·2
1982	272·7	366·8	279·2	581·3
1983	277·4	373·8	296·8	618·3
1984	282·4	394·8	324·5	648·6
1985	297·5	408·7	344·3	672·1
[1]1986	301·1	407·5	362·0	678·5

[1] Estimated.
Figures on a comparable basis for 1987 are not yet available.
Sources: OECD and IEA.

"This Week Next Week"

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will seek to obtain and place in the Library a copy of the transcript of his interview on the "This Week Next Week" programme, broadcast on BBC television on 17 January; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Parkinson: No. I understand that the Library does obtain transcripts from the broadcasters on behalf of hon. Members.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Insolvency Fees

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he intends to seek any changes in the fees charged in bankruptcy and winding-up proceedings as set out in the Insolvency Fees Order 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: A substantial contribution towards paying the costs of running the insolvency service in my Department is derived from various fees prescribed by the Insolvency Fees Order 1986. These are either of fixed amounts or on a percentage scale.

Although some of the fixed fees were increased by that order, the product this year has not come up to expectations because there has been a drop in the number of winding-up orders made and a rise in the number of insolvency cases closed where the assets are insufficient to meet the fixed fees charged. The scales of percentage fees which, by their nature, are only chargeable where assets exist, have, in the main, not been increased since 1980.

In order to provide the necessary funds to finance the work of the insolvency service, the Government intend to increase certain of the percentage fees relating to the performance by the Secretary of State of his general duties under the insolvency legislation and to the purchase of Government securities at the request of liquidators. These fees are identified by numbers 10, 11 and 12 in part I of the fees order and fee 13 in part II.

Fees 10 and 13 are calculated on moneys paid into the insolvency services account in each case where a company is wound up by the court or an individual is made bankrupt, charged on a sliding scale ranging from 10 per cent. on the first £50,000 down to 1 per cent. on any amount in excess of £5 million; these will be increased on a scale from 15 per cent. down to 1·5 per cent.

Fee 11 is charged, on moneys paid into the account in respect of companies wound up voluntarily, on two scale points of 1·25 per cent. and 0·75 per cent.; these will be increased to 1·75 per cent. and 1·25 per cent. The case limit on the total amount payable under this fee will be increased from £7,500 to £12,500. Fee 12 is charged at the rate of 0·375 per cent. on the amount expended at the request of a liquidator on any purchase of Government securities; it will be increased to 0·625 per cent. These fee increases are to be contained in a fees order which will be laid before Parliament shortly. The increases will take effect in February 1988 and are estimated to produce £500,000 in the year to 31 March next and £4 million in a full year.

The order will also include an increase of £1·15 in fees numbered 7 in part I and numbered 10 in part II of the 1986 fees order. These fees are made in respect of the insertion in the *London Gazette* by the Secretary of State or the Official Receiver or any notice authorised by the Insolvency Act or the rules. The increase represents no more than the additional charge now made by the *London Gazette* for these advertisements.

A review of the fee-charging policy and financing of the insolvency service is at present being undertaken by a project team headed by a professional accountant seconded to my Department. The team is expected to report by March 1988 and its findings may lead to further proposals for fee changes.

Labour Costs

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, what were United Kingdom unit labour costs per unit of output in the manufacturing sector, divided by a weighted average of competitors' unit labour costs, both expressed in pound sterling, for 1979, 1980, 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986 and 1987.

Mr. Alan Clark: The index of United Kingdom relative unit labour costs in manufacturing is published in tables F3 and F6 of the "Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics", a copy of which is in the Library. The data are expressed in common currency.

Manufactures

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the unit volume index of United Kingdom exports of manufactures divided by a weighted average of overseas wholesale prices, both expressed in pound sterling, for 1984, 1985, 1986 and 1987.

Mr. Alan Clark: The available information is in the following table.

United Kingdom unit value relative to competitors[1]
Wholesale prices
Manufactures[2]; 1980 = 100

Year	
1984	90·0
1985	92·6
1986	89·6
1987 Q1-Q3	90·0

Note: [1] United States of America, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Federal Republic of Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, Canada, Ireland, Japan, Finland, Spain.
[2] Standard International Trade Classification Sections 5-8.
Source: International Monetary Fund.

Capital Investment

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will publish the latest figures for capital investment on both a per capita basis and as a percentage of gross national product; and what comparable figures he has for capital investment relating to the other members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The latest figures for the United Kingdom show that gross domestic fixed capital formation amounted to around £1,130 per head of the population in 1986. This is equivalent to 17 per cent. of GDP.

Comparisons for OECD countries are readily available only for 1985. The table summarises:

1985 Current Prices

	United Kingdom	*United States*	*Japan*	*Germany*	*France*	*Italy*	*Canada*	*OECD Europe*	*OECD Total*
Gross fixed capital formation									
1. per head ($ thousand/head)	1·4	3·1	3·0	2·0	1·7	1·6	2·7	1·4	2·2
2. as a proportion of GDP (per cent.)	17	19	28	20	19	21	20	19	20

Source: OECD.

Exchange Cover

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, how many applications for tender to contract and forward exchange cover have been received in each thrice-monthly quarter since the scheme was established.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following table shows the number of applications received each quarter since the introduction of tender to contract and forward exchange cover in August 1977.

Applications for tender to contract and forward exchange supplement cover

Quarter ending	*Number of applications*
September 1977	22
December 1977	5
March 1978	15
June 1978	13
September 1978	16
December 1978	13
March 1979	31
June 1979	13
September 1979	27
December 1979	26
March 1980	23
June 1980	28
September 1980	28
December 1980	25
March 1981	14
June 1981	20
September 1981	35
December 1981	21
March 1982	19
June 1982	8
September 1982	28
December 1982	18
March 1983	17
June 1983	24
September 1983	12
December 1983	12
March 1984	18
June 1984	19
September 1984	21
December 1984	14
March 1985	4
June 1985	4
September 1985	1
December 1985	4
March 1986	4
June 1986	2
September 1986	0
December 1986	1
March 1987	3
June 1987	5
September 1987	3
December 1987	7

Toys (Lead Content)

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps he is taking to prevent the continued importation of toys with excessive lead content in their paintwork.

Mr. Maude: At present all toys placed on the market in the United Kingdom must comply with the Toys (Safety) Regulations 1974 which include requirements on the maximum level of lead and other substances permitted in paint used in toys. The Consumer Protection Act 1987

empowers Customs officers to detain goods at the port of entry for up to two working days to allow enforcement authorities time to make initial inquiries about the safety of goods detained. Trading standards authorities, which enforce the legislation, have the necessary powers to prosecute suppliers in cases of non-compliance.

The proposed European directive on toy safety will also specify levels for toxic metals which must not be exceeded.

Wine-Glass Measures

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many representations he has received during the past 12 months on the subject of wine-glass measures.

Mr. Maude: Since the beginning of 1987 the Department has received 12 representations about sales of wine by the glass; 10 in respect of enforcement authority surveys, one from the Consumers Association and one from the Restaurateurs Association.

Copyright, Designs and Patents Bill

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he has any plans to seek to amend the Copyright, Designs and Patents Bill to limit or control the amounts paid in royalties by radio broadcasters to record companies or others.

Mr. Maude: The Government are considering representations on this issue from independent radio and from the record industry. No decision has yet been taken.

South Africa

Mr. Wray: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if, further to his reply to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway) on Thursday 21 January, *Official Report*, column *769*, he will take urgent steps to collect the information on Scottish exports to and imports from South Africa not available referred to therein.

Mr. Alan Clark: No. Scottish trade with South Africa which passes through ports in the rest of the United Kingdom is not separately identified; to collect this information would impose an undue burden on companies.

National Metrological Co-ordinating Unit (Report)

Mr. Page: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he expects to publish the annual report of the National Metrological Co-ordinating Unit, as required by section 60(1) of the Weights and Measures Act 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: The final report of the National Metrological Co-ordinating Unit, covering the period 1 April 1986 to 31 March 1987, has been published today. I have arranged for copies of the report, which includes the audited statement of accounts, to be placed in the Library.

Investment Management Regulatory Organisation

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if a decision has been reached on whether to give leave for the recognition under the Financial Services Act of the Investment Management Regulatory Organisation.

Mr. Maude: In accordance with the procedures laid down in the Financial Services Act, the Director General of Fair Trading has submitted to my right hon. and noble Friend a report on the rules and guidance submitted by IMRO to the SIB. Having considered the director general's report, my right hon. and noble Friend has concluded that, on the basis of the information presently available to him, he does not consider the IMRO rules and guidance have, or are intended or likely to have, to any significant extent the effect of restricting, distorting or preventing competition. He has therefore today given his leave to the SIB for the recognition of IMRO.

Terms of Trade

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for each year since 1958 and the latest available date the terms of trade for finished manufacturing/manufactures for the United Kingdom, the United States of America, West Germany and Japan, together with imports and exports of such manufacturers in terms of dollars.

Mr. Alan Clark *[holding answer 22 January 1988]:* The available information is in the following table. Data on the terms of trade in finished manufactures are not available for the FRG and Japan. For these two countries information on the terms of trade in machinery and transport equipment (which accounted for 76 per cent. and 85 per cent. respectively of their total trade in finished manufactures) is provided instead.

	Terms of trade				*Trade in finished manufactures*[1,2] *US $ billion*							
	UK	*US*	*FR Germany*[3]	*Japan*[3]	*UK*		*USA*		*FR Germany*		*Japan*	
					imports	*exports*	*imports*	*exports*	*imports*	*exports*	*imports*	*exports*
1963	83	106	75	n/a	1·8	6·0	3·2	9·8	2·2	8·1	n/a	n/a
1964	84	107	75	n/a	2·3	6·1	3·8	11·1	2·6	9·0	1·0	2·9
1965	84	111	74	57	2·5	6·7	4·9	11·6	3·4	9·8	0·9	3·8
1966	88	111	72	61	2·8	7·3	7·1	13·0	3·9	11·1	1·0	4·7
1967	88	113	70	68	3·4	7·2	8·4	14·6	3·8	11·8	1·2	5·4
1968	83	117	72	70	4·0	7·7	11·3	16·6	4·5	13·7	1·5	6·9
1969	84	119	71	80	4·4	8·9	13·9	18·8	6·0	16·2	1·9	8·5
1970	84	116	84	74	5·0	8·7	16·0	20·5	8·3	19·1	2·8	10·4
1971	85	111	85	70	6·0	4·7	19·3	22·2	10·1	22·1	3·0	13·5
1972	89	105	88	78	7·9	12·4	24·3	24·6	12·2	26·6	3·5	17·0

	Terms of trade				Trade in finished manufactures[1][2] US $ billion							
	UK	US	FR Germany[3]	Japan[3]	UK		USA		FR Germany		Japan	
					imports	exports	imports	exports	imports	exports	imports	exports
1973	81	98	91	91	11·4	14·6	29·3	31·8	15·7	37·6	5·1	22·0
1974	82	91	92	99	13·1	17·7	34·2	43·6	17·4	45·1	6·7	29·7
1975	85	94	94	96	15·0	22·4	33·5	51·4	21·6	49·3	5·8	31·8
1976	82	100	97	97	16·2	22·7	43·4	56·1	25·6	57·5	6·5	42·0
1977	86	100	98	100	20·0	27·2	51·4	58·4	31·1	67·2	7·0	52·8
1078	89	96	100	114	26·9	32·6	70·8	68·5	40·0	79·9	9·6	66·0
1079	94	97	99	106	36·1	38·6	78·7	81·6	49·4	93·0	12·5	66·8
1980	100	100	100	100	41·2	48·3	88·7	99·1	56·8	103·4	13·8	86·7
1981	102	109	96	105	39·5	43·6	99·9	110·2	50·6	94·7	14·6	106·3
1082	101	112	100	96	40·4	40·7	105·6	102·6	48·6	98·3	13·6	96·8
1983	101	107	99	91	42·4	36·6	122·5	97·3	50·4	92·8	14·6	106·3
1984	99	114	98	95	44·4	38·1	168·3	105·2	50·9	93·2	16·9	127·3
1985	99	118	99	92	48·1	42·3	193·2	109·7	54·4	103·0	17·4	134·1
1986	102	117	107	105	58·9	49·8	226·0	112·2	76·4	142·2	21·9	164·4

[1] Standard International Trade Classification Sections 7 and 8.
[2] Standard International Trade Classification Rev. 1-up to 1977. Rev. 2-from 1978.
[3] Machinery and Transport Equipment.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Mozambique

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what arrangements are being made to establish the special fund for Mozambique, agreed by Commonwealth Heads of Government at their meeting in Vancouver.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Commonwealth Secretary-General has written to all Commonwealth Governments requesting contributions to the fund. It will have a target of £10 million and will be administered by the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation. I have informed the secretary-general that Britain is prepared to contribute 30 per cent. of the total pledged to the fund, up to a maximum of £3 million. Payment of our contribution will be subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Estimates provision.

ODA (Funds)

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether any change has been agreed in voted provision for the Overseas Development Administration in 1987-88.

Mr. Chris Patten: Subject to parliamentary approval of the spring Supplementary Estimate, the cash limit for the overseas aid vote (class II, vote 5) will be increased to £1,096,875,000. The change allows for an agreed carryover of aid programme underspending in 1986-87, for part of the cost of the United Kingdom subscription to the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency and for other minor adjustments. Subject to parliamentary approval, the cash limit on the overseas aid administration vote (class II, vote 6) will also be increased to £28,191,000 to meet additional capital expenditure for the development and introduction of computer systems and other costs. The increases do not add to the planned total of public expenditure in 1987-88.

PRIME MINISTER

Nuclear Materials (Transport)

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Prime Minister under whose command it is envisaged that *(a)* Ministry of Defence police, *(b)* members of the armed forces on escort and *(c)* police officers should operate in the event of an accident or other serious incident affecting a nuclear weapons or materials convoy.

The Prime Minister: I am not prepared to discuss details of the movement of defence nuclear materials. In the event of an accident or other incident involving such materials any members of Her Majesty's Forces or the Ministry of Defence police assisting at the scene would act in support of the civil police.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prisoners (After Care)

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what steps have been taken to implement the recommendation of the committee chaired by the director of prison medical services that arrangements should be made for patients in prison to be assessed by National Health Service medical staff prior to planning continuing care and support on release; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what steps have been taken to improve administrative procedures within his Department and the prison service following the report of the working group chaired by the director of prison medical services on the problems presented by mentally disordered offenders in the prison system in England and Wales;

(3) what measures are being taken following the report of the director of prison medical services on mentally disordered offenders in the prison system in England and Wales to ensure that the courts are fully aware of non-custodial options open to them and of the facilities available in the health system;

(4) what representations he has received on the report of the director of prison medical services on mentally disordered offenders in the prison system in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Government welcomed this report of the inter-departmental working group of officials chaired by the director of prison medical services. As my right hon. Friend announced in response to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson) on 30 November 1987 at column *349* the Government accept all 16 recommendations made. The administrative procedures referred to in that answer relate mainly to transfers from prison to hospital. In sending copies of the report to managing medical officers in prison service establishments the director of prison medical services has drawn attention to the recommendation in which they are able to make a contribution, particularly the need for transfer procedures to be initiated promptly when that course is clinically indicated.

The recommendations aimed at increasing the extent to which mentally disordered offenders are detained other than in prison custody, and advance planning where that is indicated for the release of those who receive prison sentences are to be taken forward in further discussion between Home Office and DHSS officials.

Copies of the report have also been sent to regional health authorities, chief probation officers and, on request, to a number of other organisations and individuals. We have received no representations on the report. The initial impression gained by officials is that it is recognised as a useful move forward in a difficult area.

Data Protection

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish the terms of reference of the registrar for data protection; how many complaints the registrar has dealt with for each year since his appointment; and if he will categorise the nature of such complaints.

Mr. Renton: The general duties of the Data Protection Registrar are specified in Section 36 of the Data Protection Act 1984.

In his last report to Parliament dated June 1987, the registrar reported that he had received 225 complaints in the year under review and 60 complaints prior to that. Since the Act came fully into force in November 1987 I am informed by the registrar that the rate at which complaints are being received has increased fourfold. From the end of November 1987 until mid-January 1988, 202 complaints have been received. The registrar broadly described the nature of complaints in his last report, and later complaints are I understand, following a similar pattern.

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish in the *Official Report* details of the process he adopts to monitor the Data Protection Act 1984.

Mr. Renton: The Data Protection Registrar, who is independent of the Executive, monitors the Data Protection Act 1984 and as required by section 36(5) of the Act, reports directly to Parliament. He holds regular meetings with officials to keep them informed, but my right hon. Friend is also ready to consider any representations put to him on the operation of the Act.

Wandsworth Prison

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to increase education facilities for inmates at Wandsworth prison; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There are no plans to provide additional educational facilities for inmates at Wandsworth prison. Daytime and evening classes are provided in a range of subjects and provision is made for correspondence courses and other types of education which can be pursued individually. Local management will continue to keep education provision under review.

Prisoners (Statistics)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of *(a)* men and *(b)* women who were serving a prison sentence of one month or less in prisons in England and Wales on 31 October 1987.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: From the records held centrally, it is estimated that about 770 males and 40 females were serving sentences of one month or less in prison department establishments in England and Wales on 31 October 1987. These figures include fine defaulters.

Mr. M. Naylor

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department why Mr. M. Naylor of Oadby, an officer at Glen Parva young offenders centre, South Wigston, despite completing an application form and paying a cheque for £1,200 on 29 October 1987 in relation to the free standing additional voluntary contribution pension scheme, has to date received no response from his Department.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The application form for a free standing additional voluntary contribution pension scheme completed by Mr. Naylor on 29 October 1987 was forwarded to the Home Department under cover of a letter from his insurance brokers dated 3 November 1987. Detailed information from Her Majesty's Treasury on how Departments should deal with applications for FSAVCs has only recently been received. A reply to Mr. Naylor's brokers will be sent shortly.

Police (Pay)

Sir Peter Hordern: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish the figures for the pay of police officers, at each rank, both at the basic rate, and at the level of average overtime worked, at 1 June 1979, and at the latest available date showing percentage increases.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Following is the information on basic salaries:

	June 1979		January 1988		Percentage increase	
	Minimum £	Maximum £	Minimum £	Maximum £	Minimum per cent.	Maximum per cent.
Constable	3,600	5,700	8,352	13,938	132	144·6
Sergeant	5,450	6,250	13,332	15,294	144·6	144·6
Inspector	6,250	7,440	15,294	18,195	144·6	144·6
Chief Inspector	7,100	8,235	17,364	20,142	144·6	144·6
Superintendent	9,800	10,710	23,622	25,650	141	139·5
Chief Superintendent	10,800	11,775	26,262	27,885	143·2	136·8
Assistant Chief Constable	12,500	—	30,960	—	147·7	—
Deputy Chief Constable	13,280	16,400	32,511	37,530	144·8	128·8
Chief Constable	16,600	20,500	36,906	46,914	122·3	128·8
Metropolitan Police						
Commander	12,725	—	30,960	—	143·3	—
Deputy Assistant Commissioner	15,500	—	35,277	—	127·6	—
Assistant Commissioner	19,375	—	44,097	—	127·6	—
Deputy Commissioner	21,315	—	49,983	—	134·5	—
City of London Police						
Commander	12,725	—	30,960	—	143·3	—
Assistant Commissioner	16,000	—	37,812	—	136·3	—
Commissioner	21,315	—	48,507	—	127·6	—

Figures of average overtime earnings are not collected centrally.

Radio

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will publish a White Paper on the future of radio broadcasting before introducing legislation.

Mr. Renton: We are considering this possibility.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) whether he will detail the regulations under which the new Radio Authority will supervise the ownership of radio stations;

(2) how many *(a)* national commercial radio stations, *(b)* independent local radio stations and *(c)* community radio stations any one individual or any one company will be able to own or have a controlling interest in;

(3) whether he will introduce restrictions on the ownership of radio stations by non-British and non-EEC individuals or companies;

(4) whether he will introduce restrictions on individuals or companies who are licensed to own radio stations with regard to selling, sub-letting or sub-contracting such licences;

(5) whether individuals or companies granted licences for new radio stations will be allowed to sell, sub-let or sub-contract the use of those frequencies for any other purposes;

(6) under what regulations the new Radio Authority will operate with regard to *(a)* the ownership or *(b)* equity holdings of (i) political parties (ii) local authorities, (iii) statutory bodies, (iv) charitable organisations and (v) any body or organisation in which a political party has an interest.

Mr. Renton: Conditions regulating the award, renewal or transfer of radio licences by reasons of the status of prospective applicants or their accumulation of media interests will be included in the legislative proposals which my right hon. Friend will bring before Parliament. We have in mind, for example, provisions disallowing the control of licensed stations by companies registered outside the EC; limiting an individual or company to a financial interest in one national or six other licensed stations; and disallowing any such interest by political parties and their affiliates and public bodies (while allowing the latter to contribute to projects intended to further a specific purpose of benefit to the community concerned). Subject to such conditions and to the continuing observance of the promise of performance on the basis of which licences were awarded in the first place there will be provision for their reassignment.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) whether he will detail the regulations under which *(a)* national commercial radio, *(b)* independent local radio and *(c)* community radio will operate with regard to (i) advertising time per hour, (ii) weekly films and (iii) royalty and copyright payments;

(2) whether he proposes that under the regulations which will apply to radio stations, it will be permissible to run such stations by computer, without staffing;

(3) whether the regulations which will apply to *(a)* national commercial radio, *(b)* independent local radio and *(c)* community radio will include requirements to *(a)* provide news services, *(b)* provide staff to man such stations or *(c)* broadcast a minimum number of hours each day of live programmes;

(4) what powers the new Radio Authority will have to investigate and to ensure that no system of payola operates in United Kingdom radio stations;

(5) what percentage of programmes: *(a)* the new national commercial radio stations and *(b)* independent local radio stations will be required to take from independent producers.

Mr. Renton: Under the legislative proposals my right hon. Friend will bring before Parliament it will be for licensed radio stations themselves to determine their own business and programming arrangements consistent with the general law and their licence conditions including those reflecting their promise of performance.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) whether he will detail the regulations under which *(a)* national commercial radio, *(b)* independent local radio and *(c)* community radio will operate, with regard to (i) programme balance, (ii) news and current affairs time, (iii) obscenity and (iv) incitement to racial violence or religious intolerance;

(2) further to his written reply of 19 January, *Official Report*, columns *647-9*, what requirements of accuracy, balance and decency there will be on licences of new radio stations;

(3) further to his written reply of 19 January, *Official Report*, columns *647-9*, what present constraints in the Broadcasting Act 1981 will not apply to transmission arrangements for new radio stations;

(4) further to his written answer of 19 January, *Official Report*, columns *647-9*, whether he will list the existing statutory requirements, applied to independent local radio, which will not be applied to the proposed *(a)* national commercial radio and *(b)* community radio.

Mr. Renton: The legislative proposals which my right hon. Friend will bring before Parliament will reflect paragraph 7.7 of our Green Paper "Radio: Choices and Opportunities" (Cm. 92).

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department for what period of time the radio licences granted by the new Radio Authority will run for *(a)* national commercial radio, *(b)* independent local radio and *(c)* community radio.

Mr. Renton: The legislative proposals which my right hon. Friend will bring before Parliament will include provision for the radio authority to award licences for up to eight years.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the relationship between the new Radio Authority and the Broadcasting Complaints Commission will be.

Mr. Renton: In the light of responses to our Green Paper we have concluded that radio should continue to fall within the jurisdiction of the Broadcasting Complaints Commission.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what powers and staff will be available to the new Radio Authority to monitor the programmes of new radio stations;

(2) further to his written reply of 19 January, *Official Report*, columns *647-9*, what sanctions the new Radio Authority will have in the event of new licence holders not living up to their promises to their audiences.

Mr. Renton: Provisions relating both to powers and to resources will be included in the legislative proposals which my right hon. Friend will bring before Parliament with a view to enabling the radio authority to enforce the conditions on which it issues licences, thus reflecting paragraphs 7.18-7.19 of our Green Paper.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what limits on transmission power will be imposed by the new Radio Authority on community radio stations.

Mr. Renton: Under the legislative proposals my right hon. Friend will bring before Parliament it will be for the radio authority to determine limits on the transmission power of stations it licenses, having regard amongst other things to the size of the area which the station is intended to serve and possible interference to other users of the radio spectrum.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many of the 500 responses he received to the Green Paper "Radio: Choices and Opportunities" recommended that radio licences should be assigned by competitive tender;

(2) further to his written answer of 19 January, *Official Report*, columns *647-9*, what system of competitive tendering will be adopted and what steps taken to ensure that such arrangements are open and public;

(3) further. to his written answer of 19 January, *Official Report*, columns *647-9*, who will assign, by competitive tender, the licences for radio stations;

(4) further to his written answer of 19 January , *Official Report*, columns *647-9*, what powers the new Radio Authority will have to ensure that the national commercial radio station, broadcast programmes that appeal to a variety of tastes and interests and one not limited to a single format.

Mr. Renton: The legislative proposals which my right hon. Friend will bring before Parliament will include provision for the Radio Authority to award licences for national radio services by competitive tender, for the procedure to be followed and for the criteria which the Radio Authority will be expected to apply in deciding which applications to entertain for the purposes of tender. No responses to the Green Paper recommended this proposal, and only a small number commented on it.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) further to his written answer of 19 January, *Official Report*, columns *647-9*, what is his definition of community radio;

(2) further to his written answer of 19 January, *Official Report*, columns *647-9*, what method he will employ to determine the number, scale and type of stations that a local community demands or wishes.

Mr. Renton: Under the legislative proposals my right hon. Friend will bring before Parliamemt it will be for the radio authority and not the Home Secretary to consider applications for licences to provide radio services to localities or communities. We do not envisage that under the new scheme there will be any formal distinction between different kinds of radio at the local level.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, further to his written answer of 19 January, *Official Report*, columns *647-9*, whether he will require the Independent Broadcasting Authority to sell the transmitters that it currently owns.

Mr. Renton: We do not intend to require the IBA to sell the radio transmission sites and equipment that it now owns.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, further to his written answer of 19 January, *Official Report*, columns *647-9*, by what date the BBC will have to *(a)* determine and *(b)* reassign two frequencies to independent radio.

Mr. Renton: We shall not withdraw frequencies currently assigned to the BBC until after the enactment of the legislative proposals based on the Green Paper which my right hon. Friend will bring before Parliament.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, further to his written answer of 19 January, *Official Report*, columns *647-9*, whether he will list all those areas which have no radio service other than those provided by the BBC, and how many *(a)* people and *(b)* households live in these areas.

Mr. Renton: This information is not readily available in the form sought. Those areas which have no radio service other than those provided by the BBC are those which do not receive radio services provided by the IBA since they lie outside the service areas of the ILR programme companies listed in appendix VIII to the annual report of the IBA 1986-87.

Radioactive Materials (Transport)

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Greater Manchester on the command and liaison arrangements in force with *(a)* armed forces escorts and *(b)* Ministry of Defence police in relation to the passage through Greater Manchester of nuclear weapons or other radioactive materials.

Mr. John Patten: No. It has been the policy of successive Governments not to give details of the movements of defence nuclear materials, but I am satisfied that adequate command and liaison arrangements have been made wherever they may be necessary.

Voting Rights

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table to show his estimate of the number of persons living in *(a)* England, *(b)* Wales, *(c)* Scotland and *(d)* Northern Ireland who are citizens of another member state of the EEC; how many of these citizens of each of these states are in each of the areas listed above; and of these how many have the right to vote in (i) parliamentary elections and (ii) local government elections in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 18 January 1988]:* Information on the estimated numbers of nationals of other European Community countries usually resident in the United Kingdom is given in the table. Nationals of EC countries other than the Republic of Ireland do not have the right to vote in parliamentary or local elections. It is estimated that some 95 per cent. of citizens of the Republic of Ireland who are resident in the United Kingdom are aged 18 or over, and therefore are entitled to register to vote in parliamentary elections and, if resident in Great Britain, in local government elections; those resident in Northern Ireland have the right to vote in local government elections provided they were included in the electoral register published in 1962 and meet the residence qualifications required. My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, has indicated the Government's intention to introduce legislation to amend the qualifications for local government elections in Northern Ireland in order to align them with those in Great Britain.

Estimated population of the United Kingdom, 1984-86 average[1]

Thousands

Nationality	*Place of usual residence* *England*	*Scotland*	*Wales*	*Northern Ireland*
Total	46,400	5,050	2,779	1,554
of which:				
Irish Republic	423	14	9	[2]98
France	24			
Federal Republic of Germany	33			
Greece	11			
Italy	73	8	+	+
Netherlands	19			
Portugal	10			
Spain	28			
Other European Community countries[3]	10			

+ Fewer than 5 thousand persons.
[1] Based on results of Labour Force Surveys 1984-86.
[2] Some of whom may hold dual British/Irish citizenship.
[3] Belgium, Denmark, Luxembourg.

TRANSPORT

Vehicle Examiners

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many vehicle examiners were employed by his Department in the south Wales traffic area for 1986-87; and what was the number of public service vehicles and goods vehicles for which they were responsible.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The figures for the vehicle inspectorate districts that cover approximately the south Wales traffic area are as follows:

	1986-87
Vehicle examiners in post	23
Public service vehicles over one year old	3,509
Heavy goods vehicles over one year old	27,537

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what were the numbers of vehicle examiners in post at May 1987, by traffic area.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The vehicle inspectorate is organised into 53 districts, grouped into four regions. Statistics are not kept by traffic area. The information by regions is as follows:

Number of vehicle examiners in post (May 1987)

	Number
South East Region	183
South Wales and West Region	115
North Region	132
Scottish Region	54
TOTAL	484

Public Service Vehicles

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many public service vehicles failed their annual test, by operator group, for the south Wales traffic area for 1986-87;

(2) what was the number and percentage of annual tests which resulted in immediate prohibition of public service vehicles in *(a)* Great Britain and *(b)* Wales for 1986-87, broken down by operator group;

(3) what was the number of vehicles that failed the annual public service vehicle test in 1986-87 in Great Britain, by operator group;

(4) what was the number of vehicles that failed the annual public service vehicle test in 1986-87 in Wales, by operator group;

(5) what was the number of public service vehicles, by operator group, which *(a)* failed the annual test, and *(b)* failed the annual test after rectification of minor faults, for each traffic area in Great Britain in 1986-87.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Following the reorganisation of the bus industry, it is no longer possible to split the statistics into the former operator groups. Separate information is not kept for Wales as such. The following are the statistics on failure rates for Great Britain and for vehicle inspectorate districts covering approximately the south Wales traffic area.

	Great Britain	*South Wales*
Number of PSV annual tests	68,376	3,509
Number of initial failures	26,448	1,575
Number of passes after rectification of minor faults	12,841	698
Number of final failures	13,607	877
	Per cent.	*Per cent.*
Immediate prohibition rate at annual test	0·34	0·51

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what were the results of spot checking of public service vehicles and the immediate prohibition rates for *(a)* Britain and *(b)* Wales for 1986-87.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Separate information on spot checks is not available for Wales as a whole. The information for Great Britain is:

1986-87

Number of spot checks	*Number of spot checks as a percentage of the total PSV annual tests*	*Number of immediate prohibitions issued at spot checks*	*Number of immediate prohibitions issued as a percentage of vehicles spot checked*
	Per cent.		*Per cent.*
17,767	26	942	5·3

Passenger Car Miles (Greater London)

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the latest available official estimate of the number of billion passenger car miles travelled in Greater London, together with the source; and what means he has available for maintaining subsequent measurements of that figure.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: About 25 billion passenger car miles were travelled in London in 1986. This estimate, which will be updated periodically, is derived as follows:

14 billion car miles (source: On-going National Traffic census)
× 1·77 passenger per car (source: 1985-86 National Travel Survey)
= 25 billion passenger miles.

The estimate of car mileage is provisional pending completion of work on a new series drawing on data from the national traffic census and other sources including surveys which the Department of Transport continued on abolition of the GLC. Methods of restructuring traffic surveys in London to support more accurate monitoring of year on year changes are also being studied.

London Regional Transport

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will print in the *Official Report* the "Statement of Strategy" he set out for London Regional Transport in 1985, his reasons for planning a revised statement to be published in June, and a list of the persons and bodies he and London Regional Transport are consulting concerning its contents.

Mr. David Mitchell: LRT has a duty to publish statements setting out its policies under section 7 of the London Regional Transport Act 1984. The June 1985 "Statement of Strategy" referred to was the last (and only) statement published in discharge of this duty. A copy is in the Library of the House. Under section 7(8) of the 1984 Act statements of policies must be published at least every three years. A new statement is therefore due by June 1988. Those to be consulted are specified in section 7(4) of the Act.

Motorway Service Stations

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals there are for further motorway service stations on the M62, M63, M66 or M67.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: None. The existing MSA network in the general Manchester-Liverpool-Stoke-on-Trent-Preston area is generally adequate to meet travellers' needs

and there have been no complaints about their adequacy. However, a new site is planned at Hapsford on the M56 to cater for traffic to and from the Wirral and north Wales.

Railways (Scotland)

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has about any improvements which are planned for the rail network in Angus, Scotland.

Mr. David Mitchell: I understand from British Rail that it is planning to introduce Sprinter trains on the Dundee to Arbroath local services in May 1989 and Sprinter express trains on the Aberdeen to Glasgow services in October 1989.

Blood Tests

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if, in the course of the interdepartmental road traffic law review, he will consider the current position which disallows the use of blood tests taken from an unconscious suspect following a road traffic accident; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We expect shortly to receive the report of the independent road traffic law review under the chairmanship of Dr. Peter North. We shall consider carefully any recommendations which the review may make on this issue.

Nuclear Fuel

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the ports through which spent nuclear fuel was imported in 1985, 1986 and 1987 and the number of flasks imported through each port.

Mr. David Mitchell: The ports through which flasks containing irradiated fuel were imported, and the total number of flasks for each of the three years in question, are as follows:

	1985	*1986*	*1987*
Barrow	88	76	88
Harwich	6	none	none
Dover	1	2	2
Immingham	4	6	4

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many nuclear fuel flask transport wagons British Rail has taken out of service since 1983; and at what cost.

Mr. David Mitchell: Since 1983, 10 wagons have been withdrawn from service as part of the normal replacement programme. They cost £90,000 each at today's prices.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will update the information in the reply given to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) on 16 February 1987, *Official Report*, column *430*, on notifiable incidents reported to the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate involving flasks designed to transport nuclear fuel.

Mr. David Mitchell: There have been no such incidents since February 1987.

British Airways

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport by what date he expects British Airways plc to comply with the requirements of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission to divest itself of certain routes.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: British Airways has already applied to the Civil Aviation Authority for the revocation of those of British Caledonian's European and domestic licences which it told the Monopolies and Mergers Commission it would return.

British Rail

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he next intends to meet the chairman of British Rail; and what matters will be discussed.

Mr. David Mitchell: I shall be meeting the chairman on 11 February to discuss matters of current interest.

Roads

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish in the *Official Report* tables showing *(a)* the expenditure allocation to English shire counties for road construction and repair and *(b)* the actual expenditure outturn, for the years 1983-84, 1984-85, 1985-86 and 1986-87.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information requested is in the following tables. No local authority allocations are made for maintenance expenditure which does not class as capital expenditure covered by the capital controls system.

New construction and substantial improvements

£ million

Shire county	*1983-84*		*1984-85*		*1985-86*		*1986-87*	
	Capital allocation	*Otturn*	*Capital allocation*	*Outturn*	*Capital allocation*	*Outturn*	*Capital allocation*	*Outturn*
Avon	3·736	3·019	3·140	2·149	3·000	2·387	5·620	[1]3·598
Bedfordshire	5·794	5·435	4·530	3·912	4·370	2·200	5·570	7·343
Berkshire	8·758	7·260	10·239	11·645	10·280	11·468	11·060	11·659
Buckinghamshire	6·252	4·000	8·160	4·775	6·160	6·041	5·330	5·320
Cambridgeshire	5·686	4·125	6·193	5·436	6·930	5·028	5·070	4·198
Cheshire	4·469	6·891	5·834	6·530	7·110	4·671	8·536	8·173
Cleveland	8·476	8·701	9·479	9·053	10·587	10·673	7·460	7·037
Cornwall	5·385	5·159	6·964	7·489	6·830	5·103	6·280	6·359
Cumbria	3·695	6·113	3·931	4·123	3·790	4·273	2·710	1·610
Derbyshire	5·130	3·924	6·087	6·539	5·690	6·331	5·900	7·987
Devon	7·673	8·640	8·772	7·865	10·019	11·246	10·400	[1]11·897

Shire county	1983-84 Capital allocation	1983-84 Outturn	1984-85 Capital allocation	1984-85 Outturn	1985-86 Capital allocation	1985-86 Outturn	1986-87 Capital allocation	1986-87 Outturn
Dorset	10·900	13·445	13·427	13·473	12·800	14·488	12·100	15·066
Durham	6·122	5·830	6·913	6·836	6·160	5·380	5·460	5·796
East Sussex	4·256	5·154	4·960	8·326	6·700	7·146	6·780	6·177
Essex	13·246	12·129	14·492	15·272	14·200	15·442	18·220	19·819
Gloucestershire	5·392	4·306	4·599	4·848	4·500	5·054	3·880	4·919
Hampshire	13·382	16·809	15·700	14·839	15·550	11·805	15·650	17·522
Hereford and Worcester	7·429	5·684	8·422	3·978	6·270	3·387	6·480	7·923
Hertfordshire	9·430	6·081	9·855	7·786	11·800	6·937	11·600	9·019
Humberside	10·720	11·920	11·180	10·506	8·640	9·871	7·780	[1]7·714
Isle of Wight	2·337	1·730	2·116	2·075	2·600	2·450	2·340	1·925
Kent	14·080	16·596	16·295	16·380	17·020	20·433	17·950	27·212
Lancashire	11·441	14·686	14·969	14·282	15·700	15·296	15·880	14·272
Leicestershire	11·846	9·591	13·413	10·909	13·000	13·242	12·040	[1]8·163
Lincolnshire	4·699	3·742	5·585	4·800	4·560	3·610	4·040	5·111
Norfolk	6·351	5·736	7·849	4·289	5·590	4·979	4·110	4·653
North Yorkshire	7·537	7·464	7·700	5·054	8·500	7·821	9·050	10·340
Northamptonshire	6·799	2·651	12·457	9·081	15·562	16·351	14·000	11·101
Northumberland	3·603	4·238	3·686	2·755	3·320	3·049	3·060	2·747
Nottinghamshire	10·865	7·518	9·516	7·391	9·010	7·203	7·080	7·392
Oxfordshire	3·503	2·699	5·088	6·757	5·210	3·638	5·330	2·077
Shropshire	4·594	4·424	4·400	4·293	3·600	2·461	3·890	3·312
Somerset	5·974	5·313	6·024	6·251	5·690	5·273	4·190	[1]3·262
Staffordshire	9·521	10·340	8·695	9·954	12·000	12·850	12·060	11·456
Suffolk	7·068	7·806	8·334	6·524	7·960	8·021	7·360	7·008
Surrey	8·995	8·332	9·349	6·318	8·080	10·097	9·520	14·106
Warwickshire	4·928	4·485	1·781	1·666	2·347	1·717	3·768	3·773
West Sussex	7·292	3·782	8·500	7·164	8·300	9·804	8·370	10·799
Wiltshire	4·222	4·602	5·426	3·448	7·400	3·456	6·450	4·932
Total	281·586	269·360	314·780	284·771	316·835	300·682	312·374	[1]322·777

[1] Estimated.

Road maintenance

Shire county	1983-84 £ million	1984-85 £ million	1985-86 £ million	1986-87 £ million
Avon	12·070	12·903	13·770	17·596
Bedfordshire	6·920	8·886	8·854	10·078
Berkshire	6·889	6·991	6·211	7·904
Buckinghamshire	9·244	10·303	10·625	13·173
Cambridgeshire	11·619	11·253	10·901	13·295
Cheshire	5·392	5·702	6·435	7·303
Cleveland	9·384	9·011	9·950	13·775
Cornwall	10·770	10·833	11·337	12·305
Cumbria	8·761	9·460	8·735	14·421
Derbyshire	13·969	14·160	14·785	17·497
Devon	21·635	25·122	26·553	29·146
Dorset	9·284	10·130	10·850	13·843
Durham	9·746	7·987	7·449	11·299
East Sussex	7·925	8·348	9·875	11·322
Essex	21·001	21·548	23·698	30·161
Gloucestershire	8·333	8·967	8·524	11·460
Hampshire	19·101	18·767	20·942	24·919
Hereford and Worcestershire	10·046	10·688	13·300	12·977
Hertfordshire	13·354	13·741	14·728	18·705
Humberside	15·312	16·371	16·798	21·552
Isle of Wight	2·695	2·589	2·456	3·006
Kent	22·126	21·884	25·187	32·579
Lancashire	21·090	20·129	22·483	33·021
Leicestershire	13·756	14·495	14·910	18·212
Lincolnshire	14·525	14·389	15·089	17·039
Norfolk	10·994	11·980	13·405	13·935
North Yorkshire	17·616	18·509	19·731	21·459
Northamptonshire	7·104	7·733	6·369	10·172
Northumberland	6·646	7·109	6·488	9·395
Nottinghamshire	12·989	13·642	14·651	18·933
Oxfordshire	7·508	5·035	8·224	9·673
Shropshire	6·729	6·586	6·495	9·730
Somerset	9·980	10·114	10·642	12·694
Staffordshire	13·249	11·952	14·310	19·583
Suffolk	10·118	10·945	11·452	13·380
Surrey	13·131	14·705	13·652	16·558
Warwickshire	8·427	8·301	8·583	10·162
West Sussex	9·809	9·662	11·380	13·884
Wiltshire	8·456	9·347	9·749	13·664
TOTAL	446·703	460·277	489·576	609·810

SOCIAL SERVICES

Cataract Operations

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has on the average waiting period in each regional health authority for cataract operations.

Mr. Newton: In 1985, the latest year for which information is available centrally, the estimated median interval between the times a patient was placed on the waiting list and admission to an NHS non-psychiatric hospital was as follows:

Region of Treatment	Operations on eye lens[1] Median Waiting Time (weeks)
England	16
Northern	13
Yorkshire	21
Trent	16
East Anglia	15
North West Thames	17
North East Thames	11
South East Thames	16
South West Thames	14
Wessex	18

Region of Treatment	Operations on eye lens[1] Median Waiting Time (weeks)
Oxford	24
South Western	21
West Midlands	27
Mersey	11
North Western	16
Special Health Authorities	10

[1] OPCS Classification of Surgical Operations (CSO) codes 170-179.

Dentists

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many dentists were in practice in *(a)* the Burnley constituency and *(b)* the Pendle constituency in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mrs. Currie: Information of the kind requested by the hon. Member is not available centrally on a constituency basis.

Christmas Bonus

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will express the value in real terms of the 1987 £10 Christmas bonus for pensioners compared with its value in 1979, taking account of inflation.

Mr. Scott: The 1979 Christmas bonus was worth £17·02 at December 1987 prices.

Retirement Pension

Mr. McTaggart: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what estimates are available to him of the cost in terms of state retirement pension of reducing the male retirement age to 60 years.

Mr. Scott: Our current best estimate is that the net cost to public funds would be in excess of £3,000 million in a full year.

Nurses

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to receive *(a)* the preliminary report and *(b)* the full report on the survey of nurse shortages from the Review Body for Nursing Staff, Midwives, Health Visitors and Professions Allied to Medicine; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: A sample survey of the number of whole-time equvalent funded nursing and midwifery posts vacant for more than three months at 31 March is carried out by the regional chairmen's secretariat on behalf of the Review Body for Nursing Staff, Midwives, Health Visitors and Professions Allied to Medicine.

I am advised that whilst some preliminary results of the survey at 31 March 1987 have been sent to the review body, the final report will not be submitted to the review body until February 1988.

Mr. Sayeed: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he intends to bring forward legislation to require private hospitals to contribute towards the cost of nurses' training.

Mr. Newton: We expect shortly to open discussions with the private sector with the aim of encouraging a contribution to training needs which more closely matches their contribution to health care overall. We have, however, no present plans for legislation on this matter.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if, pursuant to his answer of 13 January, *Official Report*, columns *327-8*, on nursing training expenditure, he will now break down these figures by regions.

Mr. Newton: The information is in the table.

Regional health authorities	1977-78	1978-79	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87
Northern	29	28	30	34	33	32	31	28	28	27
Yorkshire	39	38	37	40	38	37	37	35	34	34
Trent	42	41	40	44	44	43	42	39	37	38
East Anglian	16	16	16	17	16	12	16	13	16	16
North West Thames	48	45	44	46	45	38	41	38	35	35
North East Thames	58	54	53	58	55	60	59	58	53	49
South East Thames	46	43	42	40	40	39	38	39	36	35
South West Thames	34	31	31	34	33	30	31	28	26	27
Wessex	21	21	21	22	19	22	22	21	21	22
Oxford	21	20	19	20	20	18	18	17	15	15
South-Western	26	26	27	28	27	27	26	26	25	25
West Midlands	45	45	47	49	48	49	48	46	48	50
Mersey	27	26	26	27	25	24	24	23	22	23
North-Western	44	42	42	43	43	43	43	37	38	39
Total	498	479	479	503	490	482	480	453	441	439

Notes:
(1) The figures for each year are based on the estimates given in (*Official Report*, 13 January columns 327-28).
(2) Entries in the table are at 1986-87 constant prices and have been rounded to the nearest £ million.

Radiotherapy

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services pursuant to the reply by his Under-Secretary of State on 14 December, *Official Report* columns *400-1*, if he will publish the outcome of the departmental review of the policy of centralising of radiotherapy treatment centres; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: The Department's Standing Medical Advisory Committee is expected to give its views on the organisation of radiotherapy services shortly. Ministers

will consider these views as part of their review. An announcement will be made as soon as conclusions are reached.

Out-patient Appointments (Fees)

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will introduce a modest fee for out-patient appointments refundable in all cases except for belated cancellation or non-attendance.

Mr. Newton: We have no plans to do so.

Private Nursing Homes

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list by name and location *(a)* private nursing homes in the Northern regional health authority area, *(b)* the owners of such nursing homes, *(c)* the number of beds available in each home, *(d)* the amount of regional development grant and regional selective assistance grant moneys made available for each home in each of the last two years and *(e)* the date of opening of each home.

Mrs. Currie: The "Directory of Private Hospitals and Health Services", available in the Library, lists residential care and nursing homes. I regret that the remaining information requested by the hon. Member is not available centrally, and he may, therefore, wish to contact the chairmen of the health authorities concerned for further details.

Allergy-related Illness

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if Her Majesty's Government has any plans to increase the amount of money available for research into and treatment of allergy-related illness.

Mrs. Currie: It is for health authorities to decide how much of their resources they will allocate to the treatment of any particular condition, including allergy-related illness.

The Government are already supporting research in this area. The main Government-funded agency for the promotion of medical and related biological research is the Medical Research Council, which receives its grant-in-aid from the Department of Education and Science. I understand that the council is currently supporting research on allergies in 20 centres at a total cost in 1986-87 of £540,000. The council is always willing to consider well-founded proposals for further research in competition with proposals in other fields.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is funding studies into intolerance reactions to food at a cost of £500,000 over the next three years as a follow-up to the work already completed on intolerance reactions to food additives. The Department of Health and Social Security has awarded an annual grant of £10,000 for the years 1987-88 to 1989-90 to the Asthma Society and Friends of the Asthma Research Council.

St. James' Hospital, Portsmouth

Mr. David Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the latest estimate of the likely date for releasing on to the market surplus land and buildings on the site at St. James' hospital, Milton, Portsmouth.

Mrs. Currie: This is a matter for the Portsmouth and South East Hampshire health authority but I understand that preliminary negotiations are in progress between the health authority and the Portsmouth city council, prior to the submission of a formal planning application for the future use of surplus land and buildings at St. James' hospital, Portsmouth.

The health authority is unable at this early stage of the disposal process, to say when it may be possible to market this property. My hon. Friend may wish to contact the chairman if he requires further details.

Health Authorities (Administration)

Mr. Wells: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the annual administration cost of the East Hertfordshire health authority and of the West Essex health authority since 1979.

Mrs. Currie: The information is in the table. It is derived from the annual accounts of the authorities since their establishment on 1 April 1982:

Expenditure on headquarters administration

	East Hertfordshire district health authority £000	*West Essex district health authority £000*
1982-83	1,694 (2·15)	1,142 (3·82)
1983-84	1,686 (2·02)	1,147 (3·72)
1984-85	1,841 (2·02)	1,279 (3·93)
1985-86	1,070 (3·75)	1,486 (4·03)
1986-87	1,012 (3·29)	1,493 (3·70)

Notes:

1. Expenditure on headquarters administration includes all current expenditure on the pay and pay related costs of staff of all disciplines (including general managers) employed at district headquarters levels and their office costs and overheads. It excludes the cost of secretarial and clerical support staff employed in departments at hospital and unit levels: such costs are regarded as operational.

2. Prior to 1 April 1985 the East Hertfordshire Health Authority had an associated family practitioner committee (FPC) and the authority's expenditure figures shown for the years before that date include elements relating to the FPC's administrative expenses which are not separately identifiable.

3. The figures in brackets show that expenditure on headquarters administration as a percentage of each authority's total revenue expenditure for the relevant financial years. In the case of East Hertfordshire Health Authority the totals used for the years prior to 1 April 1985 include expenditure on family practitioner services incurred by the FPC.

4. Prior to 1 April 1982 each authority's predecessor health district formed part of a multi-district area health authority and district based figures were not collected centrally.

Plastic Surgery

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the latest number of plastic surgeons and the number in 1983 and 1978; and what steps are being taken to recruit, train and retain plastic surgeons.

Mrs. Currie: The numbers of medical staff in the specialty of plastic surgery are set out in the table. Numbers of training grade posts are related to the numbers of expected consultant opportunities. We are satisfied that there are sufficient doctors in training to meet planned developments, but the position is closely monitored by the joint planning advisory committee.

Numbers of hospital medical staff[1] in the specialty of plastic surgery at 30 September each year: England

	1978	1983	1986
Consultants[2]	79	88	98
All staff[3]	198	212	225

[1] Permanent paid and honorary staff.
[2] Including senior hospital medical officers with allowance.
[3] Excluding hospital practitioners and doctors with paragraph 94 appointments (clinical assistants).

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the number of plastic surgeons per 1,000 people in the United Kingdom and the comparable figure for France, West Germany, Italy, Denmark, the Netherlands and Belgium.

Mrs. Currie: The number of consultant plastic surgeons per 1,000 people in the United Kingdom at 30 September 1986 was 0·002. Comparable figures for other countries are not available.

Government Data Network

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether his Department is considering a network as an alternative to his Department's participation in the Government data network; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: The Department is working with others on the proposed Government data network. The work includes the assessment of alternative ways of meeting our data communication requirements. Final decisions will be taken after tenders are received.

General Practitioners (Equipment)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what proposals his Department has to encourage general practitioners to purchase desk top analysers and other technological equipment.

Mrs. Currie: General practitioners are not encouraged at present to purchase desk-top analysers. It is not yet obvious that the acquisition of technological equipment by GPs is more cost-effective than their continued use of the specialist services provided by hospital pathology departments.

Family Income Supplement

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people were in receipt of family income supplement in *(a)* Vale Royal and *(b)* Winsford in each of the last five years.

Mr. Portillo: I regret that this information is not available. Family income supplement claims are dealt with by one centre at Blackpool and no information is maintained about claims from particular local areas.

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people have been registered as claimants for supplementary benenfit in Winsford at a convenient date in each of the last five years.

Mr. Portillo: The table sets out the information requested giving the earliest data available. The district of Winsford is served by Northwich local office but the boundaries are not conterminous.

Northwich Local Office

Date	Number of supplementary benefit claimants
18 December 1984	6,464
17 December 1985	6,526
16 December 1986	6,647
17 November 1987	6,579

Source: 100 per cent. count of cases in action.

AIDS

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the hospitals in the Greater London area that have special provision to care for people suffering from AIDS.

Mr. Newton: In the majority of cases, any general hospital would be able to provide necessary care and treatment for people with AIDS. Some hospitals in the Greater London area, for example St. Stephen's, Fulham, St. Mary's, Paddington and the Middlesex hospital, have special provision for people with AIDS, such as designated wards, clinics and outreach teams.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the number of reported cases of AIDS in the Greater London area in each of the last three years.

Mr. Newton: It is regretted that the information is not available in the form requested. The cumulative totals of cases of AIDS reported to the Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre from district health authorities which are either wholly or partly within the Greater London area for the last three years are as follows:

	Number
1985	189
1986	399
1987	852

St. James' Hospital, Balham

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many staff employed at St. James' hospital, Balham, have found employment at St. George's hospital, Tooting; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: This information is not yet available. The transfer of services from St. James' hospital is not expected to be completed until later in the year and the process of interviewing staff is still under way. Assurances have been given that no staff will be disadvantaged by the relocation and that there will be no compulsory redundancies.

Correspondence

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he received letters from the hon. Member for Gateshead, East dated 16 November 1987 and 17 December 1987 concerning the incidence of child leukaemia on Tyneside; and when he expects to reply.

Mrs. Currie: I replied to the hon. Member on 22 January 1988.

Leicestershire Family Practitioner Committee

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the outcome of the recent meeting between an official of his Department and the Leicestershire family practitioner committee regarding financial allocations to the committee; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The purpose of the meeting on 8 January 1988 was to discuss with the chairman and administrator how a potential overspend on the committee's cash limit for administration this year might be avoided in the light of increases to funding referred to in my reply to my hon. Friend on 22 January 1988 at column *895*. The Department has now received a revised assessment to the effect that the committee expects to remain within its cash limit.

Vitamin Deficiency

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has concerning any relationship between vitamin or mineral deficiency in the diet of children and inattentiveness or delinquent behaviour; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: A number of theories have been put forward linking diet or vitamin and mineral supplementation with children's behaviour. I am advised that the results so far published of studies designed to validate such theories appear to have been vitiated by inadequate research. The Department's medical advisers are studying the report published in the *Lancet* on 23 January relating to vitamin and mineral supplementation among Welsh schoolchildren which was the subject, together with a study in the United States of America, of a recent television programme. The Welsh study did not address inattentiveness or delinquency. Apparently the United States study was concerned with delinquency, but no details have yet been published.

Health Authorities

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what account he takes, when considering additional funding to district health authorities, of the attitude of those authorities, or hospitals within those authorities, towards the contracting out of services currently provided in-house.

Mr. Newton: Allocations to district health authorities are a matter for regions.

Benefits

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the criteria used by his Department's adjudication officers in establishing whether an unmarried claimant is living as husband or wife.

Mr. Portillo: Guidance for adjudication officers on the interpretation of social security legislation is given by the office of the chief adjudication officer, which is independent of the Department.

Guidance from the office of the chief adjudication officer to adjudication officers gives the following criteria to be considered when establishing whether an unmarried claimant is living as husband or wife:

1. Membership of the same household;
2. Stability of relationship;
3. Financial support;
4. Sexual relationship;
5. Children;
6. Public acknowledgement.

For adjudication officers considering the question of living together as husband and wife in connection with a claim to supplementary benefit this guidance is in the S Manual (S2501-S3000), which is published and available to the public. Similar guidance for adjudication officers dealing with the question in connection with a claim for a national insurance benefit is contained in the insurance officer's guide. This code is not published but a copy is held in the Library.

From April 1988 guidance for adjudication officers for all social security benefits will be contained in the adjudication officer's guide, which will replace existing material and will be published before 11 April.

In addition to the guidance issued to adjudication officers by the office of the chief adjudication officer, the Department also publishes a leaflet for the public which lists the criteria used by adjudication officers when considering the question of living together: Leaflet NI247, "Social Security: Living together as husband and wife", which is available from local social security offices.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people, shown by age and marital status, are in receipt of the long-term rate of supplementary benefit for the latest date and for equivalent dates in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 9 December 1987]:* The available information is shown in the tables. Table one shows the numbers of those who are claiming supplementary benefit as single people; table two shows the numbers of those who are claiming for a partner.

Table one: Numbers of single people in Great Britain in receipt of the long-term rate of supplementary benefit—by age group

Year	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1986*
Age group							
16	—	49	99	—	—	50	—
17	—	2,342	1,898	2,197	2,497	2,300	2,747
18	1,349	3,292	5,398	5,094	5,893	7,399	7,290
19	3,345	6,234	6,545	7,640	9,887	10,098	11,139
20	5,458	6,882	8,291	10,539	12,685	14,040	15,834
21-24	30,402	43,161	51,759	58,678	65,101	73,217	84,017
25-29	43,638	56,355	64,675	71,919	79,630	93,665	111,781
30-34	50,890	60,163	61,073	71,501	79,385	83,714	94,908

Year	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1986
35-39	34,597	44,394	53,767	58,492	66,854	70,034	85,823
40-44	32,444	35,093	34,028	39,050	42,633	47,087	55,948
45-49	25,585	25,459	31,615	31,207	35,299	36,538	40,612
50-54	26,900	29,358	31,292	29,722	32,651	39,343	40,345
55-59	40,814	40,960	40,678	42,846	44,346	47,872	49,919
60-64	113,028	124,232	132,896	157,357	179,492	185,471	194,784
65-69	271,807	255,551	255,938	247,235	210,104	201,685	212,921
70-74	348,462	338,988	330,060	352,892	306,106	328,081	307,545
75-79	319,280	320,707	329,111	354,041	332,983	324,077	347,014
80-84	205,032	221,245	235,460	240,300	241,035	255,163	258,395
85-89	105,966	107,179	114,333	103,886	113,785	124,464	127,887
90 and over	31,911	34,343	40,382	36,449	40,915	45,834	50,659
Total	1,690,906	1,755,988	1,829,300	1,921,046	1,901,283	1,990,132	2,099,570

Source: Annual Statistical Enquiry

Table two: Numbers of couples in Great Britain in receipt of the long-term rate of supplementary benefit—by age group of claimant

Year	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1986
Age Group							
16	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
17	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
18	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
19	—	50	—	—	—	50	—
20	—	—	50	—	—	—	100
21-24	—	150	50	50	249	300	500
25-29	200	199	300	100	498	649	848
30-34	598	349	500	949	750	1,201	1,547
35-39	498	596	949	1,351	1,249	2,648	3,795
40-44	749	1,542	1,149	1,198	2,647	3,697	4,846
45-49	1,350	1,746	1,948	1,650	2,647	5,353	6,698
50-54	3,052	2,942	3,348	4,894	5,994	9,298	10,340
55-59	6,243	5,878	6,797	8,089	13,883	20,553	24,773
60-64	9,484	11,399	21,035	38,145	99,729	118,105	123,182
65-69	99,132	84,679	94,741	87,050	64,123	61,902	63,171
70-74	111,606	99,020	98,584	106,833	90,653	86,563	80,757
75-79	73,507	64,708	72,872	74,963	74,951	71,017	66,110
80-84	24,534	23,060	24,830	31,707	31,307	36,617	34,183
85-89	6,899	8,126	6,165	7,251	7,715	5,452	7,800
90 and over	1,185	774	763	1,976	2,360	—	1,766
Total	339,029	305,220	334,082	366,206	398,755	423,404	430,417

Source:—Annual Statistical Enquiry

Public Funds

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what proposals for the dispersal of public funds were discussed at a meeting of senior officials of his Department and the leaders of major voluntary organisations on 15 January.

Mr. Scott: Officials had a preliminary meeting with representatives from the National Council for Voluntary Organisations, Community Service Volunteers, the Volunteer Centre, the Community Projects Foundation and the Charities Aid Foundation on 15 January 1988.

The purpose of the meeting was to seek their assistance and advice on the disbursement of the funds arising from the error in relation to the retail price index.

Health Advisory Service

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services which district health authorities in the west midlands have been visited by the Health Advisory Service since its inception and when these visits took place.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 25 January 1988]:* The information required is in the table. The Health Advisory Service makes visits to monitor services provided for the elderly and the mentally ill.

District Health Authority	Visits in respect of services for The elderly	The mentally ill
Bromsgrove and Redditch	1974	1973, 1981
Central Birmingham	1970, 1986	1972, 1982, 1986
Coventry	1973	1981, 1984, 1986
Dudley	1974	1972
East Birmingham	1974, 1986	1972
Herefordshire	1973, 1980, 1984	1970, 1985
Kidderminster	1981	1986
Mid-Staffordshire	1974 (twice) 1975, 1980	1972
North Birmingham	1974, 1982, 1984	1972, 1979, 1985
North Staffordshire	1974, 1978	1972, 1984
North Warwickshire	—	1984
Rugby	1980	1984
Sandwell	1974, 1984	1979
Shropshire	1974 (twice)	1972, 1981
Solihull	1987	1972, 1981, 1984
South Birmingham	1974, 1986	1972, 1980
South Warwickshire	1974	1984
Walsall	1974	—
West Birmingham	1973, 1983, 1986	1979
Wolverhampton	1974, 1975	1972
Worcestershire	1973, 1974 (twice) 1981	1972 (twice) 1985

There were also visits to examine services for the elderly mentally ill specifically to Coventry, South Warwickshire and Wolverhampton in 1981 and Wolverhampton again in 1987.

Residential Care

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will take urgent steps to ensure that all providers of accommodation for people needing residential care are subject to a national registration system;

(2) if he will urgently seek the abolition of any distinction between residential care and nursing homes providing long-term care.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 26 January 1988]:* Any changes in the existing arrangements for registration and inspection would need to take account of what is said about homes in the reports expected shortly of Lady Wagner's review of residential care, Sir Roy Griffiths' overview of community care, and the social services inspectorate's report on the implementation of the Registered Homes Act 1984. The registration and inspection system for homes in Scotland is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

DEFENCE

Territorial Army

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when next he expects to meet the chairman of the Territorial Army Volunteer Reserve Association to discuss the future of the Territorial Army.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence has no plans scheduled for a meeting with the chairman of the Territorial Auxiliary and Volunteer Reserves Association at the present time. However, formal consultative machinery exists in the shape of the bi-annual Territorial Auxiliary and Volunteer Reserves Advisory Committee, which is next due to meet on 12 July 1988. The council of TAVRAs does, however, have the right to make representations to the Department at any time it sees fit to do so.

Category Z Berths

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the locations of all category Z berths in the Clyde area.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The locations of Z berths in the Clyde area are as follows:

Coulport
Rothesay (two berths)
Arran (two berths)
Campbeltown (four berths)
Loch Fyne—Tarbert
Inverary
Rosebank
Loch Goil
Loch Striven
Glen Mallan

Clyde Naval Emergency Monitoring Team

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on how many occasions since 1979 the Clyde naval emergency monitoring team has been called out to incidents.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The Naval Emergency Monitoring Organisation (Scotland) has been called out on three occasions since 1979. In April 1985 it was asked to provide assistance to the civil authorities under the national arrangements for incidents involving radioactivity (NAIR scheme) when a suspect package was found on a beach on the outskirts of Helensburgh which subsequently proved not to contain any radioactive material. In October 1985 it was called out when an alarm sounded at the Clyde submarine base. This was subsequently found to be spurious. In May 1986 it was called to the royal naval armaments depot, Coulport, when a slighter higher than normal radioactive reading was detected within a sealed item of equipment. It was quickly established that there was no hazard.

Clyde Area Public Safety Scheme

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what provisions are made under the Clyde public safety scheme for an accident involving a nuclear weapon.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The aim of the Clyde area public safety scheme is to safeguard the public, not only in the unlikely event of a submarine reactor accident, but in the event of any other accident in the Clyde area which might lead to a release of radioactivity, and which interferes with the normal activities of the local population.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the names, dates and locations of exercises held under the Clyde public safety scheme since 1979.

Mr. Ian Stewart: It is not our practice to discuss details of nuclear accident response exercises.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the amendments made to the Clyde public safety scheme since 1983.

Mr. Ian Stewart: There have been two amendments to the Clyde area public safety scheme sine 1983, one issued in July 1985 and the other in September 1986. A copy of the scheme is held in the Library and a copy incorporating the amendments since 1983 has now also been placed in the Library.

European Fighter Aircraft

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met his West German counterpart to discuss the future of the European fighter aircraft.

Mr. Sainsbury: My right hon. Friend holds frequent and regular meetings with his West German counterpart at which a wide range of matters of mutual interest is discussed. The last such occasion occurred on 20 January.

Mr. Martin Kettrick

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the question of compensation payments for disabled ex-Marine Martin Kettrick was first raised with his Department by the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South; on how many occasions it has been raised since and in what form; when he expects a decision to be made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The right hon. Gentleman first raised the case of Martin Kettrick in a letter to my Department in March 1982. It has been raised since on a considerable number of occasions, both in correspondence and in the House. As the right hon. Gentleman is aware, Mr.

Kettrick has submitted a case for consideration by the Defence council under the procedures which provide for submission for redress of grievance. A decision is expected to be made on this shortly.

Ex-Service Personnel (Injury Payments)

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many ex-service people have claimed ex-gratia payments after being injured whilst serving; what payments have been made; how many people are still awaiting settlement; and when he expects to reach decisions on the outstanding claims.

Mr. Freeman: Complete records are not available for the period before 8 December 1986, when my hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence announced that, pending repeal of section 10 of the Crown Proceedings Act 1947, claims for personal injuries to service personnel would be considered for settlement on an ex-gratia basis. In respect of the period from 8 December 1986 to 15 May 1987, when section 10 was repealed, seven claims have been received from ex-service people. A decision to make a payment has been taken in one case, two claims have been rejected and four are still under investigation. Decisions will be taken on the four outstanding claims as soon as inquiries have been completed.

Nuclear Materials (Transport)

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if there are any plans to deploy his Department's police in connection with nuclear materials convoy duties in Greater Manchester.

Mr. Ian Stewart: It has been the policy of successive Governments not to give details of the movement of defence nuclear materials.

SCOTLAND

Housing

16. **Mr. Lambie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he intends to meet the chairman of the Scottish Special Housing Association to discuss housing in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend has no immediate plans to do so.

Regional Aid

18. **Mr. Andrew Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many firms in the Arbroath travel-to-work area applied for regional development grants in 1987.

Mr. Lang: In 1987 applications for revised regional development grant were received from 28 firms in the Arbroath travel-to-work area. Information on applications under the old regional development scheme is not available.

24. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received on the announcement on the withdrawal of regional development grant for Scotland.

Mr. Lang: I have not received any representations following the announcement of the ending of regional development grant for Scotland.

31. **Mr. McCleish:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the likely impact of recent changes in regional aid policy on the attraction of inward investment to Scotland.

Mr. Lang: Scotland is an attractive location for inward investment. Since 1981 Scotland has attracted £2·6 billion of planned investment with related employment amounting to 46,000 jobs. I am satisfied that the change in regional assistance announced recently together with Scotland's other attractions will enable us to be similarly successful in the future.

39. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the effect of the changes announced on 12 January 1988, *Official Report*, columns *145-47* on the one-door approach adopted by the Dundee project.

Mr. Lang: The changes announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on 12 January 1988 will improve the effectiveness of the work of the Dundee project. The administration of the new Department of Trade and Industry advisory service in Scotland by the Scottish Development Agency, allied to the agency's new regional structure, will increase the range of business support services on which the Dundee project can draw.

40. **Mr. Douglas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on any changes in the relationship between his Department and the Scottish Development Agency as a consequence of the recently announced proposals to alter regional financial assistance.

Mr. Lang: As I announced on 13 January 1988 in the context of the launch of the Industry Department for Scotland booklet "Regional Development: Encouraging Enterprise in Scotland", the agency will, together with the Highlands and Islands Development Board, act as agent for the Department of Trade and Industry's business development initiatives in Scotland. It will also take over from April 1988 the administration of the better business services scheme in those parts of Scotland where it is currently administered by my Department. Otherwise, there will be no changes in the present relationship between the Scottish Office and the Scottish Development Agency.

"The Way Forward"

19. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he has had with Nirex since the publication of the executive's document, "The Way Forward".

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend has had no discussions with Nirex since this document was published on 12 November.

Education (Strathclyde)

20. **Mr. Michael J. Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, when he next expects to meet Strathclyde regional council representatives to discuss education within the region.

29. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will meet representatives of Strathclyde regional council to discuss problems in the educational field within the region.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans at present to meet representatives of Strathclyde regional council to discuss education.

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many representations he has received concerning the proposed reorganisation of school education in Strathclyde; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: At the most recent count I have received 2,555 representations including three petitions in connection with the proposed reorganisation of school education in Strathclyde. I recognise that difficult decisions will have to be taken by Strathclyde and other education authorities in rationalising school provision so as to reduce surplus capacity. But I am also concerned that the options being considered include the closure of schools which are so highly regarded by parents that they remain full to capacity even at a time when school rolls generally are falling.

I have therefore decided to take powers to review in certain circumstances education authorities' proposals for school closures. I am laying regulations today — the Education (Publication and Consultation etc.) (Scotland) Regulations 1988 — which will require education authorities to submit for my consent any proposal to close or reorganise a school where the pupil numbers exceed 80 per cent. of the school's capacity.

Cardiac Facilities

21. **Mr. Buchanan-Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to complete his review of hospital cardiac facilities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The national specialist services advisory committee is nearing the end of its review of cardiac surgery provision throughout Scotland. Its report is expected in the next few months.

Municipal Rents

22. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the level of municipal rents in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Responsibility for setting rent levels for council housing lies with the individual local authority concerned. Average local authority rents in Scotland in 1987-788 stand at £14·65 per house per week. They have risen from an average of £4·92 per house per week in 1979-80, some 75 per cent. of the average for local authorities in England and Wales, to a level which is now 84 per cent. of the England and Wales average of £17·40 per week.

Student Grants

23. **Mr. McTaggart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has as to how many university students in the Strathclyde area have been refused all or part of their grant allowance due to the fact that the student's parent has failed to complete part 2 of the application form.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: We are aware of seven such cases among students attending Glasgow and Strathclyde universities in session 1987-88.

Mr. Maginnis: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many students from Scotland to whom covenants are made and who are also entitled, after means testing, to a full university or further education award, currently have a deduction made from their awards relative to the amount of the covenant.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not available.

School Closures

25. **Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on representations received about school closures in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend and I have received representations about many of the schools currently being considered for closure in Strathclyde region. In particular we have received over 2,000 representations and a petition with 7,300 signatures protesting about the proposal to close Paisley grammar school.

Scottish Special Housing Association

26. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions his Department has had with the Scottish Special Housing Association regarding the transfer of its tenants in Shetland to the Hjaltland Housing Association.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Officials of the Scottish Development Department met officials of the Scottish Special Housing Association on several occasions last year to discuss proposals for the association's tenants in Shetland to be given the opportunity to transfer to Hjaltland housing association. The tenants are now considering this matter.

Crown Estates Commission

27. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received urging a review of the powers of the Crown Estates Commission over the development of fish and shellfish farming in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend has received representations from several hon. Members, local authorities, other bodies and individuals. The majority of such representations have concerned both the role of the Crown Estate Commissioners and the exclusion of marine fish farms from the scope of planning controls.

Court Actions (Costs)

28. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will indicate the costs incurred by the Crown Office in bringing *(a)* interdict proceedings against *The Scotsman* and *(b)* contempt proceedings against *The Glasgow Herald* and its editor, in each case indicating the cost incurred: (i) before any writ was lodged in the Court of Session and (ii) thereafter; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The actions have been brought by the Lord Advocate on behalf of the

Government. The expenses of these actions and liability for their payment will only be known once the actions are concluded.

Scottish Development Agency

30. **Mr. Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what additional resources he will give to the Scottish Development Agency following the announcement of regional aid cuts.

Mr. Lang: There have been no such cuts. On the contrary, the 1988 public expenditure White Paper (Cm. 288), published on 20 January by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, shows total expenditure on the Scottish industry programme for 1988-89 as £266 million, an increase of £25 million over the planned provision in the 1987 expenditure White Paper (Cm. 56).

Primary Schools (Pupil Costs)

32. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much was spent per pupil in primary schools in Scotland in the most recent year for which figures are available; and what was the comparable figure in 1978-79, at constant prices.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: In 1985-86 net expenditure per pupil in primary schools in Scotland at outturn prices was £961. This is 24 per cent. more than the comparable figure in 1978-79 which, at 1985-86 prices, was £774.

School Management

33. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to ensure that the comments expressed in the responses to the consultation paper "School Management and the Role of Parents" are reflected in any ensuing legislation.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Government's conclusions on school management were published on 18 January in the booklet "School Management — the Government's Conclusions" and they reflect many of the helpful comments expressed during the consultation. Copies of the booklet have been sent to all Scottish Members and have been placed in the Library. A Bill to give effect to our intentions will be brought forward shortly.

Public Expenditure

34. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to be able to publish the Scottish commentary on public expenditure.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend expects to publish "Public Expenditure to 1990-91: A Commentary on the Scotland Programme" around 17 February. As in previous years a copy will be sent to each Scottish Member. Copies will also be placed in the Library.

Rating Reform

35. **Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what will be the financial implications for each of the regions of Scotland of the failure to introduce a uniform business rate at the same time as is proposed for England and Wales; and what will be the financial implications for Scotland as a whole of the non-introduction of a uniform business rate for Great Britain.

Mr. Lang: I refer the hon. Member to my replies to his questions on 27 November 1987 at column *132*, 17 December 1987 at column *643* and 14 January 1988 at column *367*, which explained policy on the reform of non-domestic rates in Scotland. Detailed estimates of the kind requested have not been made.

38. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will seek to amend the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987 so that married students, who depend on their spouse's income for grant purposes, will not be jointly and severally liable for that spouse's poll tax.

Mr. Lang: No.

Newbattle Abbey College

36. **Mr. Eadie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what processes of consultation he undertook before announcing the withdrawal of funding from Newbattle Abbey college in Dalkeith.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There was no public consultation before the decision was announced, but there will be adequate opportunity for the governors and others to express their views before the decision takes effect.

Disabled People (Transport)

37. **Mr. Hood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, if he will make a statement on the provision of transport for the disabled in the Strathclyde region since deregulation.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I understand that Strathclyde passenger transport executive, on behalf of the regional council, last year carried out a review of dial-a-bus services for the mobility handicapped within the Glasgow area. As a result of the review an extension of the concept of door-to-door dial-a-bus services was recommended and the council has now approved changes in the style and scope of the service.

The extended network, which is subsidised by the council, will start on 1 February in the following operating areas:

Glasgow North West
Glasgow North East
Glasgow South East
Glasgow South West
Hamilton/East Kilbride
Renfrew
Clydesdale

I understand that there are, in addition, three community transport schemes operated by the voluntary sector which provide transport for the mobility handicapped within the conurbation.

Job Creation

41. **Sir Hector Monro:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent discussions he has had with the Confederation of British Industry about new industries coming to Scotland during the past year and on how many jobs will be created.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend keeps in regular touch with the Confederation of British Industry on a range of issues, and addressed its annual conference in Glasgow in November when he drew attention to the continuing attractiveness of Scotland as a location for

industrial investment. Last year there were announcements of over 50 major new industrial projects with the prospect of over 12,000 jobs.

Housing Finance

42. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the provisional non-housing revenue account and housing revenue account capital allocations for 1988-89 for *(a)* Scotland and *(b)* Edinburgh; and if he will express them as a percentage of the allocation in the 1987-88 financial year.

Mr. Lang: The provisional non-housing revenue account and housing revenue account capital allocations for 1988-89 for Scotland as a whole are £122·6 million and £387 million, respectively. These represent 83·1 per cent. and 106·8 per cent. respectively of the equivalent allocations at this stage last year.

The provisional non-housing revenue account and housing revenue account capital allocations for 1988-89 for Edinburgh district council are £24 million and £26·4 million respectively. These represent 70 per cent. and 107 per cent. respectively of the equivalent allocations at this stage last year.

This year, as a result of substantial increases in receipts, the housing revenue account allocations at final stage were higher than the provisional allocations. Similarly next year, any receipts additional to those assumed will enhance 1988-89 allocations.

Roads (North Ayrshire)

43. **Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on Government policy for improving road communications in north Ayrshire.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The north of Ayrshire is served by two trunk roads, the A77 and the A78. On the A78 there are plans to bypass the towns of Ardrossan and Saltcoats. On the northern section of the A77, the Ayr road route is a joint central Government-regional authority project, which will provide an all-purpose dual carriageway between the centre of Glasgow and Ayrshire. Roads connecting with the trunk road network are the responsibility of the local roads authority, Strathclyde regional council.

Legal System

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to introduce legislation to reform the Scottish legal system; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend will continue to introduce well-based proposals for appropriate reforms of the Scottish legal system.

Paisley Grammar School

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many representations he has received concerning the proposal to close Paisley grammar school; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: At the most recent count 2,385 representations and a petition with 7,300 signatures have been received in connection with the proposal to close Paisley grammar school.

Road Improvements

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of major road improvements projects which are under way or are to be initiated during the current year in Angus, Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: There are no major trunk road schemes under construction at present, or planned to commence in the current financial year, in Angus.

Hospitals

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of new hospital building projects which are planned to take place in Angus, Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The initiative on new hospital building projects lies with health boards in the first instance. Tayside health board has, I understand, long-term plans to provide a new community hospital in Forfar, Angus. These proposals are however currently subject to a detailed option appraisal and if the board decides to proceed, a submission for approval-in-principle will be made to the Scottish Home and Health Department.

Educational Expenditure

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of any educational projects which are planned for the current year in Tayside.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The educational building projects being undertaken or proposed in the financial years 1987-88 and 1988-89, as listed in Tayside regional council's current financial plan, are given in table 1. Table 2 gives details of projects in 1987-88 in central institutions in Tayside and the Dundee campus of the Northern college of education. Comparable information for 1988-89 is not yet available.

Table 1

Project	*Planned expenditure* 1987-88 £000s[1]	1988-89 £000s[1]
Perth academy—alterations and extensions	1,327	233
Educational improvements (including replacement furniture)	470	470
Webster's high school, Kirriemuir—alterations, extension and community provision	520	1,869
Perth grammar school phase IV	33	54
Conversion of former Arbroath high school to FE premises	340	836
Minor works, energy conservation equipment etc.	1,901	1,393
Grove academy—alteration, extension and community provision (met from covenant)	604	936
Montrose academy—alteration and extension (met from covenant)	175	1,550

[1] At outturn prices.

Table 2

Project	*Planned expenditure 1987-88 £000*[1]
1. Duncan of Jordanstone college of art	
Access for disabled	50
Conversion of boiler	53
Remedial work to Springfield facade	34
Minor works	16
	153
2. Dundee college of technology	
Minor works	15
3. Dundee campus of northern college of education	
Re-roofing	65
Floor coverings	12
	77

[1] At outturn prices.

National Health Service (Resources)

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to increase resources allocated to the National Health Service in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Yes. My right hon. and learned Friend announced on 9 December that the provision for the National Health Service in Scotland would rise by about £130 million next year, to £2,393 million and by a further £100 million in each of the next two years. I also refer the hon. Member to the additional £7·6 million of which details were mentioned in the reply I gave on 18 December 1987, at column *820*, to my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart).

Meningitis

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many cases of meningitis have occurred in Scotland during each of the past three years; how many of these have been fatal; what evidence he has as to the principal cause of the disease; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The number of cases of meningococcal meningitis, which is a notifiable disease, for the past three years in Scotland is as follows:

1985	136
1986	180
1987	159 (provisional)

The number of laboratory reports of all forms of meningitis received by the Communicable Diseases (Scotland) Unit is as follows:

1985	460
1986	419
1987	432

The number of deaths from all forms of meningitis is as follows:

1985	22
1986	25
1987	n.a.

The principal attributable cause of the disease has not yet been identified. The recent position is that meningitis in Scotland appears to be confined to sporadic cases with no significant upsurge in numbers beyond anticipated variation. We are, however, keeping the situation under close review.

Graduates (Teaching)

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the percentage of Scottish graduates who went into teaching as a first job in 1970, 1975, 1980 and 1985.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The numbers of persons entering postgraduate teacher training courses in Scotland in 1970, 1975, 1980 and 1985 expressed as rates per 100 graduates from academic establishments in Scotland during the previous academic year are 28, 30, 14 and 6, respectively. Information on the proportion of graduates commencing teaching employment for the first time in each of these years is not readily available.

Teachers

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of teaching posts in Scottish primary schools is held by *(a)* males and *(b)* females.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: At September 1984 11·4 per cent. of the full-time teachers in education authority primary schools were male and 88·6 per cent. were female.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the average salary of *(a)* a male and *(b)* a female teacher in Scotland's schools.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Scottish teachers, whether male of female, receive the same rates of pay which are determined from a single salary structure. The estimated average salary for all Scottish teachers at October 1987 is £13,200. Information on the separate average salaries of male and female teachers is not available.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the average age of *(a)* male and *(b)* female teachers in Scotland in 1970, 1975, 1980 and 1985.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The average ages of full-time teachers in education authority schools are as shown. Information for session 1970-71 is not readily available; 1984-85 is the latest year for which information is available.

	Session		
	1975-76	*1980-81*	*1984-85*
Primary			
Males	43	42	42
Females	36	38	40
Secondary			
Males	38	39	40
Females	35	36	37
Primary and Secondary			
Males	39	39	40
Females	36	37	39

Ayr Road Route

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the timetable for completion of the Ayr road route; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: All of the statutory orders have now been published for this scheme. The number and nature of the objections received, both to the trunk road section and to Strathclyde regional council's proposals, mean that a joint public local inquiry will be required. A provisional starting

date for an inquiry of 23 March is being investigated and a press announcement confirming details will be made in due course. I hope my hon. Friend will appreciate that I cannot give an indication of when construction of the Ayr road route might start since whether it goes ahead or not will depend on the recommendation of the inquiry reporter and my final decision.

South African Consul General for Scotland

Mr. Galloway: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland on how many occasions the South African consul general for Scotland has met any Minister or any official of his Department or the Scottish Development Agency; and what was the purpose and outcome of the meetings.

Mr. Rifkind *[holding answer 21 January 1988]:* None of my ministerial colleagues has met the South African consul general for Scotland. An official of the Industry Department for Scotland attended a lunch in Glasgow on 26 November 1987, along with others from Scottish industrial and commercial interests, to mark a visit to Scotland by the South African ambassador.

In addition, Scottish Office officials have occasional meetings or discussions with consular officials in the normal course of their duties.

Peterhead Prison

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what role he envisages for Peterhead prison within the Scottish penal system;

(2) what is his policy on the conclusion of the Buyers report into prisoners' grievances at Peterhead, that on balance the building of a new prison at Peterhead is justified;

(3) whether he will accept the recommendation of the Buyers report into prisoners' grievances at Peterhead on the establishment for new alternative secure units in Scottish prisons;

(4) when he intends to respond to the recommendation and points of note in the Buyers report into prisoners' grievances at Her Majesty's prison, Peterhead;

(5) if he will make a statement on Scottish prison policy.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 26 January 1988]:* My right hon. and learned Friend made a speech on 25 January on penal policy and the operation of the Scottish prison service in Scotland. Copies of his speech have been placed in the Library. My right hon. and learned Friend indicated in his speech the main measures which he is pursuing in response, inter alia, to the advice put to him by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons (following his special investigation into grievances of prisoners at Peterhead).

For the time being Peterhead prison will operate with a reduced capacity. At present places are available for up to 60 long-term prisoners who present management or control problems; this capacity will be increased when D hall becomes available in December this year. There is also capacity for up to 50 long-term prisoners who are unable to go into normal circulation and for 20 local prisoners serving short sentences.

For the longer term, my right hon. and learned Friend is considering a range of options including the possibility of changing the plans for building a new prison at Peterhead. He has made it plain, however, that nothing has been decided yet and that this possibility is only one of the options for the future of Peterhead prison.

The Government's initial response to Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons' report on his inquiry into prisoners' grievances at Peterhead prison was published on 6 May. A number of recommendations have already been implemented. Action on other matters will be announced in due course.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Experimental Husbandry Farms

Mr. Ashby: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many experimental husbandry farms there are; what is the purpose of these farms; and if he will make a statement on his future policy in respect of such farms.

Mr. Donald Thompson: There are 12 experimental husbandry farms throughout England and Wales representing all the main farming enterprises on a range of soil types and under a variety of climatic conditions. The primary purpose of these farms is to conduct developmental work in general areas and on specific projects where there is a demonstrable need within the farming industry, with the aim of the early adoption of these systems or techniques by the industry. The development work at the centres is an integral part of the ADAS R and D programme and as such is inseparable from the future decisions on support for agricultural R and D.

Mr. Ashby: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the cost of running each experimental husbandry farm; what revenue is received in respect of each farm; and how much of that revenue comes from charges to visitors.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The table shows the running costs and the revenue received in respect of each experimental husbandry farm for the financial year 1986-87. None of these receipts are attributable to charged visits.

	Total costs £'000s	*Receipts £'000s*
Boxworth	796	409
Bridgets	1,006	477
Drayton	630	201
Gleadthorpe	1,225	381
High Mowthorpe	977	530
Liscombe	520	185
Pwllpeiran	475	180
Redesdale	568	284
Rickwood	514	77
Rosemaund	945	364
Terrington	1,147	359
Trawscoed	1,503	704

Mr. Ashby: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the number of visitors to each experimental husbandry farm in each year since 1984.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The table shows the numbers of visitors to experimental husbandry farms for the years 1984 to 1987.

	1984	1985	1986	1987
Boxworth	2,861	2,932	1,821	1,958
Bridgets	2,915	2,215	1,831	1,925
Drayton	1,147	1,390	1,106	950
Gleadthorpe	1,758	2,387	1,467	1,129
High Mowthorpe	1,187	2,327	1,219	2,269
Liscombe	5,144	3,407	2,078	3,356
Redesdale	1,197	1,035	1,185	733
Rickwood	1,727	1,788	1,743	1,016
Rosemaund	7,317	3,643	3,403	3,191
Terrington	1,412	1,880	1,886	1,761
Trawscoed/Pwlpeiran	2,479	4,398	4,184	2,014

Basking Sharks

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what representations he has received from the Marine Conservation Society concerning the fishing of basking sharks in British and European waters; if he will seek their current views on this matter; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many tonnes of basking shark liver have been taken by the Norwegians from British waters during 1987;

(3) what currently is the quota of Norway in respect of basking shark fishing in British and European waters; and if he intends to make any representations or take any action in respect thereof.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The 1988 Norwegian quota for basking shark in Community waters is 400 tonnes of basking shark liver, as in 1987. Details of catches against this quota for 1987 are not yet available.

Officials of my Department and the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland have had a number of contacts with the Marine Conservation Society about the fishery for basking sharks and its effects on stocks. The Government are aware of the views of the Marine Conservation Society and see no need for further consultation at this stage. Fisheries and Environment Ministers are, however, giving further consideration to the case for inclusion of basking sharks in schedule 5 to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Forestry

Ms. Quin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement concerning the implications for forestry of the Government's and the EEC's proposals for set-aside in agriculture.

Mr. MacGregor: The Community set-aside scheme, on which discussions are continuing in the Council of Ministers, is expected to include provision for land taken out of arable crop production to be used for woodland. The consultation document issued by the Agricultural Departments on 8 December 1987 contained suggestions as to how this option might be put into practice in the United Kingdom and linked with the new farm woodland scheme. I and my colleagues will wish to consider the matter further in the light of the Community's final decisions, and of views expressed during our current consultations in this country.

Pesticides

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish the criteria which are used for the review of pesticides under the control of pesticides regulations.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 26 January 1988]:* Pesticides under review are evaluated in relation to a wide range of criteria, including their chemical properties, function, efficacy, residues, toxicity and environmental effect. Each product is considered individually, but the fields of interest are those set out in appendix 4 of the volume "Approval for Data Requirements for Approval under the Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986" which is in the Library of the House.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Agricultural Development Programme

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will announce the details of the Northern Ireland agricultural development programme; which items will be grant-aided; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers: Council Regulation (EEC) No. 1942/81 under which the Northern Ireland agricultural development programe was introduced, was recently amended by Council Regulation (EEC) No. 3156/87 to permit its continuation. An amended programme has been drafted by the Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland but it is still subject to the formal approval of the EC Commission. However, I hope that approval will be obtained soon, and that I will be able to make an early announcement about the details of the programme.

Amusement Machines

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will introduce legislation to regulate the growth of fruit machines, slot machines and video machines in shop premises in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: Fruit machines and other slot machines which are used for gaming are already illegal in these premises under the provisions of the Betting, Gaming, Lotteries and Amusements (Northern Ireland) Order 1985. However, I am aware that there are problems associated with the illegal use for gaming of certain types of machines which are designed for amusement only, for example video poker machines and I am considering what action, needs to be taken in regard to these.

Terrorist Attacks

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what were the casualty figures due to terrorist attacks for the last three months; what were the figures for the same period for each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: The information is as follows:

	October-December				
	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987
Number of persons murdered by terrorists (also includes those murdered as a result of internal disputes)	28	8	9	10	19

	October-December				
	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987
Total injuries associated with terrorist activity	178	159	193	260	332

Mentally Disordered Prisoners

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what consideration his Department has given to the problems presented by mentally disordered prisoners in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: In Northern Ireland prisoners who are diagnosed as suffering from mental illness or severe impairment (as defined in the Mental Health (Northern Ireland) Order 1986) of a nature or degree which warrants detention in hospital for medical treatment, may be transferred to hospital for such treatment. Male prisoners who do not require hospitalisation but who need treatment for mental disorders are housed in the psychiatric unit in Belfast prison where they are assessed and treated by consultant psychiatrists and prison medical staff. A new purpose-built psychiatric unit in the male prison at Maghaberry is due to open later this year to replace the existing unit in Belfast prison. Female prisoners who need psychiatric attention are treated in Maghaberry (female) prison.

Students (Republic of Ireland)

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish in the *Official Report* the estimated cost to public funds for students from the Republic of Ireland now receiving their higher education in Northern Ireland as a result of European Community regulations.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information in the form requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, the cost of reimbursing the tuition fees of these students in the 1987-88 financial year will be about £450,000.

Police Meetings

Mr. Maginnis: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many meetings have taken place between the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Commissioner of the Irish Republic's police force since 15 November 1985 *(a)* within Anglo-Irish conferences and *(b)* outside Anglo-Irish conferences;

(2) how many meetings have taken place between the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Commissioner of the Irish Republic's police force since 15 November 1985 *(a)* within Northern Ireland, *(b)* within the Republic of Ireland and *(c)* elsewhere;

(3) during how many of the meetings between the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Commissioner of the Irish Republic's police force held since 15 November 1985 a Minister or official of his Department was present.

Mr. Stanley: Since 15 November 1985, the Chief Constable and the Garda Commissioner have attended eight meetings of the Intergovernmental Conference, four of which were held in Belfast, three in London and one in Dublin. They have also participated in a further six meetings within the ambit of the conference attended by officials from both sides, five of which were held in Belfast and one in Dublin. In addition, the Chief Constable has had a number of private discussions with the present and former commissioner, both in Dublin and Belfast.

Maghaberry Prison

Mr. Maginnis: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what has been the total capital cost of the construction and equipping of Her Majesty's prison, Maghaberry; when work commenced; when it was first used to accommodate prisoners; and if it is now complete.

Mr. Stanley: The prison complex at Maghaberry has cost some £35 million to construct and equip. Construction commenced in 1976 and prisoners were first accommodated there in March 1986. The complex is now essentially complete.

Mr. Maginnis: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what have been the annual *(a)* maintenance costs and *(b)* operating costs at Her Majesty's prison, Maghaberry for each year that it has been in use.

Mr. Stanley: Maintenance costs in the first full financial year of use (1986-87) were £333,939 and in the same period, operating costs were £7,023,058. Corresponding costs in the current financial year to date (April to December 1987) are £227,941 and £7,127,330 respectively.

Mr. Maginnis: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the prisoner capacity of Her Majesty's prison, Maghaberry; and what has been the average annual prison population for each year it has been in use.

Mr. Stanley: The female prison at Maghaberry has 56 cells and was designed to accommodate all the female prisoners in Northern Ireland. The male prison has a capacity for 432. The average weekly female population during 1986 was 29 and in 1987 it was 30. The corresponding figures for male prisoners are eight and 16 respectively.

Students (Covenants)

Mr. Maginnis: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many students from Northern Ireland to whom covenants are made and who are also entitled, after means testing, to a full university or further education award, currently have a deduction made from their awards relative to the amount of the covenant.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is not available.

Salmon Tagging

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he has any plans to combat salmon poaching by the introduction of a tagging scheme.

Mr. Viggers: I have no plans at present to do so.

Fish Disease UDN

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the disease in fish known as UDN was first recorded in a Northern Ireland river; what were

the peak years of incidence; which rivers were most affected; when the incidence of this disease became so low as not to cause concern over the future of salmon stocks; and what were the principal effects on salmon stocks.

Mr. Viggers: I assume the hon. Gentleman is referring to UDN (ulcerative dermal necrosis) which was first recorded in a Northern Ireland river in 1966. The peak years of incidence were 1966-68. No information exists to allow an accurate assessment of which rivers were most affected. By the early 1970s the incidence of UDN had become so low as to stop concern over the future of salmon stocks. The principal effect on salmon stocks in Northern Ireland was to reduce the number of adult fish surviving to spawn, thus lowering the amount of ova deposited.

Extradition

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons were extradited from the Republic of Ireland to Northern Ireland in each of the last three years where the charge was in respect of *(a)* terrorist activity and *(b)* non-terrorist activity.

Mr. Stanley: The information is as follows:

	1985	*1986*	*1987*
Numbers of persons extradited in respect of terrorist activity	0	0	0
Number of persons extradited in respect of non-terrorist activity	4	1	0

On 14 January 1988, the Irish Supreme Court ordered the extradition of Robert Peter Russell, who escaped from the Maze in 1983. He will be returned to Northern Ireland on completion of a three-year sentence imposed in the Republic.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he has taken, in conjunction with the security forces to draw up a list of persons believed to be living in Republic of Ireland, for which applications for extradition might be appropriate, what percentage of such persons are being sought by the Royal Ulster Constabulary for terrorist offences; and if the list has been extended as a result of changes in extradition law in the Irish Republic.

Mr. Stanley: As I said in my reply to the hon. Gentleman on 10 November at column *66* it is not the practice to give details of possible individual extradition cases. I can assure him, however, that the Royal Ulster Constabulary has always given consideration to possible extradition cases involving both terrorists and non-terrorist offences.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many applications for extradition of persons from the Irish Republic to Northern Ireland have been made since the recent changes in extradition law in the Irish Republic came into effect; and of these how many were for *(a)* terrorist offences and *(b)* non-terrorist offences.

Mr. Stanley *[holding answer 26 January 1988]:* The Extradition (ECST) Act 1987 came into force on 1 December and the Extradition (Amendment) Act 1987 came into force on 14 December. I understand that between 1 and 14 December there were three new applications for the extradition of persons from the Irish Republic to Northern Ireland. There have been no further new applications since 14 December.

Salmon and Grilse

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what numbers of salmon and grilse have been taken by *(a)* rod anglers, *(b)* draft nets, *(c)* drift nets in the Foyle System and other fixed engines in each of the last 20 years to the end of 1987.

Mr. Viggers: The information requested for the years 1985 and 1986 is shown below. Information for 1987 is not yet available. The information for previous years is given in the annual reports of the Foyle Fisheries Commission which are laid before Parliament.

	1985	*1986*
Reported rod catch	1,814	1,172
Draft nets	14,066	12,709
Drift nets	24,528	32,280
Fixed engines	1,927	1,365

Crime Statistics

Sir John Biggs-Davison: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to what factors he attributes the fact published in the 1986 statistics that overall crime rates in Northern Ireland are consistently lower than in most other regions of the United Kingdom; how the Royal Ulster Constabulary's clear-up rate now compares with that of mainland forces; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley *[holding answer 21 January 1988]:* The reasons for the overall crime rate being lower in Northern Ireland than in England, Wales or Scotland must necessarily be somewhat speculative. Adherence to traditional values and the strength of the family unit in the Province may be contributory factors. The RUC's clear-up rate for all forms of crime in 1986 was 37 per cent. compared to 32 per cent. in England and Wales and 34 per cent. in Scotland in the same year. The RUC is to be congratulated on this performance, particularly as it is achieved amidst a terrorist campaign which makes conventional police work that much more difficult.

Royal Ulster Constabulary

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information he has as to the number of days off work sick reported for members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary for each of the last five years; and if he will express this as an average figure.

Mr. Stanley *[holding answer 22 January 1988]:* The following number of days were lost by members of the regular RUC as a result of sickness and injury on duty for each of the last five years:

	Days lost
1983	91,388
1984	110,048
1985	132,669
1986	148,307
1987	[1]

[1] Figures not yet available.

In 1986 these figures represented an average loss of 18·01 days per member.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Miss Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) on 14 December 1987, *Official Report*, column 338, if he will list the area of buoyant labour demand where new claimants will be provided with information on available jobs.

Mr. Lee: This will be a matter for regional and local managers in the employment service to decide, based on the prevailing circumstances in their areas.

Mr. Fallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment by how much unemployment has fallen in the northern region since July 1986.

Mr. Lee: On 10 December 1987, the number of unemployed claimants in the northern region, adjusted for seasonality and excluding school leavers, was 191,400, a fall of 34,500 since July 1986.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps his Department takes to help reduce the problem of seasonal unemployment.

Mr. Lee: Seasonal fluctuations in unemployment have always occurred here and in other countries, reflecting seasonal patterns of demand. They occur even when unemployment is very low. Those affected usually remain unemployed for only short periods.

In tourism, one of the industries particularly affected by seasonal unemployment, it is Government policy, and that of the national tourist boards, to encourage year-round tourism through marketing and investment in tourism facilities.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the latest unemployment figures for Cornwall.

Mr. Lee: On 10 December 1987 the number of unemployed claimants in the county of Cornwall was 23,972.

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the present level of job vacancies in the Blackpool travel-to-work area.

Mr. Lee: On 4 December 1987 the number of unfilled vacancies at the jobcentres Blackpool central, Blackpool south, Thornton Clevelys, St. Annes, Kirkham and Fleetwood, which cover an area closely corresponding to the Blackpool travel-to-work area, was 864.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the percentage change in *(a)* employment levels and *(b)* unemployment levels of those aged under 25 years, 25 to 54 years, and 55 years and over (i) from mid-1979 to mid-1986 and (ii) from mid-1986.

Mr. Lee: The regularly published working population series does not separately identify those in employment by age. Also estimates by age from the monthly unemployment count for 1979 and 1986 are not comparable because of changes in coverage. The Labour force survey (LFS) provides information on a different basis.

LFS estimates of the percentage change in the number of persons in employment in Great Britain between spring 1979 and spring 1986, for the age groups requested, are as shown:

Age (Years)	*Change per cent.*
16-24	+2·7
25-54	+2·0
55 and over	−20·8

LFS estimates of the percentage change in the number of persons unemployed in Great Britain are not available for 1979 on a basis consistent with later years. The estimated percentage changes from spring 1981 to spring 1986 are as follows:

Age (years)	*Change per cent.*[1]
16-24	+2·9[2]
25-54	+29·0
55 and over	−12·3

[1] Estimated change in the number unemployed on the definition adopted in the Department of Employment's estimates of the Great Britain labour force.

[2] The 1981 LFS estimate for 16 to 24-years-olds is on a slightly different basis from later years and the estimated change since 1981 is therefore less reliable than for the older age groups.

Figures on this basis are not yet available for 1987. However, the percentage changes in claimant unemployed in Great Britain from July 1986 to October 1987, for the age groups requested, are as shown:

Age (years)	*Change per cent.*
16-24	−22·6
25-54	−14·1
55 and over	−9·8

These claimant unemployed figures are affected by seasonal influences.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been *(a)* the annual percentage change since 1979 in the total (i) employed and (ii) unemployed, and *(b)* the aggregate percentage change since 1979 to the latest available date in the total (i) employed and (ii) unemployed, in each of the categories of employment listed in tables 1·2 and 1·3 of the *Employment Gazette*.

Mr. Lee *[holding answer 22 January 1988]:* The available information is as follows:

Table 1

Employees in employment: Percentage changes between June of each year in the categories listed in Table 1·3 of 'Employment Gazette'

Great Britain	*Division Class or Group of SIC*[3]	*Change 1979-80*	*Change 1980-81*	*Change 1981-82*	*Change 1982-83*	*Change 1983-84*	*Change 1984-85*	*Change 1985-86*	*Change 1986-87*	*Change 1979-87*
Production Industries	1-4	−3·9	−9·6	−5·5	−5·7	−2·4	−1·2	−2·9	−1·8	−28·9
Manufacturing Industries	2-4	−4·3	10·3	−5·7	−5·8	−2·1	−0·8	−2·3	−1·3	−28·7
Energy and Water Supply	1	0·7	−2·3	−4·2	−4·7	−5·0	−4·5	−8·6	−7·4	−31·0
Coal extraction and solid fuels	111	−0·4	−4·2	−5·0	−5·3	−8·8	−6·6	−16·5	−15·9	−48·7
Electricity	161	−0·6	−3·1	−4·8	−3·6	−3·1	−2·4	−1·2	−0·5	−17·8
Gas	162	1·1	0·0	−1·8	−3·5	−3·9	−4·0	−4·1	−4·5	−19·0
Other Mineral and Ore Extraction Etc	2	−5·9	−12·8	−5·6	−7·8	−2·3	0·1	−2·6	−0·9	−32·5
Metal Manufacturing	22	−10·0	−19·6	−10·0	−13·9	−9·5	−3·7	−7·4	−4·8	−56·9
Non-Metalic Mineral Products	24	−4·9	−12·1	3·4	−4·3	2·7	3·6	−1·0	1·2	−17·7
Chemical Industry	25	−3·5	−8·9	−4·1	−6·0	−0·6	0·6	−0·6	0·2	−21·1
Basic industrial chemicals	251	−3·1	−11·1	−7·6	−8·4	−1·0	1·2	−0·6	0·0	−27·3
Other chemical products and preparations	255-259/260	−3·8	−7·6	−1·8	−4·5	−0·3	0·3	−0·5	0·3	−17·0
Metal Goods, Engineering and Vehicles	3	−3·2	−10·6	−6·5	−6·7	−3·2	−1·7	−3·7	−2·6	−32·6
Metal Goods nes	31	−4·3	−15·2	−6·1	−10·5	−3·7	−3·5	−5·5	−1·9	−41·2
Mechanical Engineering	32	−2·7	−10·4	−6·3	−8·9	−2·3	−0·3	−3·3	−1·9	−31·3
Industrial plant and steelwork	320	−7·5	−12·5	−3·9	−7·6	8·0	−3·1	−6·7	−1·3	−30·8
Mining and construction machinery etc	325	−4·4	−13·0	−8·6	−6·2	−5·4	−4·1	−2·2	−3·0	−38·6
Other machinery and mechanical equipment	328	−2·1	−10·0	−6·1	−9·4	−2·8	1·1	−2·7	−1·4	−29·4
Office Machinery, Data Processing Equipment	33	4·8	−0·7	3·4	2·3	3·3	9·1	−0·5	3·6	28·1
Electrical and Electronic Engineering	34	−2·1	−8·6	−6·9	−3·4	−0·8	−2·2	−4·1	−2·4	−27·0

Great Britain	Division Class or Group of SIC[1]	Change 1979-80	Change 1980-81	Change 1981-82	Change 1982-83	Change 1983-84	Change 1984-85	Change 1985-86	Change 1986-87	Change 1979-87
Wires, cables, batteries and other electrical equipment	341/342/343	−3·2	−9·6	−7·6	−6·9	−3·8	−1·3	−5·7	−4·6	−35·7
Telecommunication equipment	344	2·0	−3·7	−4·5	−2·4	−2·7	−2·8	−4·5	−1·8	−18·9
Other electronic and electrical equipment	345-348	−4·2	−11·7	−8·3	0·0	4·7	−2·5	−1·9	−0·8	−22·9
Motor Vehicles and Parts	35	−6·3	−16·8	−12·9	−6·0	−6·1	−4·2	−5·3	−4·6	−48·2
Motor vehicles and engines	351	−6·2	−16·7	−14·3	0·3	−5·6	−1·2	−4·4	−7·1	−44·5
Bodies, trailers, caravans and parts	352/353	−6·3	16·8	−12·1	−9·4	−6·4	−6·1	−5·8	−3·0	−50·2
Other Transport Equipment	36	−3·0	−4·4	−3·4	−5·5	−9·0	−3·9	−3·6	−5·9	−32·8
Aerospace equipment	364	1·3	−2·8	−4·1	−3·2	−1·5	−1·1	−1·2	−2·2	−14·0
Ship and other transport equipment	361-363/365	−7·1	−6·0	−2·8	−8·0	−17·3	−7·5	−6·9	−11·4	−50·7
Instrument Engineering	37	−3·0	−9·3	−3·3	−6·3	0·0	0·9	1·1	−2·1	−20·4
Other Manufacturing Industries	4	−5·0	−8·9	−4·7	−3·9	−0·9	−0·1	−0·6	0·0	−22·0
Food, Drink and Tobacco	41/42	−1·1	−5·8	−4·0	−6·1	−2·7	−1·6	−3·7	−1·3	−23·6
Meat and meat products, organic oils and fats	411/412	0·5	−4·3	−4·5	−2·7	−4·3	−0·2	−1·6	−0·9	−16·8
Alcoholic and soft drinks manufacture	424/428	0·7	−7·4	−4·2	−8·4	−0·6	−4·3	−4·9	−2·1	−27·6
All other food, drink and tobacco manufacture	413-423/429	−2·0	−5·7	−3·8	−6·3	−3·0	−1·2	−3·9	−1·2	24·1
Textiles	43	−12·6	−15·9	−6·2	−6·8	−2·2	−0·3	0·7	−5·1	−40·1
Footwear and Clothing	45	−8·6	−12·9	−6·1	−3·2	2·1	1·0	0·6	−1·6	−26·2
Timber and Wooden Furniture	46	−5·1	−8·0	−7·4	1·2	0·1	−0·4	2·6	0·7	−15·7
Paper, Printing and Publishing	47	−0·8	−5·1	−2·9	−2·8	−0·9	0·7	−1·2	2·5	−10·3
Pulp, paper, board and derived products	471/472	−5·5	−12·8	−7·0	−7·3	−3·4	−0·5	−0·8	4·4	−29·3
Printing and publishing	475	1·9	−1·1	−1·0	−0·9	0·1	1·2	−1·3	1·7	0·5
Rubber and Plastics	48	−5·3	−11·2	−4·5	−2·2	3·5	1·5	2·8	4·2	−11·6
Other Manufacturing	49	−10·9	−10·5	−3·1	−2·5	−4·6	0·6	3·8	3·7	−22·1

[1] Standard Industrial Classification.

Table 2 Employees in Employment: Percentage changes between June of each year in those categories listed in table 1.2 of 'Employment Gazette' which do not appear in table 1.3

Great Britain	Division Class or Group of SIC	Change 1979-80	Change 1980-81	Change 1981-82	Change 1982-83	Change 1983-84	Change 1984-85	Change 1985-86	Change 1986-87	Change 1979-87
All industries and services	(0-9)*									
All employees		−0·8	−4·8	−2·2	−1·6	0·8	1·3	0·4	1·3	−5·6
Production and construction industries	(1-5)									
All employees		−3·3	−9·4	−5·6	−5·2	−2·2	−1·2	−2·9	−1·3	−27·4
Service industries	(6-9)									
All employees		0·9	−1·8	−0·2	0·4	2·5	2·6	2·2	2·6	9·5
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	(01-03)	−1·9	−2·6	−1·5	−2·4	−3·0	0·3	−3·4	−3·2	−16·4
Coal, oil and natural gas extraction and processing	(11-14)	0·3	−3·1	−4·7	−5·2	−7·1	−6·2	−15·1	−14·3	−44·4
Electricity, gas, other energy and water supply	(15-17)	1·1	−1·4	−3·7	−4·4	−2·7	−3·1	−2·9	−2·0	−17·6
Metal manufacturing, ore and other mineral extraction	(21-24)	−7·5	−15·3	−6·8	−8·9	−3·7	−0·2	−4·3	−1·6	−39·8
Office machinery, electrical engineering and instruments	(33-34, 37)	−1·7	−8·1	−5·5	−3·3	−0·3	−0·5	−3·1	−1·6	−21·8
Textiles, leather, footwear and clothing	(43-45)	−10·5	−14·2	−6·0	−5·0	−0·2	0·2	0·2	−3·1	−33·5
Timber, wooden furniture, rubber, plastics, etc.	(46, 48-49)	−6·3	−9·7	−5·4	−0·8	0·6	0·4	3·0	2·7	−15·2
Construction	(50)	0·4	−8·6	−5·8	−2·2	−0·5	−1·4	−2·8	2·4	−17·5
Wholesale distribution and repairs	(61-63, 67)	3·2	−3·0	0·3	0·8	2·8	1·2	1·4	2·8	9·6
Retail distribution	(64-65)	nil	−3·9	−3·3	−1·0	2·4	1·6	1·2	0·3	−2·9
Hotels and catering	(66)	3·0	−3·0	3·1	−1·0	4·8	5·1	2·3	2·3	17·6
Transport	(71-77)	−0·8	−5·9	−4·4	−3·2	−0·6	0·3	−0·8	0·2	−14·3
Postal services and telecommunications	(79)	3·4	0·2	−0·2	−0·9	nil	0·5	0·7	2·8	6·5

Great Britain	Division Class or Group of SIC	Change 1979-80	Change 1980-81	Change 1981-82	Change 1982-83	Change 1983-84	Change 1984-85	Change 1985-86	Change 1986-87	Change 1979-87
Banking, finance, insurance	(81-85)	2·9	2·6	3·4	4·3	5·0	5·9	5·8	6·0	42·2
Public administration etc.	(91-92)	−1·1	−4·2	−1·0	2·0	1·0	1·3	1·1	2·6	1·4
Education	(93)	−1·2	−1·7	−1·2	−0·4	0·6	1·0	2·4	3·0	2·5
Medical and other health services: veterinary services	(95)	−2·0	2·7	0·9	−0·9	0·4	1·2	0·3	−0·2	6·6
Other services	(94, 96-98)	−1·9	−0·3	1·8	0·8	6·7	6·0	4·2	3·9	27·6

As a result of the change to a claimant-based unemployment count, statistics of unemployment by industry have not been available since May 1982. Figures prior to 1982 are not available by the 1980 standard industrial classification (SIC) definitions as given in tables 1.2 and 1.3 of the *Employment Gazette*.

Professional and Executive Recruitment

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) how, for the purpose of its flotation, the valuation of Professional and Executive Recruitment will be taken, given the service/knowledge orientation of its work;

(2) what safeguards are proposed to ensure the autonomy of Professional and Executive Recruitment;

(3) what consultations have taken place with trades unions concerning the proposed privatisation of Professional and Executive Recruitment.

Mr. Cope: These issues do not yet arise. On 2 December my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced the appointment of Lloyds Merchant Bank Limited to advise early in the new year on the options for transferring Professional and Executive Recruitment out of the public sector. We are awaiting Lloyds' advice and recommendations before taking a decision.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the income to Professional and Executive Recruitment in each year since 1979 from *(a)* social welfare subvention and *(b)* the Manpower Services Commission.

Mr. Cope: The information requested is as follows:

	Social subvention[1]	Manpower Services Commission[2]	MSC/DE Grant[3]
	£	£	£
1979-80	3,535,000	205,000	Nil
1980-81	4,914,000	131,000	Nil
1981-82	4,920,000	370,000	Nil
1982-83	4,591,000	618,000	Nil
1983-84	Nil	2,886,000	123,000
1984-85	Nil	2,179,000	170,000
1985-86	Nil	2,754,000	170,000
1986-87	Nil	3,514,000	271,000

[1] Until 31 March 1983, PER operated with the assistance of a subvention from public funds to cover the identifiable costs of PER's non-commercial activities. On 1 April 1983, this subvention was withdrawn. PER was given a new "break-even" objective requiring that operating costs are met in full from earned revenue.
[2] Net income from recruitment work for MSC programmes.
[3] Grant from MSC/Department of Employment for non-commercial work.

Tourism

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the latest figures he has on tourist-related employment in the county of Durham.

Mr. Lee: The latest data relate to September 1984 when there were an estimated 11,800 employees in employment in tourism-related industries in the county of Durham. This figure does not include self-employed persons for whom a comparable estimate is not available.

Flammable Gases and Liquids

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement, pursuant to his answer, *Official Report*, 15 December 1987, column *914*, on the consideration by the Health and Safety Commission of the report by the Advisory Committee on Dangerous Substances on proposals for the future controls over flammable gases and liquids, including standards relating to the keeping and use of liquefied petroleum gas.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Commission sought the advice of its Advisory Committee on Dangerous Substances on controls over flammable gases and liquids. The committee recommended a number of specific initiatives to improve controls and standards and to fill particular gaps. These initiatives include the development of up-to-date standards and guidance in close co-operation with industry, in such fields as piped gas transmission and distribution, the keeping and use of liquefied petroleum gas at residential premises, and the construction and operation of petrol filling stations. The commission has accepted the committee's advice and the Health and Safety Executive has embarked on discussions and consultations to carry the initiatives forward.

Mines and Quarries Act 1954

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many responses to "Restrictions in Employment of Young People" and the "Removal of Sex Discrimination in Legislation" are in favour of repealing section 93 of the Mines and Quarries Act 1954 which prohibits women and young people from lifting, carrying or moving a load so heavy as likely to cause injury at a mine.

Mr. Nicholls: No responses have been received to date concerning section 93 of the Mines and Quarries Act 1954. The closing date for comments on the consultative document is 29 February 1988.

Health and Safety

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has on the average fine for breaking the health and safety laws in 1985 and in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Nicholls: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) on 1 December 1987 at column *504*.

Manpower Services Commission Programmes

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will provide the number of projects, the amount of expenditure, the percentage of United Kingdom expenditure, and expenditure per head of regional population, in each United Kingdom standard region for the following Manpower Services Commission programmes *(a)* the business enterprise programme, *(b)* the private enterprise programme and *(c)* training grants to small employers.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 25 January 1988]:* It is not possible to provide the information in the precise form requested. The available information is shown in the tables.

Great Britain[1] planned starts and expenditure 1987-88[2] by region[3], expenditure expressed as a percentage of Great Britain total

Region	Business enterprise programme			Private enterprise programme			Local grants to employers[4]		
	Starts[5]	Expenditure £ million	Per cent.	Starts	Expenditure £ million	Per cent.	Starts	Expenditure £ million	Per cent.
South East	5,790	0·718	11·21	5,561	0·293	7·71	15,360	2·708	11·48
London	8,962	1·102	17·21	6,180	0·502	13·21	11,665	2·184	9·26
South West	7,855	0·770	12·02	6,892	0·121	3·19	5,555	1·618	6·86
West Midlands	4,617	0·445	6·95	3,872	0·466	12·27	13,328	3·620	15·35
East Midlands and Eastern	4,615	0·555	8·67	8,154	0·739	19·45	10,173	2·697	11·44
Yorkshire and Humberside	3,846	0·428	6·68	5,150	0·414	10·90	6,101	1·550	6·59
North West	8,592	1·008	15·74	10,007	0·712	18·74	11,652	3·365	14·27
Northern	3,359	0·389	6·07	3,442	0·146	3·84	8,015	1·901	8·06
Wales	3,339	0·313	4·89	2,996	0·133	3·50	6,648	1·502	6·37
Scotland	3,836	0·677	10·57	4,006	0·273	7·19	9,282	2·431	10·31
GREAT BRITAIN	54,811	6·405	100·00	56,260	3·799	100·00	97,779	23·581	100·00

Expenditure per head of the regional population[6] in Great Britain

	Business enterprise programme £	Private enterprise programme £	Local grants to employers £
Region			
South East	0·07	0·03	0·27
London	0·16	0·07	0·32
South West	0·17	0·03	0·36
West Midlands	0·09	0·09	0·70
East Midlands and Eastern	0·09	0·11	0·42
Yorkshire and Humberside	0·09	0·08	0·32
North West	0·15	0·10	0·49
Northern	0·15	0·06	0·73
Wales	0·11	0·05	0·53
Scotland	0·13	0·05	0·47

[1] Figures for the United Kingdom are not available.
[2] April 1987—March 1988.
[3] Manpower Services Commission regions have been used, as figures are not recorded by standard region.
[4] Local Grants to Employers include two complementary schemes, Local Training Grants and Local Consultancy Grants. It is not possible separately to identify Local Training Grants by region.
[5] Records of projects are not recorded; starts to schemes have been given.
[6] Manpower Services Commission population projection for calendar year 1987.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Dollar-denominated Bonds

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the extent of the United Kingdom's present commitments in the form of dollar-denominated bonds, broken down between the public and private sector; and what is his estimate of the losses incurred on these bonds *(a)* since their original purchase, *(b)* over the last 12 months and *(c)* since 19 October 1987.

Mr. Lilley: It is not the practice to publish a currency breakdown of United Kingdom's official reserves, including any overseas bond holdings. Comprehensive recent information on United Kingdom residents' holdings of dollar-denominated bonds is not available.

Trading Fund Status

Mr. Lord: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if, in the light of the establishment of the Atomic Energy Authority as a trading fund, any other authorities or Government organisations will be brought into the category of a trading fund.

Mr. Major: Trading fund status is an option for organisations whose operations make it a suitable method

of financing. There are no firm proposals to establish additional trading funds at present, but cases will continue to be considered on their merits.

Business Expansion Scheme

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many taxpayers invested in the business expansion scheme in 1984-85, by the marginal rate of tax and the amount of business expansion scheme investment, as set out in table 5.7 of "Inland Revenue Statistics 1987."

Mr. Norman Lamont: The information is as follows:

Investors by marginal rate of tax and amount of BES investment for 1984-85

Percentages

Marginal rate of tax per cent.	*Amount of BES investment (£'000)*					
	0-5	*5-10*	*10-20*	*20-30*	*30+*	*Total*
30	12	6	1	—	1	20
40-55	35	9	3	2	1	51
60	11	7	7	2	4	30
Total	58	22	11	4	6	100

Note:

This table includes later information not available when "Inland Revenue Statistics 1987" was compiled; hence the final column does not correspond exactly with that in table 5.6.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Michael Shersby: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether *(a)* a jaffa cake, *(b)* a chocolate chip cookie, *(c)* a cereal bar, *(d)* a chocolate bar and *(e)* a chocolate-coated biscuit are subject to value added tax.

Mr. Lilley: The liability to value added tax of confectionery is governed by excepted item No. 2 of group 1 of schedule 5 to the VAT Act 1983. Under this provision chocolate bars and chocolate coated biscuits are liable to VAT at the standard rate. Jaffa cakes and chocolate chip cookies are regarded as zero-rated. The liability of cereal bars, of which there are a wide variety, falls to be determined in individual cases.

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when Her Majesty's Customs and Excise intend to make available the value added tax annual accounting scheme under section 11(1) of the Finance Act 1987.

Mr. Lilley: The scheme will be available from 1 July 1988 and a copy of the proposed draft Value Added Tax (Annual Accounting) Regulations 1988 has been placed in the Library today.

Nuclear Establishments (Payments)

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the formula employed by the Crown Estate Commissioners to calculate the payments due to them in respect of pipelines and associated works on the seabed at Dounreay, Sellafield and Hunterston nuclear establishments.

Mr. Lawson: The Crown Estate Commissioners use the district valuer to assess the value of their foreshore and seabed dealings. In assessing these values the district valuer acts on the basis of instructions from the valuation office to the effect that the price or rent should be the best which is obtainable in the open market and estimates should therefore be capable of justification on normal considerations of supply and demand, including the demand of the particular purchaser or lessee. The objective is to get the best price or rent obtainable having regard to all the circumstances of the case. In the case of the disposal of rights or interests in the foreshore or seabed, the commissioners often hold the monopoly. They do not, however, wish any element of monopoly value to be included. In such cases, therefore, the district valuer assumes, for the purpose of making his valuation, that there is a measure of competition and that, if the negotiations with the commissioners break down, equally suitable facilities could be obtained from other landowners on payment of a consideration which is reasonable in the circumstances of the case.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 28 January 1988

HOME DEPARTMENT

Heathrow Airport (Policing)

Sir Peter Hordern: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what arrangements have been made to meet the cost of policing Heathrow airport; and whether such police count towards the strength of the Metropolitan police.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The provisions of the Aviation Security Act 1982 require Heathrow Airport Limited to pay the Metropolitan police for policing Heathrow airport and to provide accommodation and facilities for this purpose. Metropolitan police officers stationed at Heathrow airport count towards the strength of the force.

Michael Ryan

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on what date the late Michael Ryan made an application for a firearms certificate, or a variation of a firearms certificate; and what was the nature of that application.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to a Question from the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) on 22 January at columns *869-70*.

Prison Libraries

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to increase the special prison library grant.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Each year, a payment is made to public library authorities for the provision of library services in prison establishments. The payment is based on a formula agreed with the local authority asssociations and takes account each year of current costs in the public library service. There are no plans to change the basis on which these payments are made.

Abortion Lobby (Policing Costs)

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to how many policemen were involved in policing the demonstration and abortion lobby on 21 January; what was the cost; and what was the police estimate for the number of demonstrators.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that 531 officers were rostered to police demonstrations and lobbies on 21 January at an additional cost (mainly overtime and catering) of £21,580. A further 248 officers were drafted in from other duties on the day. About 9,000 demonstrators are estimated to have been in attendance.

Animal Experiments

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to prohibit all sight deprivation experiments on animals under the terms of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No.

Royal United Services Institute (Publications)

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will list those publications by the Royal United Services Institute which he has approved for publication since 1979.

Mr. Hurd: I have authorised no such publications as far as I am aware. A comprehensive check of records since 1979 would involve disproportionate cost.

Parole

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what percentage of prisoners in England and Wales who were eligible for parole were subsequently granted parole, under section 33 of the Criminal Justice Act 1982, in 1987;

(2) how many prisoners in England and Wales were eligible for parole, under section 33 of the Criminal Justice Act 1982, in 1987.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: This information is not yet available.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many prisoners in England and Wales in 1987, who were eligible for parole under section 33 of the Criminal Justice Act 1982, had not been notified of their release date by the time of their parole eligibility date during 1987;

(2) how many parole applications, under section 33 of the Criminal Justice Act 1982, have passed their parole eligibility date and are currently outstanding.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The parole eligibility date is the date before which an inmate cannot be released on licence but must have his case for parole reviewed at the prison. The review arrangements are designed to enable the inmate to be released on parole licence on the parole eligibility date if parole is granted. It is not always possible to meet that objective. Delays can occur for a number of reasons in individual cases. The increasing parole caseload has also led in recent months to a general increase in the number of cases in which prisoners are not informed of the decision in their case until after their parole eligibility date, but the cases which are most affected are those which have to be referred to the Parole Board. In the overwhelming majority of cases of prisoners' sentences of less than two years (known as section 33 cases) the prisoner is notified of the decision to grant parole sufficiently in advance of the parole eligibility date to make release on that date possible.

Radio

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which frequencies he has in mind to withdraw from the BBC to enable national commercial radio stations to broadcast.

Mr. Hurd: I have it in mind, after the enactment of the legislative proposals outlined in my reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack) on 19 January at columns *647-649*, to reassign the medium frequencies now used by BBC Radio 1 and Radio 3. A VHF network will also be available for use by a national commercial station.

London City Airport

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the cost of police services associated with the London City airport, and who pays.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 18 January 1988]:* It is not possible to identify the total cost of police services which may be associated with the airport. Such costs are borne by the police.

DEFENCE

Computers

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the ICL series 39 computers used by his Department's auditors in connection with fraud cases with IDETOL software are capable of the fuzzy matching of data.

Mr. Sainsbury: ICL series 39 computers and INDEPOL software are not used by MOD auditors.

Building Projects

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give details of any building projects which are planned by his Department in Angus, Scotland.

Mr. Freeman: The only building projects planned by my Department in Angus, Scotland are:

1. A small new build of single living accommodation at Barry Buddon Training Camp.
2. Some married quarters improvements and Stage 4 of a project to build single living accommodation and dining facilities at RM Condor, Arbroath.

HMS Dreadnought

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on plans for the disposal of HMS Dreadnought, now sited at Rosyth.

Mr. Sainsbury: No decisions have yet taken on the preferred disposal route for reactors from decommissioned nuclear submarines.

Nuclear Waste (Rosyth and Fife)

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has had any discussions with Nirex over the disposal of nuclear waste in the Rosyth and Fife areas.

Mr. Sainsbury: No.

Polaris

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on his plans for the siting of the four Polaris submarines once they are decommissioned.

Mr. Sainsbury: No Polaris are planned to be decommissioned for several years. No decisions have been taken on how they should be dealt with when they do.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence where he plans to store the nuclear waste that will arise from the decommissioning of the four Polaris submarines.

Mr. Sainsbury: Decommissioning of the Polaris submarines will not begin until the first of the Trident submarines is ready to enter service in the mid-1990s. Nuclear waste disposal issues will only arise over the reactor compartment and associated components, and will therefore be identical to those raised by the decommissioning of nuclear attack submarines. The first of these HMS Dreadnought, has already been safely defuelled, de-equipped and laid up. Small items categorised as low-level or intermediate-level waste will be removed, suitably packaged and disposed of by routes currently under investigation by UK Nirex Ltd. The ultimate disposal of the reactor compartments themselves is still under study in my Department.

Channel Islands

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the estimated cost incurred in providing for the defence of the Channel Islands.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The cost of providing for the defence of the Channel Islands is not separately identifiable within the defence budget.

Falkland Islands

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all the costs to his Department of the recapture and occupation of the Falkland Islands for each year since 1982 inclusive.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Total defence expenditure, including campaign and garrison costs, relating to the Falkland Islands from 1 April 1982 to the end of the last financial year is as follows:

	£ million
1982-83	780
1983-84	637
1984-85	644
1985-86	572
1986-87	402

BATES Software

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what difficulties arose over the contract let to subcontractors by Marconi for BATES software prior to 1985.

Mr. Sainsbury: The management of sub-contractors is a commercial matter for the prime contractor and it would not be appropriate for MOD to comment.

RUSI (Publications)

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will list those publications by the Royal United Services Institute which he has approved for publication since 1979.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Books and articles written by service personnel or Ministry of Defence civil servants should be cleared through the appropriate Ministry of Defence channels before publication by the Royal United Services Institute. A list of books and articles approved for publication since 1979 could only be made available at disproportionate cost.

Nuclear Testing (Mortality and Cancer Incidence)

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he will respond to the report of the National Radiological Protection Board into mortality and cancer incidence among United Kingdom participants in United Kingdom atmospheric nuclear weapons tests and experimental programmes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The report by the National Radiological Protection Board on mortality and cancer incidence in United Kingdom participants in the United Kingdom atmospheric nuclear weapon tests and experimental programmes is being published today. A copy has been placed in the Library. The report compares the health of the participants (over 80 per cent. of whom were included) with that of a similar number of matched controls to show whether their health has been affected. The roughly equal number of deaths in both groups (1,600) shows that participation has not had a detectable effect on their expectation of life. Indeed, both groups appear to be somewhat healthier than would be expected from the national rates of mortality, possibly due to the social class distribution and to their having been to some extent selected for overseas duties. The expected number of deaths according to national rates would be about 2,000.

Compared with the control group, more participants were found to have died from leukaemia and multiple myeloma. Although the excess was only marginally above national rates, because of the association of these diseases with exposure to ionising radiation, even a small increase merited detailed analysis. Investigation showed that it did not occur so strongly among those present at any nuclear detonation, nor among those known to have been exposed to measurable doses of radiation, nor among those for whom inhalation or ingestion of radioactive material was a remote possibility. Consequently, although no cause of the increased leukaemia was identified, this investigation as not proved that the cause was exposure to ionising radiation.

The Government welcome, and will co-operate with the NRPB in implementing, the recommendation to continue to observe the mortality and cancer incidence of the participants over a further period of 10 years, as a means of testing the three hypotheses which have been formulated. Meantime, however, they regard the results of this study to date as fully vindicating their view that the radiological protection measures adopted were effective and that the chance of anyone suffering harm to health as a consequence of participation is extremely small.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether the order under the Access to Personal Files Act currently under discussion will extend to universities, polytechnics and all schools.

Mrs. Rumbold: No. The draft regulations issued by my right hon. Friend for consultation in October 1987, which would be made under section 27 of the Education Act, 1980, would allow parents access to records of pupils in maintained schoolss and non-maintained special schools. Universities are outside their scope, as will be the polytechnics when the Education Reform Bill is enacted and the polytechnics cease to be local authority-maintained.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has met vice-principals of the universities to discuss the implications of their code of practice and the right of subject access under the Data Protection Act; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: There has been no such meeting. This is a matter for universities, within the law. I understand that the code of practice was finalised in consultation with the Data Protection Registrar's office.

City Technical College, Solihull

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion of applications to the city technical college in Solihull were on behalf of female students; what proportion of female students have been accepted; and what is the total number of applications and acceptances.

Mrs. Rumbold: Of the total 315 applications which were received for places at the Kingshurst city technology college, 43 per cent. were on behalf of female students. All but one of the places offered to students have been accepted and 47 per cent. have gone to female students.

Geological Surveying

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science on what date he received a copy of Sir Clifford Butler's report on geological surveying; when he received the comments of the Natural Environment Research Council and the British Geological Survey upon it; and if he will now announce his decision on the recommendation that the British Geological Survey should be separated from the Natural Environment Research Council.

Mr. Jackson: The report of the study group into geological surveying, chaired by Sir Clifford Butler, was addressed to the chairmen of the Advisory Board for the Research Councils and the Natural Environment Research Council, who submitted it to my right hon. Friend in June 1987 with a recommendation that it be published. The views of the BGS staff were sent to the chairmen of the ABRC and the NERC and copied to my Department on 10 August 1987.

The recommendations of the report that fall to be considered by Government are being discussed with the Departments concerned and with the NERC. A decision

on the future status of the British Geological Survey will be reached in conjunction with decisions on other relevant recommendations in the report.

Nursery Education

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of local education authorities in England which provide nursery education for children aged three to five years.

Mr. Dunn: In January 1987 the local education authorities in England that provided nursery education for children under five in either nursery schools or nursery classes in primary schools were as follows.

Local education authorities that provide nursery education January 1987

Barking
Barnet
Bexley
Brent
Bromley
Croydon
Ealing
Enfield
Enfield
Haringey
Harrow
Havering
Hillingdon
Hounslow
Kingston upon Thames
Merton
Newham
Redbridge
Richmond upon Thames
Sutton
Waltham Forest

Inner London

Birmingham
Coventry
Dudley
Sandwell
Solihull
Walsall
Wolverhampton

Knowsley
Liverpool
St. Helens
Sefton
Wirral

Bolton
Bury
Manchester
Oldham
Rochdale
Salford
Stockport
Tameside
Trafford
Wigan

Barnsley
Doncaster
Rotherham
Sheffield

Bradford
Calderdale
Kirklees
Leeds
Wakefield

Gateshead
Newcastle-upon-Tyne
North Tyneside
South Tyneside
Sunderland

Avon
Bedfordshire
Berkshire
Buckinghamshire
Cambridgeshire
Cheshire
Cleveland
Cornwall
Cumbria
Derbyshire
Devon
Dorset
Durham
East Sussex
Essex
Hampshire
Hereford and Worcester
Hertfordshire
Humberside
Isle of Wight
Kent
Lancashire
Leicestershire
Lincolnshire
Norfolk
North Yorkshire
Northamptonshire
Northumberland
Nottinghamshire
Oxfordshire
Shropshire
Somerset
Staffordshire
Suffolk
Surrey
Warwickshire
West Sussex
Wiltshire

Medical Schools (Recruitment)

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list in the *Official Report* those medical schools which are currently recruiting approximately equal numbers of women and men students.

Mr. Jackson: In 1986-87 all medical schools in the United Kingdom, except for the medical schools at Cambridge, Manchester and Dundee universities and the London hospital medical school, recruited between 40 and 60 per cent. of women students. The average proportion of women entrants for all medical schools was 45 per cent. compared with 42 per cent. for all university entrants.

Advanced Supplementary Level Courses

Mr. Hargreaves: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many schools have mounted advanced supplementary level courses in the current year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: A survey carried out by my Department last autumn shows that 407 maintained and independent schools in England have mounted GCE advanced supplementary level courses this year. This represents nearly 15 per cent. of schools with A-level pupils.

These schools have mounted nearly 1,000 AS-level courses, most frequently in mathematics, computing, French and English. This accords closely with the priorities expressed by higher education.

In the schools offering AS-levels, 18 per cent. of the first year A-level pupils have also chosen at least one AS-level course. The five most popular subjects are those set out above, together with general studies. In total, over 6,000 pupils are on AS-level courses.

More than three times as many schools intend to offer AS level courses from September 1988. The survey indicates that 1,300 schools, which represents 50 per cent. of those offering A-levels, will also offer AS-level courses next year.

The full results of the survey will be published shortly.

PRIME MINISTER

Gwent

Q29. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Prime Minister if she is planing to visit the county of Gwent in the near future.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

North Devon

Q116. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to visit north Devon.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Official Secrets

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister what evidence she has as to the extent of public support for more stringent protection of official secrets.

The Prime Minister: As my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has said, we shall be bringing forward proposals for the reform of section 2 of the Official Secrets Act 1911 which are effective, enforceable and reasonable. I believe we have general public support for that objective.

National Health Service

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister what are the terms of reference for Her Majesty's Government's consideration of the National Health Service; and when she expects to bring forward proposals for consultation.

The Prime Minister: The Government are undertaking an internal review of the National Health Service, with special emphasis on the hospital service. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services will consider carefully any submissions put to him. We shall be bringing forward proposals in due course.

Non-departmental Public Bodies

Mr. Fallon: To ask the Prime Minister whether the programme of reviews of non-departmental public bodies, which she announced on 19 November 1984, *Official Report*, column *57-58*, has now been completed; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Yes. I have now received a report on the review programme from the Minister of State, Privy Council Office and the Paymaster General. By April 1987, reviews had been carried out in over 75 per cent. of executive non-departmental public bodies, 75 per cent. of advisory bodies and over 60 per cent. of tribunals. For the period under review, departments reported total savings from their funding of NDPBs of some £30 million and 1,830 staff, as a result of winding up some 150 bodies, rationalisation of others, financial management reviews and other initiatives. Further savings are planned of 290 posts leading in total to continuing savings of some £33 million per year. NDPBs also expect to achieve additional value-for-money improvements from better standards of financial management. In all, there were 524 fewer NDPBs on 1 April 1987 than in 1979.

For the future, I have accepted the recommendations in the report that the main responsibility for maintaining this progress should be placed on senior management in the NDPBs and their sponsoring Departments. In addition, all NDPBs will be subject to a comprehensive review at least every five years, which will consider the continued need for each NDPB, its objectives and its financial and other management systems.

For some particular tasks, non-departmental public bodies can be the most appropriate and cost-effective solution, but we shall continue to resist proposals for new bodies unless this can be clearly demonstrated, within a strict framework of financial and management controls. Legislation setting up new bodies should normally contain powers to permit winding up at a later date, if a fixed lifetime is not established at the outset.

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 January.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 January.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 January.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 January.

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 January.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 January.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 January.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 January.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council

Sir John Biggs-Davison: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council last met; and what is Her Majesty's Government's future policy and programme for that body.

Mrs. Chalker: The Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council last met in November 1985. It continues to provide a framework for a wide variety of meetings between the two Governments, including those of the Intergovernmental Conference established by the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985. This was explicitly set up within the framework of the AIIC. There will continue to be regular meetings, including those of the AIIC co-ordinating committee and its cultural and educational working group.

Rare and Endangered Species

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will raise with the Chinese Foreign Minister when he meets him in the spring the need to prevent the trade in rare and endangered species of wildlife between the Dongmen market in Shenzhen and Hong Kong; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: We have already drawn to the attention of the Chinese authorities the concern which is widely felt in this country about this matter. I understand that the Chinese authorities entirely share this concern.

Kenya and Nigeria (Prime Minister's Visit)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give details of the extra costs incurred by the high commissions in Kenya and Nigeria due to the recent visits by the Prime Minister.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 15 January at column 416.

Royal United Services Institute (Publications)

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will list those publications by the Royal United Services Institute which he has approved for publication since 1979.

Mr. Eggar: The following articles and volume written by present and former officials, have been approved. They are listed by date of publication.

1981
Adrian Hill—*Whither Pegasus*

1983
Sir Antony Acland—*The Relationship between Foreign and Defence Policy*

1985
Sir Clive Rose—*Campaigns against Western Defence*

1987
Pauline Neville-Jones — *Foreign Policy Objectives and the parameters of military power*
Robert Cecil — *The assessment and acceptance of intelligence:* a case study.
John Bruce Lockhart—*What is intelligence*

Iran and Iraq (Arms Embargo)

Mr. Neil Hamilton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government will support proposals to the United Nations Security Council for an arms embargo jointly on Iran and Iraq.

Mr. Mellor: We remain committed to the twin-track approach agreed by the Foreign Ministers of the five permanent members of the Security Council on 25 September 1987. The Secretary-General has our full support as he continues his efforts to obtain compliance with Security Council resolution 598. In the meantime we have begun work with other members of the Security Council on the terms of an arms embargo. It is the responsibility of the Security Council as a whole to determine non-compliance.

Iran-Iraq War

Mr. Neil Hamilton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government will make it their policy to go further than the proposals in United Nations resolution 598 (1987), requesting the Secretary General to explore the possibility of appointing an impartial body to inquire into the responsibility for starting the Iran/Iraq war, and propose that such a body be now appointed.

Mr. Mellor: The establishment of an impartial body to investigate responsibility for the conflict is one of a number of elements of Security Council resolution 598 currently under discussion. We are anxious to see both parties comply with the resolution as a whole.

TRANSPORT

London Coach Terminal

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when and under whose auspices he expects the proposed public inquiry into the proposed relocation of the main London coach terminal at Paddington to take place; when and by what means he expects to publish the detailed plans; and what range of time scale he envisages for the relocation.

Mr. David Mitchell: The inquiry will be held only once a planning application for the proposed terminal is received. I understand that London Regional Transport intends to submit such an application later this year. The inspector would report to my right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for Transport and the Secretary of State for the Environment jointly. The plans for all applications made would be available for inspection at the inquiry and at the office of the local planning authority. Decisions on the time scale for any relocation would be made in the light of the outcome of the inquiry.

Search and Rescue

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many search-and-rescue incidents involving small boats and non-commercial small vessels have occurred in each of the past 10 years; and how many were concluded successfully.

Mr. David Mitchell: Search-and-rescue incidents involving small boats and non-commercial small vessels from 1982 to 1986 inclusive are summarised in the table. Information so far available on 1987 incidents is also included.

As the statistical records kept prior to 1982 were not specific with regard to vessel types, it is not possible to provide figures for the past ten years.

	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	[1]1987
Number of incidents	1,488	1,873	1,662	2,108	1,992	1,680
Persons assisted	3,821	5,095	4,886	5,792	5,064	4,256
Lives lost	41	54	42	35	45	18

Tractor Units (Gross Weight)

Mr. Biffen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if, having regard to safety factors, he will authorise the raising of the 16 tonne gross weight of a two-axle tractor unit in line with the gross weight now allowed for two-axle trucks.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Two-axle tractor units with a minimum axle spacing of 2·7 m have since May 1983 been permitted a gross weight of 17 tonnes provided the vehicle has a total train weight of more than 32·52 tonnes. Statutory Instrument 1987 No. 676 removes that proviso and fixes the maximum gross weight of two-axle rigid lorries also at 17 tonnes. The SI comes into effect on 1 April 1988.

Traffic (Damage)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will provide details of recent assessments of the damage caused to the environment by the impact of various modes of transport, lorries, cars and other road users.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[pursuant to his reply, 19 January 1988, c. 702]:* Information on some recently published reports on various effects of traffic on the environment is as follows. I have arranged for copies of those reports (shown with an asterisk) not already in the Library to be deposited there.

(1) Traffic-induced ground-borne vibrations in dwellings. TRRL Research Report 102, 1987.
*(2) The effects of a simulated traffic vibration on a dwelling house. TRRL Contractor Report 44, 1987.
(3) Public attitudes to drawbar goods vehicles. TRRL Research Report 108, 1987.
*(4) Pollution levels near a motorway in a cutting. TRRL Paper presented at the International Symposium on Environmental Meteorology in West Germany in 1987.
(5) Digest of environmental protection and water statistics. No. 9 1986, HMSO.
(6) The impact of the reduction in the lead content of petrol on airborne lead concentrations in the United Kingdom from January 1986. Warren Spring Laboratory Report No. LR 633 (AP)M, 1987.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Suspension (Pay forfeiture)

Mr. Dickens: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will further consider seeking to introduce a system whereby an hon. Member suspended from the service of the House should forfeit his salary for a period of up to three months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: This is ultimately a matter for the House to decide. I would, however, refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) during the course of business questions on 14 January at column 460.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Food (Colouring Matter)

Dr. Twinn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects to announce his response to the Food Advisory Committee final report on the Colouring Matter in Foods Regulations 1979.

Mr. Donald Thompson: We received a large number of detailed representations on the recommendations in the report, and these need to be carefully evaluated before I can come to any conclusion on the issues. We are dealing with the matter as quickly as possible and I shall make an announcement just as soon as we have reached decisions.

Common Agricultural Policy

Sir Michael Shaw: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress was made towards reforming the common agricultural policy at the meeting of Ministers in Brussels.

Mr. MacGregor: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer which I gave on 25 January, at columns *52-53*, to my hon. Friend the Member for Wansdyke (Mr. Aspinwall).

Fishing Industry (Decommissioning Grants)

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether Falkis Ltd. has received decommissioning grants for either freezer or fishing vessels.

Mr. Donald Thompson: No decommissioning grants have been paid to Falkis Ltd.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether Berkeley Sound Shipping has received decommissioning grants for either freezer or fishing vessels.

Mr. Donald Thompson: No decommissioning grants have been paid to Berkeley Sound Shipping.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether Thomas Hamling Ltd. has received decommissioning grants for either freezer or fishing vessels.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Under the Fishing Vessels (Financial Assistance) Scheme 1983 grants have been paid in respect of four freezer trawlers which were decommissioned by Thomas Hamling Ltd. The details are as follows:

Vessel	*Grant* £
St. Jason	537,200
St. Jerome	515,280
St. Jasper	514,484
St. Benedict	581,504
	2,148,468

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on what date information

relating to the awarding of decommissioning grants to Messrs. Putford Enterprise was provided to the National Audit Office by officials in his Department.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Information was available to the NAO on the awarding of decommissioning grants to Messrs. Putford Enterprises from the moment it commenced its examination in spring 1986.

Pesticides

Sir Hector Monro: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action has been taken to ensure the safe use of pesticides on the farm.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Part III of the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 gave wide powers which were implemented by the Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986 and its consents. When using pesticides operators have been obliged since 6 October 1986:

(a) to use only products which have been approved under the regulations;

(b) "to take all reasonable precautions to protect the health of human beings, creatures and plants, to safeguard the environment, and in particular to avoid the pollution of water"; (Consent No. 2, 2nd Condition).

(c) to ensure that they are competent for the duties they are to perform.

From 1 January 1988 they must observe certain conditions of use described on the pesticide label, including the target crop, maximum dose-rate and environmental and operator safeguards.

The consents have also introduced a number of additional conditions upon use with which aerial operators must comply.

To help farmers to fulfil these obligations we have:

(i) issued and amended a booklet which lists all pesticides which have approved status;

(ii) supplemented guidance booklets and leaflets with a first draft of a code of practice on agricultural and horticultural use; a revised text of which will be made available in the early spring;

(iii) established training standards with the agricultural training board and certification arrangements with the National Proficiency Tests Council;

(iv) arranged with the Civil Aviation Authority for the guidance booklet which it issues to aerial operators to contain details of the further rules now applicable to aerial operations.

In order to avoid farmers being inspected by different bodies for different safety legislation, an agency agreement has been entered into with the Health and Safety Executive, and Her Majesty's agricultural inspectors are authorised to enforce the Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986.

Intervention Stocks

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the amount of intervention stocks in the United Kingdom at present in the following commodities: butter, beef, SMP, wheat, barley and rye; and what the figures represent in terms of days' supply.

Mr. Donald Thompson: A note setting out the volume of United Kingdom intervention stocks of agricultural commodities, and the number of days' supply these stocks represent, is deposited in the Library of the House and updated monthly.

Pigmeat

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he intends to take to protect United Kingdom pigmeat producers from heavy losses due to the advantage to Dutch and Danish producers receiving monetary compensatory amounts for the export to the United Kingdom of bacon, fresh pork loins and middle bacon.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Improvements which we have secured in negotiations in the Community, together with the strengthening of sterling, have resulted in a fall of 16 points in our pigmeat MCAs over the past year. I shall continue to seek further improvements in the position at every opportunity. I must, however, stress that this is a highly controversial issue in the Community.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will strengthen the present arrangements for controlling pigmeat imports so as to assist in stopping the spread of classical swine fever.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Imports of pigmeat are already the subject of stringent veterinary conditions laid down by European Community directives. Following pressure from the Government, the rules on classical swine fever controls have been strengthened by a package of measures which had to be implemented by 1 January 1988.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any plans to introduce private storage aids to United Kingdom pigmeat producers.

Mr. Donald Thompson: This is to be discussed at the Pigmeat Management Committee in Brussels on Friday 29 January.

Intervention Grain Stocks

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will allow feed users to use intervention grain stocks at intervention prices.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Decisions on the sale of intervention grain stocks on to the domestic market are taken by the European Commission; in view of the current surplus of feed grain on the market both in the United Kingdom and in the rest of the Community sales from intervention for use as feed could not at present be justified.

Windscale Fire

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether his Department retains any unpublished files, information and reports in connection with the 1957 Windscale fire; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Various papers held in my Department have some connection with the 1957 Windscale fire; these have been or will be made available for public inspection in strict conformity with the Public Records Acts.

Surplus Food

Mr. John M. Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will take steps to

alter the agricultural support mechanisms of the European Economic Community so as to facilitate the release of surplus food for use overseas.

Mr. MacGregor: The Community's existing commodity regulations contain appropriate provisions enabling food from intervention and from the market to be made available for export and for use as food aid.

ADAS (Charges)

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his policy towards the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service charging for advice and services following an emergency; and how this operated the severe storm in south-east England in October 1987.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 27 January 1968]:* I am always prepared to look at the case for making appropriate information and advice available without charge following an emergency; but each incident must be considered on its own merits.

In the immediate aftermath of the October storm ADAS provided free general advice on such matters as emergency repairs, ways to preserve produce in cold stores and save damaged trees and glasshouse crops and the financial implications for growers. Advice notes covering the four main horticultural sectors were sent without charge to growers in the worst affected areas and growers in th south-east were also invited to "storm clinics" giving general advice on how to cope with the damage, including the financial implications. ADAS also provided some free help with particular livestock problems.

WALES

Investigating Accountants (Regional Aid)

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, how many investigating accountants he has within his Department to evaluate applications for regional selective assistance; how many cases on average each of them has prepared for the Welsh Industrial Development Advisory Board to consider over the past two years; and how many cases each of them is on average expected to prepare over the next two years.

Mr. Peter Walker: There are currently four investigating accountants in my Department regularly engaged in evaluating applications for regional selective assistance. On average, each investigating accountant has prepared 47 cases over the last two years for consideration by the Welsh Industrial Development Advisory Board. The number of cases that each will prepare in the future will depend on the volume of RSA applications received, the amount of the grant sought and the complexity of the cases, and I am unable to give a precise estimate. I am expecting an increase in demand for RSA and will keep the requirements for accountancy staff under review.

Regional Development Grant

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his most up-to-date estimate of the expenditure on regional development grants in Wales in the next financial years, if there were no changes in the regional aid scheme to industry.

Mr. Peter Walker: The 1988 public expenditure White Paper contained planned provision of £63·5 million (net of EC receipts) for regional development grants in Wales in 1988-89. Equivalent provision in the 1987 public expenditure White Paper was £26·7 million. The increase in provision results from a combination of several factors, including the need to provide resources for those RDG applicants who meet the deadline of 31 March 1988 and are thus subject to the transitional arrangements provided for the ending of the scheme. I am not able to make any precise estimate of the cost of such transitional arrangements at this stage.

Industrial Assistance

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many cases of industrial assistance the Welsh Industrial Development Advisory Board has been considering each month on average in each of the past three years; and how many cases he expects it to be considering on average in each of the next three years.

Mr. Peter Walker: In the past three years, the Welsh Industrial Development Advisory Board has considered the following number of cases on average per month:

	Cases
1985	8
1986	6
1987	7

The number of cases to be considered by the board in future years will depend on the volume of regional selective assistance applications which will be received and the value of assistance sought. I am expecting the demand for RSA to increase in future years. I am unable at this stage to make a precise assessment of the effect of this on the caseload of the board but I am confident of the board's ability to cope with what I hope will be a substantial increase in applications.

Regional Aid

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his most up-to-date estimate of the increase in corporation tax receipts arising from the switch away from tax-free regional development grants to taxable selective assistance.

Mr. Peter Walker: The tax position of regional selective assistance applicants is likely to vary widely depending on the circumstances of each company. It is not possible therefore to make any reliable estimate of the tax receipts which may arise from present or potential applicants for regional selective assistance.

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will estimate the amount of regional selective assistance to be paid out in Wales for each year from 1988-89 to 1990-91.

Mr. Peter Walker: The 1988 public expenditure White Paper contained planned provision for regional selective assistance in Wales of £45·9 million, £52 million and £61·2 million respectively in the three years 1988-89 to 1990-91. The increase in provision between the years reflects additional demand for RSA, which I envisage as a result of the ending of the regional development grant scheme. There will be a further substantial contribution to regional

assistance in Wales as a result of the substantial increase in the expenditure of the Welsh Development Agency and the new investment, innovation and business development grants scheme.

National Museum of Wales

Sir Raymond Gower: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if the consultants appointed to carry out a financial management and policy review of the national museum of Wales have now submitted their report; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I am publishing today the report prepared by P-E Inbucon. Copies have been placed in the Library of the House and the executive summary is being made available to the press. It is a major document. The role, organisation and management of the museum have been critically examined. The Report identifies deficiencies and contains detailed and positive proposals for improvements which will have far-reaching implications for the future management of the national museum of Wales and for its relationship with the Welsh Office. I have had a preliminary discussion with the president of the museum and have asked for a considered response from the museum by 4 March 1988. This is a wide-ranging and penetrating analysis and the consultants' individual recommendations will need careful and thorough consideration. I intend to ensure that the recommendations are treated with urgency and determination. A major task confronts the museum and the Welsh Office. The museum will need additional administrative support and that will be provided. The museum has an important place in the life of the Principality and a major contribution to make to the culture and heritage of Wales and it is important that it should fulfil its role effectively and efficiently. I intend to see that it is able to do so.

Circulars

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of all circulars issued by his Department in 1985, 1986 and 1987, together with the corresponding numbers of those circulars.

Mr. Peter Walker: I will write to the hon. Gentleman shortly and will place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

Nursery Education

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of local education authorities in England which provide nursery education for children aged three to five years.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Nursery education is provided in each of the Welsh authorities. Seventy per cent. of the total three and four-year-old population in Wales was receiving nursery education last year.

Radiation

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he expects that the bequerel counts in sheep in the Llyn Vyrnwy and Ysbyty Ifan areas will fall below *(a)* 1000bq. and *(b)* 600bq. within the next 30 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: Monitoring of sheep from the north Wales restricted areas during 1987 indicated that some 86 per cent. already had readings below 1,000 bq/kg which is the action level the Government have adopted. Research work is under way on the recycling of caesium from peat soils into different types of pasture and this should enable an estimate to be made of how long restrictions on the movement and slaughter of sheep will be necessary. It does not follow that because the half life of caesium 137 is 30 years, restrictions will be necessary for anything like that long.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the latest available figures for the number of patients waiting for hospital admission for *(a)* more than one month for urgent treatment and *(b)* more than one year for non-urgent treatment.

Mr. Grist: At 31 March 1987, 2,639 patients on waiting lists had waited more than one month for urgent hospital treatment; and 9,139 had waited more than a year for non-urgent treatment.

Education Reform

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how the eradication of surplus school places will be affected by the parental choice provision of the Education Reform Bill, based on 1979 school rolls.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The continuing need for local education authorities to remove surplus school places is not affected by the provisions in the Education Reform Bill on admission to county and voluntary schools, which aim to give additional scope for parental choice.

SCOTLAND

Rating Reform

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will publish in the *Official Report* the recent letter from the Data Protection Registrar concerning the community charge, together with his response; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: I have today placed in the Library copies of the registrar's letter of 17 November 1987 and my response of 18 January 1988.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will list those organisations which will not be allowed to obtain copies of the community charge register; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: Under section 20(2)(b) and (c) of the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987, access to the full community charges register is restricted to local authorities for the purpose of determining levying and collecting the community charges, and to assessors and electoral registration officers.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) whether the community charge officer will be able to access sources of information other than those data held by a local authority; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether the community charge officer will have access to non-clinical records held by health authorities when compiling the register; and if he will make a statement;

(3) whether Scottish community charge officers will be able to use the data collected during the next census; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: Under section 17(2) and (3) of the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987, community charges registration officers will have access, for the purpose of discharging their functions, to information held by the assessor or registration officer for their area and, on request, to information held by local authorities or housing bodies in their area, or other registration officers. The Act gives registration officers no other general right of access to information.

Under section 17(5) of the Act, registration officers are able to require responsible persons to give them information in respect of premises in their area. In certain circumstances, local authorities and health boards may be responsible persons for this purpose. The information which may be requested is limited to that prescribed for the purposes of section 17(5). Otherwise, registration officers will have no access to information held by health boards. Under no circumstances will they have access to census information.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what advice he will be giving to prisoners just before their release as to their responsibility to pay the community charge from their first day of freedom; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what advice he will be giving to homeless persons which describes their responsibility to pay the community charge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend has launched a public information campaign to help ensure that all future community charge payers are aware of their obligations under the new system.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he intends to introduce regulations obliging the community charge officer to seek the consent of individuals as to whether they want their name and address on the community charge register to be sold; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: I refer to the answer I gave on 3 November 1987 at columns *550-551*. My right hon. and learned Friend is still considering whether any amendment to section 20(4) of the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc (Scotland) Act 1987 is required to provide for any restriction on the parts of the public register which may be made available for sale.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what precautions he is taking to ensure that addresses of members of the armed forces, security services or other public figures who may be at risk do not appear on the community charge register; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend is considering this matter.

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has given any instructions or advice to the Scottish new town development corporations on the implementation of the poll tax; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 26 January 1988]:* My officials have had discussions in the last few months with representatives from Scottish new towns about the implementation of the community charge and in addition the new towns have received copies of the consultation drafts of regulations which have been issued. The role which new towns, as housing bodies, may play in implementing the community charge will depend on the nature of any agency agreement reached by them with the levying authority, the regional council.

Mearnskirk Hospital (Staff Houses)

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he now expects the sale of staff houses at Mearnskirk hospital to sitting tenants to be completed.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I expect the Greater Glasgow health board to be in a position to make formal offers to the tenants concerned within a month, following the meeting of the board's property and land sub-committee on 27 January. The conveyancing procedures are normally completed within three months of offers being accepted.

Housing

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of housing projects which are planned to take place in Angus, Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Angus district council's latest housing plan, published in January 1986, sets out its general strategy for housing provision in its area. it is, however, for the council to deploy resources available for capital expenditure according to the priorities it determines on a year-to-year basis, and details of council projects programmed are not held centrally.

The Scottish Special Housing Association will shortly be starting work on 35 special needs houses in Arbroath. The Housing Corporation in Scotland has approved housing association projects of various kinds in the district. These projects, which are at different stages of development, will provide 300 units.

No detailed information is available centrally on proposed private sector housing projects.

Forestry

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of new forestry projects which are planned to take place in the current year in Angus, Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: On the basis of schemes approved to date, it is expected that between 700 and 800 hectares of new planting will take place in Angus in 1988 under the Forestry Commission's grant schemes. Some 60 hectares of new planting will be carried out by the Commission.

Births

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what is the average cost to the local health authority of each baby born; and what are the highest and current costs of delivery for each health board;

(2) what is the average cost to health boards of delivering babies born at home.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I regret that the information requested is not held centrally.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion of babies are born in units handling more than 1,500 deliveries a year.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The proportion of babies born in units handling more than 1,500 deliveries a year is 79 per cent.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion of babies in each local health authority area are born in maternity units which handle under 200 deliveries a year.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The proportion of babies born in units handling fewer than 200 deliveries a year is 4·3 per cent.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion of babies in each health authority are born at home.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is as follows:

Percentage of births (live and still) taking place at home in each health board area, Scotland, 1986

Health Board Area	*Percentage*
Scotland	0·5
Borders	0·9
Forth Valley	0·5
Dumfries and Galloway	0·8
Fife	0·4
Grampian	0·7
Highland	1·0
Lothian	0·5
Argyll and Clyde	0·5
Ayrshire and Arran	0·3
Greater Glasgow	0·5
Lanarkshire	0·5
Tayside	0·4
Orkney	0·4
Shetland	1·1
Western Isles	1·2

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion of babies are born in units which handle fewer than 200 deliveries a year.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is as follows:

Health Board	*Percentage*
Argyll and Clyde	5·3
Ayrshire and Arran	6·2
Borders	20·1
Dumfries and Galloway	7·5
Fife	—
Forth Valley	—
Grampian	13·8
Greater Glasgow	—
Highland	9·6
Lanarkshire	2·2
Lothian	—
Orkney	76·3
Shetland	—
Tayside	8·1
Western Isles	9·1

Dinoseb

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will consult the National Farmers Union and local industries in the Angus area, regarding the consequences of his decision to ban the use of Dinoseb.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: We have been in regular contact with the National Farmers Union of Scotland over the last 18 months on the use of Dinoseb. These contacts will continue as necessary. It is not possible at this stage to make any assessment of the likely consequences on local industries of the decision to ban the use of Dinoseb.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what research is being conducted in *(a)* alternatives to the Glencova variety of raspberry and *(b)* a replacement for Dinoseb; and if he will produce extra funds for such research.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Two new raspberry varieties bred with Government support at the Scottish Crop Research Institute are already available to growers. Both show considerable promise as replacements for Glen Clova. Work also funded by Government has been ongoing for some time to find alternative means of controlling cane vigour in Glen Clova. There are no signs of any early breakthrough and the grant-aided work is continuing.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what estimates he has of the economic and employment effects on the raspberry and associated industries of his decision to prohibit the use of Dinoseb.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: It is not possible to estimate with any degree of accuracy the extent of the losses that will be caused by raspberry producers and associated industries as a result of the ban on the use of Dinoseb. Much will depend on how farmers and others react to the new situation.

While we appreciate that the decision to ban the use of Dinoseb will have serious consequences for raspberry producers and associated industries, we had no option but to take this decision in the light of the conclusion by the Advisory Committee on Pesticides that Dinoseb and its related products could pose a health risk to people using them.

Operations

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the arrangements he proposes with private sector hospitals to carry out National Health Service operations; and what money he has set aside in this and the next financial year.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I am encouraging health boards in Scotland to consider the extent to which Scotland's private health sector could help them to improve their services for National Health Service patients. I have not set aside money for this purpose in this or the next financial year, but as part of our initiative on waiting lists £300,000 of the additional resources for the current financial year announced by my right hon. and learned Friend on 16 December has been allocated to meet bids from boards to use private sector hospitals to carry out National Health Service operations.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the latest estimate available to him of the cost of the following operations in *(a)* National Health Service hospitals and *(b)* private hospitals in Scotland for (i) hysterectomy, (ii) tonsillectomy, (iii) hernia, (iv) hip replacement, (v) heart by-pass and (vi) varicose veins.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Comparative information on this basis is not available. Information on health service costs

is not generally held in a form which permits total costs of individual procedures to be identified; progress is, however, being made in improving cost information for resource management.

Salmon

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the number of prosecutions which have occured in each of the past five years as a result of salmon proprietors *(a)* failing to provide his Department with statistical returns or *(b)* being found to have made fraudulent returns.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 14 January 1988]:* There have been no such prosecutions.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give, by district salmon board area, how many riparian proprietors, upper and lower, were required to complete returns for the compilation of Scottish salmon and sea trout statistics in each of the past five years; and how many have complied.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 14 January]:* Information related to salmon catch statistics is published by region and statistical district. The number of proprietors and occupiers of salmon fisheries, upper and lower together, who were sent statistical forms and made returns for 1984, 1985 and 1986 are given by statistical district in the following table. Accurate information for earlier years is not available.

Statistical District	*1984* *Number of Forms*		*1985* *Number of Forms*		*1986* *Number of Forms*	
	Sent	*Returned*	*Sent*	*Returned*	*Sent*	*Returned*
Tweed	138	136	136	128	135	127
Forth	70	61	64	50	66	58
Tay	150	136	149	133	151	146
South Esk	26	23	24	20	24	23
North Esk and Bervie	21	20	21	20	21	21
Dee (Aberdeen)	73	69	70	64	68	66
Don	49	46	46	41	48	45
Ythan	21	21	20	20	21	21
Ugie	13	13	12	11	12	9
Deveron	53	52	50	46	49	47
Spey	63	61	61	55	61	60
Lossie	6	6	5	4	5	4
Findhorn	22	22	21	20	21	21
Nairn	28	28	28	25	28	27
Ness	33	32	31	29	32	32
Beauly	11	11	10	10	11	11
Conon and Alness	31	27	30	26	32	32
Kyle of Sutherland	29	28	26	22	25	22
Fleet and Brora	4	4	4	4	4	4
Helmsdale	6	4	6	1	1	1
Berriedale to Wick	10	10	7	5	9	6
Thurso and Forss	12	9	11	9	11	10
Halladale and Strathy	7	7	7	7	6	5
Naver and Kinloch	9	8	9	9	9	8
Hope and Grudie	7	7	7	7	7	6
Inchard to Kirkaig	12	11	12	12	11	11
Kennart to Gruinard	16	15	15	14	14	12
Ewe	8	8	8	7	8	7
Badachro to Applecross	7	6	6	4	6	5
Kishorn and Carron	8	7	7	5	8	7
Loch Long and Croe	14	12	13	11	13	13
Glenelg to Kinchoan	6	6	8	6	8	8
Morar to Shiel	17	15	17	15	17	15
Skye and Small Isles	25	23	25	21	24	21
Sunart and Aline	8	8	5	5	6	5
Sanda to Creran	38	33	36	29	35	31
Awe and Nell	63	58	58	48	55	50
Add and Ormsary	30	28	27	25	33	30
Island of Mull	36	34	35	28	35	31
Islay and Jura	9	9	10	10	11	10
Carradale and Iorsa	14	12	14	11	14	12
Fyne	20	19	16	12	17	14
Ruel and Drumfiachloy	5	5	5	5	5	5
Echaig	10	9	9	7	12	12
Clyde	13	12	13	11	14	12
Irvine	7	7	7	7	7	7
Ayr	37	31	37	33	37	37
Doon	30	28	29	27	29	24
Girvan	24	21	24	21	24	23
Stinchar	41	37	38	33	37	32
Luce	5	5	5	4	6	6
Bladenoch	19	18	18	16	19	19
Cree and Fleet	30	30	30	25	30	29
Dee (Kirkcudbright)	28	25	26	23	27	24
Urr	24	23	24	20	28	25
Nith	56	47	52	42	54	48

Statistical District	1984 Number of Forms Sent	1984 Number of Forms Returned	1985 Number of Forms Sent	1985 Number of Forms Returned	1986 Number of Forms Sent	1986 Number of Forms Returned
Annan	126	120	111	87	39	36
Isle of Lewis	15	13	14	13	17	14
Harris	9	8	9	7	9	9
The Uists	5	5	5	5	5	5
Orkney	—	—	1	1	1	1
Shetland	—	—	10	4	10	7
Totals	1,707	1,589	1,634	1,420	1,582	1,469

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will take steps to ensure that future statistical bulletins on Scottish salmon and sea trout catches published by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland, contains full information about the levels of non-reporting, and the identity of those responsible for it.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 14 January 1988]:* Consideration is already being given to including some indication about levels of reporting in future statistical bulletins. It is not intended that the identity of those who have not made returns will be published.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the procedures used by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland to check the accuracy of catch returns provided by Scottish salmon proprietors, prior to the publication of total reported figures.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 14 January 1988]:* The forms are checked to ensure that relevant parts have been completed and that there are no inconsistencies in the entries for example between numbers and weights of fish reported as caught. Any omissions or inconsistencies would be pursued with the proprietor or occupier of the fishery as would any large discrepancy noted between a return and returns for earlier years.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the salmon proprietors, upper and lower, who have failed to make returns of the numbers and weight of fish caught in each of the past five years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 14 January 1988]:* No.

Salmon (Illegal Netting)

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many incidents of illegal netting for salmon in Scottish waters by fishermen from the Irish Republic were detected in each of the last five years to the end of 1987.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 27 January 1988]:* There have been no such incidents reported by enforcement officers of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland in the five years to the end of 1987.

Laughing Goose

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy to withhold grants for agricultural developments which might endanger the habit of the laughing goose; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 27 January 1988]:* Section 17 of the Agriculture Act, 1986 imposes on Ministers charged with agricultural responsibilities, an obligation to have regard to the endeavour to achieve a reasonable balance between the interests of agriculture and a number of other considerations including flora and fauna. A blanket prohibition on grants as suggested would be at variance with that obligation: individual cases will be considered on their merits.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Barristers' Clerks

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Attorney-General what consideration has been given to recommendation 34.1 of the 1979 Royal Commission on legal services that barristers should not be required to have a clerk; what representations have been received on the matter; and what proposals he has for implementing the recommendation.

The Attorney-General: In its response to the Royal Commission on legal services in a White Paper published in November 1983, Cmnd. 9077, the Government indicated that this recommendation among others was for consideration by the profession. The Government have received no representations on the matter and have no plans to implement the recommendation.

Family Courts

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: To ask the Attorney-General what further representations he has received on the time that has elapsed since proposals for a family court were first considered by the Lord Chancellor's Department; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: There is no record of further representations having been received, on the time that has elapsed since proposals for a family court were first considered by the Lord Chancellor's Department, since the hon. Member's question on 11 January 1988, at column 7. I have nothing to add to my answer on that date.

Kent Police

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Attorney-General whether he will take legal proceedings against Kent county constabulary requiring it to fulfil its statutory responsibility under section 228 of the Local Government Act 1972 and provide information on the precise nature of items purchased from Q.E.D., Parker Hale Ltd., Hull Cartridge Co. Ltd., royal small arms factory, royal ordnance factory and Longstaff (Rec) Ltd.

The Attorney-General: If the hon. Gentleman would care to furnish me with particulars of any case he has in mind, I shall consider the matter.

Prosecutions

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Attorney-General how many decisions have been taken in each year since 1985 not to prosecute people against whom there was otherwise sufficient evidence to justify prosecution, on the grounds of public interest or the interests of national security.

The Attorney-General: In every case where the evidence is in law sufficient for criminal proceedings it is necessary to consider whether the public interest requires a prosecution. There are no records of how many decisions not to prosecute have been taken on the ground that the public interest did not require a prosecution.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Attorney-General in how many instances court proceedings have been instituted in each year since 1985, despite the evidence being otherwise regarded as insufficient to justify a prosecution, on the grounds of public interest or to protect national security.

The Attorney-General: No prosecution should in any circumstances be instituted if the evidence is regarded as insufficient to justify a prosecution, and none has been so instituted within my knowledge by any prosecuting authority.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Attorney-General on how many occasions in each year since 1985 *(a)* the Director of Public Prosecutions or *(b)* the Director of Public Prosecutions (NI) has concluded that, despite advice from the law officers that a prosecution would not be in the public interest, such a prosecution should be instituted.

The Attorney-General: None.

EMPLOYMENT

Employment Service

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a further statement on the progress of the new employment service.

Mr. Lee: The employment service now provides under a single management the full range of services formerly provided by the separate unemployment benefit and jobcentre services.

We are developing new approaches to helping unemployed people, and particularly long-term unemployed people, which take advantage of this single management. We are introducing a number of changes to ensure both that benefit claimants can be offered the most appropriate help available and to enable us to check more systematically that people claiming benefits continue to be available for work.

We are looking at ways of helping with job-finding and making benefit payments simpler, more accessible and more effective. A current management priority is to test a range of models which will bring together services currently delivered from separate premises.

Small Firms

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what guidance is given to small firms on the opportunities to do business with the Government; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: This Department has made considerable efforts to open up Government contracts to small firms. We publish a summary booklet, "Tendering for Government Contracts", which gives broad guidance on what the various Government Departments seek to buy and the names and addresses of the relevant contacts. This information is also on Prestel. Departments, including the Ministry of Defence and our Department, also publish booklets providing more specific information on the purchasing opportunities within their Departments. Fuller information can be obtained through the small firms service by telephoning Freefone Enterprise.

"Building Businesses . . . Not Barriers"

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to implement the proposals in the White Paper, "Building Businesses . . . Not Barriers"; if he will estimate the numbers of part-time workers who currently qualify for employment rights but who would be excluded if those proposals were implemented; and what proportion of those excluded would be women.

Mr. Nicholls: The proposals and their implementation are still under consideration. As to the effect of the proposals on part-time workers I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) on Monday 7 December 1987 at column *31*.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the percentage of the population nationally and in the Rotherham-Mexborough travel-to-work area which is in full-time employment.

Mr. Lee: The latest available local area information on persons in full-time employment comes from the 1981 census of population, which found that 43·5 per cent. of all persons aged 16 and over resident in the Rotherham and Mexborough travel-to-work area were in full-time employment. The comparable figure for Great Britain was 45·6 per cent. Later information for Great Britain is available from the labour force survey, which estimated that in spring 1986 43·2 per cent. of all persons aged 16 and over in Great Britain were in full-time employment.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the percentage change in (i) employment and (ii) unemployment in each of the regions *(a)* from mid-1979 to mid-1986 and *(b)* since mid-1986.

Mr. Lee *[holding answer 25 January 1988]:* The figures are give in the following tables.

Table 1 gives in percentage terms the net changes in the size of the civilian employed labour force (the sum of employees in employment and the self employed) in each region between June 1979 and June 1986 and between June 1986 and June 1987. The figures are not adjusted for the effects of seasonal variation.

Table 2 gives in percentage terms the changes in the numbers of unemployed claimants in each region between June 1979 and June 1986 and between December 1987. The figures are adjusted for discontinuity and for the effects of seasonal variation.

Table 1
Civilian employed labour force in the regions of Great Britain

	Net changes	
	June 1979 to June 1986 Per cent.	*June 1986 to June 1987 Per cent.*
South East	1·6	1·9
East Anglia	11·1	4·5
South West	4·6	1·9
West Midlands	−7·4	2·0
East Midlands	0·8	1·2
Yorkshire and Humberside	−6·6	1·4
North West	−12·5	0·6
North	−10·1	1·0
Wales	−12·2	1·2
Scotland	−7·5	0·7

Table 2
Unemployed claimants in the Regions of Great Britain

	Changes	
	June 1979— June 1986 Per cent.	*June 1986— December 1987 Per cent.*
South East	243·7	−24·2
East Anglia	205·9	−25·5
South West	160·4	−23·1
West Midlands	220·3	−20·4
East Midlands	225·7	−17·5
Yorkshire and Humberside	209·7	−17·1
North West	167·6	−17·8
Northern	130·3	−15·5
Wales	148·9	−19·8
Scotland	128·8	−9·5

Social Fund

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment ,pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford, (Ms. Ruddock) *Official Report*, 21 January, column *807*, if he will give similar information on European social fund allocations to Merseyside in the current year.

Mr. Cope: The European Commission is not expected to announce its decision on the allocation of 1988 European social fund grants until April 1988 at the earliest. My Department will not be able to inform organisations of the result of their applications until then. The following list details social fund applications and aid applied for which have been submitted to the European Commission for schemes to operate in Merseyside during the calendar year 1988. The list does not, however, include national schemes run, for example, by the Manpower Services Commission, and industrial training boards from which those living in Merseyside will benefit. Separate figures for Merseyside for these national schemes are not readily available.

1988 European social fund aid requested for Merseyside

Applicant name	*Organisation*	*Beneficiaries*	*£ aid*	*Article*[1]	*Article*[1]
Acorn Venture Association	PB1	4	12,451·00	12a	41-
Acorn Venture Association	PB1	3	9,338·00	12a	42c
AP Precision Hydraulics Ltd.	PB3E	182	55,906·00	12a	42a
Beoco Ltd.	PB3	175	120,000·00	12a	42a
CDS Training Ltd.	PB4	24	23,669·00	12a	41-
CDS Training Ltd.	PB4	42	34,020·00	12b	41-
CDS Training Ltd.	PB4	16	14,843·00	12a	41-
CDS Training Ltd.	PB4	24	22,627·00	12a	42a
CDS Training Ltd.	PB4	18	24,008·00	12a	42a
CDS Training Ltd.	PB4	14	14,492·00	12a	41-
CDS Training Ltd.	PB4	21	21,340·00	12a	42a
Eldonian Community Association	PB4	4	16,519·50	12a	41-
Eldonian Community Association	PB4	6	24,775·20	12a	42a
Employment Resource Group (ERG) Ltd.	PB1	60	44,900·00	12a	42a
Fringe	PB1	3	11,879·00	12a	41-
Fringe	PB1	3	11,879·00	12a	42a
Fringe	PB1	6	32,021·00	12a	41-
Fringe	PB1	6	32,021·00	12a	42a
GEC Installation Equipment Ltd.	PB3E	26	37,581·00	12a	41-
GEC Installation Equipment Ltd.	PB3E	118	50,255·00	12a	42a
Greenbank Project	PB1	39	142,726·00	12a	41-
Into Business Project Ltd.	PB4	8	19,785·00	12a	42a
Into Business Project Ltd.	PB4	40	89,060·00	12a	41-
Keyes UK Ltd.	PB3P	58	19,068·00	12a	42e
Kirkby Challenge Community Newspaper	PB4	2	6,800·00	12a	41-
Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	90	88,536·00	12a	41-
Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	60	87,118·00	12a	41-
Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	26	38,327·00	12a	42a
Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	20	20,658·00	12a	41-
Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	20	20,658·00	12a	42a
Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	20	17,800·00	12a	41-
Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	20	17,800·00	12a	42a
Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	45	64,990·00	12a	41-
Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	30	43,382·00	12a	42a
Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	30	41,643·00	12a	42e
Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	30	13,473·00	12a	41-

Applicant name	Organisation	Beneficiaries	£ aid	Article[1]	Article[1]
Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	105	145,183·00	12a	41-
Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	12	12,057·00	12a	42a
Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	24	6,615·00	12a	42b
Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	24	6,615·00	12a	41-
Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	190	191,706·00	12a	41-
Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	48	36,666·00	12a	42a
Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	250	292,500·00	12b	41-
Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	25	25,471·00	12a	42a
Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	10	61,642·00	12a	41-
Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	40	12,260·00	12a	42a
Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	40	43,382·00	12a	42-
Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	75	97,609·00	12a	41-
Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	30	44,436·00	12a	41–
Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	30	43,177·00	12a	41–
Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	12	8,130·00	12a	42a
Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	20	17,820·00	12a	41–
Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	20	17,820·00	12a	41–
Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	20	17,820·00	12a	41–
Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	40	54,080·00	12b	41-
Landlife	PB1	12	43,105·00	12a	41–
Liverpool Elfrida Rathbone Community Association	PB1	21	68,250·00	12a	41–
Liverpool Appropriate Technology Ltd	PB1	28	107,262·00	12a	41–
Liverpool Mencap	PB1	7	23,674·00	12a	41–
Liverpool Mencap	PB1	7	22,036·00	12a	42c
Liverpool City Council	LA1	864	597,143·00	12a	41–
Liverpool City Council	LA1	504	321,237·00	12a	41–
Liverpool City Council	LA1	600	282,066·00	12a	41–
Liverpool City Council	LA1	600	282,066·00	12a	42a
Liverpool City Council	LA1	120	21,671·00	12a	41–
Liverpool City Council	LA1	120	21,671·00	12a	42b
Liverpool City Council	LA1	300	128,430·00	12a	41–
Liverpool City Council	LA1	300	128,430·00	12a	42c
Lucas Aerospace Limited Power Systems Division	PB3E	50	16,073·00	12a	42a
Merseyside Enterprise Board Ltd	PB4	100	75,472·50	12a	42a
Merseyside Council for Voluntary Service	PB1	72	27,937·00	12a	42a
Merseyside Education Training Enterprise Ltd	PB1	300	106,919·00	12a	42a
Merseyside Education Training Enterprise Ltd	PB1	60	25,974·00	12a	41–
Merseyside Education Training Enterprise Ltd	PB1	60	25,974·00	12a	41–
Merseyside Education Training Enterprise Ltd	PB1	100	95,970·00	12a	42e
Merseyside Education Training Enterprise Ltd	PB1	8	26,405·00	12a	41–
Merseyside Education Training Enterprise Ltd	PB1	8	26,405·00	12a	42a
Merseyside Education Training Enterprise Ltd	PB1	8	26,405·00	12a	41–
Merseyside Education Training Enterprise Ltd	PB1	36	12,220·00	12a	42b
Merseyside Education Training Enterprise Ltd	PB1	72	31,019·00	12a	42a
Merseyside Education Training Enterprise Ltd	PB1	60	20,169·00	12a	42a
Merseyside Education Training Enterprise Ltd	PB1	60	20,169·00	12a	42a
Merseyside Education Training Enterprise Ltd	PB1	200	73,116·00	12a	42a
Merseyside Education Training Enterprise Ltd	PB1	48	20,130·00	12a	41–
Merseyside Education Training Enterprise Ltd	PB1	48	20,250·00	12a	41–
Merseyside Education Training Enterprise Ltd	PB1	72	28,579·00	12a	41–
Merseyside Education Training Enterprise Ltd	PB1	48	21,340·00	12a	42a
Merseyside Education Training Enterprise Ltd	PB1	25	19,308·00	12a	41–
Merseyside Education Training Enterprise Ltd	PB1	25	22,918·00	12a	42a
Merseyside Education Training Enterprise Ltd	PB1	25	20,043·00	12a	42a
Merseyside Education Training Enterprise Ltd	PB1	25	21,066·00	12a	42e
Micro-craft Consultants Limited	PB3	5	56,160·00	12a	42c
NEO Industries Ltd	PB4	40	83,000·00	12a	41–
North Everton Technology Centre Ltd	PB1	25	89,869·00	12a	41-
Parents Apprenticeship Action Committee	PB1	35	89,661·00	12a	41-
Risdon Venesta International Ltd	PB3P	65	11,377·00	12a	42e
Suston Diesels Ltd.	PB3E	23	22,296·00	12a	41–
Suston Diesels Ltd.	PB3E	35	18,360·00	12a	42a
Sefton Community Resource Action Programme	PB1	80	10,000·00	12a	42a
Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	689	249,650·00	12a	41–
Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	15	26,186·00	12a	41–
Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	28	9,341·00	12a	41–
Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	60	18,588·00	12a	42a
Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	20	15,600·00	12a	41–
Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	28	9,341·00	12a	41–
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	36	29,626·00	12a	41–
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	30	24,480·00	12a	42a
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	40	14,948·00	12a	42b
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	235	73,754·00	12a	41–
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	51	44,169·00	12a	41–
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	40	14,793·00	12a	41–
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	110	82,357·00	12a	41–
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	30	14,679·00	12a	41–

Applicant name	*Organisation*	*Beneficiaries*	*£ aid*	*Article*[1]	*Article*[1]
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	30	141,187·00	12a	41-
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	30	7,989·00	12a	41-
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	60	19,101·00	12a	41-
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	30	13,317·00	12a	42a
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	150	51,768·00	12a	41-
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	30	12,642·00	12a	41-
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	30	10,204·00	12a	41-
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	30	10,204·00	12a	42a
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	30	10,204·00	12a	41-
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	30	10,204·00	12a	42a
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	40	16,889·00	12a	41-
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	185	101,159·00	12a	41-
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	150	114,942·00	12a	41-
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	25	49,518·00	12a	42b
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	15	38,238·00	12a	41-
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	40	28,771·00	12a	41-
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	288	207,281·00	12a	41-
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	50	25,390·00	12a	41-
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	309	254,375·00	12a	41-
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	20	17,841·00	12a	41-
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	30	25,185·00	12a	42a
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	40	12,848·00	12a	41-
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	40	12,848·00	12a	42d
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	60	16,908·00	12a	41-
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	60	16,908·00	12a	42c
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	22	11,223·00	12a	41-
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	20	10,426·00	12a	42c
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	24	12,481·00	12a	41-
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	24	22,835·00	12a	41-
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	63	27,502·00	12a	41-
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	60	20,360·00	12a	41-
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	18	5,976·00	12a	42a
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	60	18,545·00	12a	41-
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	36	30,272·00	12a	41-
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	18	8,566·00	12a	41-
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	18	14,640·00	12a	41-
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	18	12,815·00	12a	41-
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	104	102,500·00	12a	41-
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	169	137,866·00	12a	41-
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	30	25,114·00	12a	41-
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	402	356,971·00	12a	41-
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	60	31,687·00	12a	41-
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	12	39,741·00	12a	41-
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	35	17,178·00	12a	41-
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	200	98,161·00	12a	42a
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	70	78,711·00	12a	41-
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	70	74,861·00	12a	41-
University of Liverpool	LA3	3	6,815·00	12a	41-
Vauxhall Motors Ltd.	PB3E	518	472,773·00	12a	42a
Wirral Borough Council	LA1	360	430,346·00	12a	41-
Wirral Borough Council	LA1	120	61,121·00	12a	41-
Wirral Borough Council	LA1	270	68,976·00	12a	42e
Wirral Borough Council	LA1	120	68,337·00	12a	41-
Wirral Borough Council	LA1	360	196,001·00	12a	42a
Wirral Borough Council	LA1	72	44,740·00	12a	41-
Wirral Borough Council	LA1	288	140,581·00	12a	42b
Wirral Borough Council	LA1	40	120,729·00	12a	41-
Wirral Borough Council	LA1	80	196,128·00	12a	42c
Wirral Borough Council	LA1	60	18,720·00	12b	41-
Wirral Borough Council	LA1	240	260,874·00	12a	41-
Wirral Borough Council	LA1	10	21,090·50	12a	41-
Wirral Borough Council	LA1	20	44,439·00	12a	42c
Wirral Borough Council	LA1	12	40,693·50	12a	41-
Wirral Borough Council	LA1	20	59,308·00	12a	41-
Wirral Borough Council	LA1	20	30,915·50	12a	41-
Women's Technology Training Ltd.	PB1	30	170,148·00	12a	42b

COMPUTER CODINGS FOR APPLICATIONS

Organisation Types

PB1 = Registered charities and friendly societies
PB2 = Industrial Training Boards
PB3 = Private companies
PB4 = Companies limited by guarantee

LA1 = local authorities
LA2 = Educational establishments (excluding universities)
LA3 = Universities
LA4 = Health Authorities

NATIND1 = Nationalised Industries
NATIND2 = Public Corporations e.g. BBC

MSC = Manpower Services Commission
DE = Department of Employment
OGD = Other Government schemes

Article Numbers

12a = Vocational training
12b = Recruitment & wage subsidies
12c = resettlement & socio-vocational integration in connection with geographical mobility
12d = services and technical advice concerned with job creation

41 – = Under-25 scheme
42a = unemployed people over the age of 25
42b = women over-25 who wish to return to work
42c = handicapped (over 25)
42d = migrant workers (over 25)
42e = people over 25 employed in small or medium-sized enterprises

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock), *Official Report*, 21 January, column *804*, if he will give similar information on European social fund allocations to Merseyside in 1987.

Mr. Cope: The European Commission allocated the following amounts from the European social fund to projects based in Merseyside for the calendar year 1987. The list does not, however, include national schemes run, for example, by the Manpower Services Commission, and industrial training boards from which those living in Merseyside will have benefited. Separate figures for Merseyside for these national schemes are not readily available.

1987 European Social Fund Allocations for Merseyside

Applicant name	*Organisation*	*Beneficiaries*	*£ Aid*	*Article**	*Article**
Acorn Venture Association	PB1	10	8,568·00	12a	41–
Automotive products PLC	PB3E	161	29,239·00	12a	42a
Beoco Ltd	PB3	55	60,241·00	12a	42a
CDS Training Ltd	PB4	16	14,826·00	12a	41–
CDS Training Ltd	PB4	24	19,516·00	12a	42a
CDS Training Ltd	PB4	16	16,053·00	12a	41–
CDS Training Ltd	PB4	21	14,841·00	12a	42a
CDS Training Enterprise Ltd	PB4	30	23,798·00	12b	41–
CDS Training Enterprise Ltd	PB4	12	15,734·00	12a	42a
CDS Training Enterprise Ltd	PB4	12	82,269·00	12a	41–
Eldonian Community Association	PB4	7	27,639·00	12a	41–
Eldonian Community Association	PB4	8	15,97·00	12a	42a
Fringe	PB1	6	29,426·00	12a	41–
Fringe	PB1	6	23,711·00	12a	42a
Greenbank Project	PB1	33	118,544·00	12a	42c
Help the Aged	PB1	150	104,098·00	12a	41–
Into Business Project Ltd	PB4	50	99,016·00	12a	41–
James Halstead Ltd	PB3P	19	5,490·00	12a	41–
Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	20	67,833·00	12a	41–
Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	230	267,175·00	12b	41–
Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	120	108,068·00	12a	41–
Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	14	9,381·00	12a	42a
Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	120	160,451·00	12a	41–
Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	30	21,194·00	12a	42a
Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	20	9,272·00	12a	42a
Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	20	8,117·00	12a	42a
Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	12	4,000·00	12a	42a
Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	20	12,080·00	12a	42a
Landlife	PB1	12	41,665·00	12a	41–
Liverpool Elfrida Rathbone Community Association	PB1	21	68,692·00	12a	41–
Liverpool Appropriate Technology Ltd	PB1	29	115,815·00	12a	41–
Liverpool Mencap	PB1	10	26,320·00	12a	41–
Liverpool Mencap	PB1	5	10,604·00	12a	42c
Liverpool Education Authority	LA1	1,752	1,257,606·00	12a	41–
Liverpool Education Authority	LA1	1,104	792,035·00	12a	41–
Liverpool Education Authority	LA1	1,408	282,079·00	12a	42a
Liverpool Education Authority	LA1	552	142,173·00	12a	41–
Liverpool Education Authority	LA1	840	107,884·00	12a	42b
Liverpool Education Authority	LA1	420	242,626·00	12a	41–
Liverpool Education Authority	LA1	564	154,668·00	12a	42c
Merseyside Education Training Enterprise Ltd	PB1	8	22,310·00	12a	42a
Merseyside Education Training Enterprise Ltd	PB1	75	23,765·00	12a	42c
Merseyside Education Training Enterprise Ltd	PB1	144	56,186·00	12a	41–
Merseyside Education Training Enterprise Ltd	PB1	240	54,722·00	12a	42a
Merseyside Education Training Enterprise Ltd	PB1	48	21,403·00	12a	42a
Merseyside Education Training Enterprise Ltd	PB1	60	23,327·00	12a	42b
Merseyside Education Training Enterprise Ltd	PB1	18	11,175·00	12a	41–
Merseyside Education Training Enterprise Ltd	PB1	8	27,687·00	12a	41–
Merseyside Education Training Enterprise Ltd.	PB1	300	64,732·00	12a	42a
Merseyside Education Training Enterprise Ltd.	PB1	60	21,306·00	12a	41–
Merseyside Education Training Enterprise Ltd.	PB1	60	21,306·00	12a	42b
Merseyside Education Training Enterprise Ltd.	PB1	200	38,644·00	12a	42a
Merseyside Skill Training Ltd.	PB1	30	88,945·00	12a	41–
Merseyside Enterprise BoardLtd.	PB4	100	37,887·00	12a	42e
NEO Industries Ltd.	PB4	40	80,216·00	12a	41–
NEO Industries Ltd.	PB4	40	59,955·00	12a	42a
North Everton Technology Centre Ltd.	PB1	25	82,217·00	12a	41–

Applicant name	Organisation	Beneficiaries	£ Aid	Article*	Article*
Parents Apprenticeship Action Committee	PB1	35	88,554·00	12a	41–
Plessy Telecommunications Limited	PB3E	40	9,367·00	12a	41–
Plessy Telecommunications Limited	PB3E	86	7,523·00	12a	41–
Plessy Major Systems Ltd.	PB3E	168	183,607·00	12a	41–
Plessy Major Systems Ltd.	PB3E	463	52,993·00	12a	42a
Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	20	15,488·00	12b	41–
Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	12	15,513·00	12a	41–
Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	7	7,709·00	12a	41–
Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	14	7,796·00	12a	42c
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	83	68,754·00	12a	41–
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	15	18,282·00	12a	41–
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	27	4,083·00	12a	41–
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	21	1,254·00	12a	42a
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	15	27,255·00	12a	42a
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	20	16,808·00	12a	41–
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	30	11,199·00	12a	41–
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	150	44,783·00	12a	41–
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	30	7,641·00	12a	41–
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	30	5,691·00	12a	42a
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	40	6,383·00	12a	42a
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	40	32,881·00	12a	41–
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	225	52,268·00	12a	41–
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	30	9,467·00	12a	41–
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	20	7004·00	12a	42b
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	30	42,336·00	12a	41–
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	153	108,823·00	12a	41–
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	135	109,770·00	12a	41–
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	30	69,340·00	12a	41–
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	45	37,172·00	12a	41–
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	25	26,081·00	12a	42b
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	303	218,509·00	12a	41–
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	30	10,848·00	12a	42a
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	259	175,709·00	12a	41–
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	22	10,074·00	12a	41–
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	13	2,770·00	12a	42c
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	50	16,501·00	12a	41–
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	15	21,368·00	12a	42a
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	80	25,153·00	12a	41–
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	30	4,592·00	12a	42a
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	30	8,132·00	12a	41–
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	48	22,412·00	12a	41–
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	30	8,933·00	12a	41–
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	40	6,023·00	12a	42d
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	105	98,283·00	12a	41–
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	LA1	450	337,655·00	12a	41–
Venesta International Packaging Ltd.	PB3P	37	5,076·00	12a	42a
Wirral Borough Council	LA1	29	28,954·00	12a	42c
Wirral Borough Council	LA1	40	33,269·00	12a	42c
Wirral Borough Council	LA1	128	67,971·00	12a	42c
Wirral Borough Council	LA1	10	48,551·00	12a	42c
Wirral Borough Council	LA1	280	192,470·00	12a	41–
Wirral Borough Council	LA1	640	451,590·00	12a	41–
Wirral Borough Council	LA1	260	79,492·00	12a	42a
Wirral Borough Council	LA1	60	45,638·00	12a	41–
Wirral Borough Council	LA1	130	56,338·00	12a	42b
Wirral Borough Council	LA1	360	70,364·00	12a	42c
Women's Technology Training Ltd.	PB1	30	126,435·00	12a	42b

COMPUTER CODINGS FOR APPLICATIONS

Organisation types

PB1 = Registered charities and friendly societies
PB2 = Industrial Training Boards
PB3 = Private companies
PB4 = Companies limited by guarantee

LA1 = Local authorities
LA2 = Educational establishments (excluding universities)
LA3 = Universities
LA4 = Health authorities

NATIND1 = Nationalised Industries
NATIND2 = Public Corporations eg BBC

MSC = Manpower Services Commission
DE = Department of Employment
OGD = Other Government schemes

Article numbers

12a = Vocational training
12b = Recruitment and wage subsidies
12c = Resettlement and socio-vocational integration in connection with geographical mobility
12d = Services and technical advice concerned with job creation

41 = Under-25 scheme
42a = Unemployed people over the age of 25
42b = Women over-25 who wish to return to work
42c = Handicapped (over 25)
42d = Migrant workers (over 25)
42e = People over 25 employed in small or medium-sized enterprises

Labour Statistics

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the absolute total of, and the percentage change in the number of, persons unemployed *(a)* less than three months, *(b)* three to six months, *(c)* six months to 12 months, *(d)* one to two years, *(e)* two to three years, *(f)* three to five years, and *(g)* over five years during the periods (i) each year since 1979,(ii) over the period since 1979 as a whole, (iii) from mid-1979 to mid-1986 and (iv) since mid-1986.

Mr. Lee *[holding answer 26 January 1988]:* Direct comparison of unemployment by duration since 1979 are not possible because of the change to the method of compilation. The following is the available information, which is also in the library.

Table A shows the average number of unemployed registrants in the United Kingdom for each year from 1979 to 1982, who had been unemployed for the durations requested, except of for those unemployed for three to five years and over five years, for which figures were not separately identified together with the percentage change over the previous year. It is not possible to give this change for 1979, as unemployment figures for Northern Ireland are not available by duration for 1987.

Table B shows the average number of claimants who had been unemployed for each duration requested for each year from 1983 to 1987, together with the percentage change over the previous year. Comparisons are affected by changes in the method of compilation.

Table C shows the numbers at 8 October 1987, the latest date for which figures are available, together with the percentage change since 10 July 1986. The change over this period is affected by seasonal factors.

Table A
Average number of unemployed registrants in the United Kingdom

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*
Unemployed under 3 months	569,221	753,776	695,674	885,109
Percentage change over year	n/a	32·4	−7·7	27·2
Unemployed 3-6 months	240,878	331,588	673,481	539,324
Percentage change over year	n/a	37·7	103·1	−19·9
Unemployed 6-12 months	237,121	284,233	619,856	681,917
Percentage change over year	n/a	19·9	118·1	10·0
Unemployed 1-2 years	n/a	178,418	360,744	657,790
Percentage change over year	n/a	n/a	102·2	82·3
Unemployed 2-3 years	n/a	74,056	97,304	203,637
Percentage change over year	n/a	n/a	31·4	109·3

Table B
Average number of unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom

	1983	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
Unemployed under 3 months	841,759	828,089	843,572	849,769	758,572
Percentage change over year	n/a	−1·6	1·9	0·7	−10·7
Unemployed 3-6 months	506,929	490,009	498,309	502,283	447,671
Percentage change over year	n/a	−3·3	1·7	0·8	−0·1
Unemployed 6-12 months	639,082	610,779	607,263	606,079	549,276
Percentage change over year	n/a	−4·4	−0·6	−0·2	−9·4
Unemployed 1-2 years	589,339	557,782	538,746	509,233	463,082
Percentage change over year	n/a	−5·4	−3·4	−5·5	−9·1
Unemployed 2-3 years	197,046	302,447	299,045	274,969	233,984
Percentage change over year	n/a	53·5	−1·1	−8·1	−14·9
Unemployed 3-5 years	n/a	279,052	345,289	342,394	290,877
Percentage change over year	n/a	n/a	23·7	−0·8	−15·0
Unemployed over 5 years	n/a	90,096	149,178	227,653	272,087
Percentage change over year	n/a	n/a	65·6	52·6	19·5

Table C
Unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom
October 1987

	Unemployed	*Percentage change on July 1986*
Under 3 months	765,816	−8·4
3-6 months	370,192	−21·0
6-12 months	443,140	−29·4
1-2 years	415,998	−17·1
2-3 years	218,373	−19·4
3-5 years	261,411	−23·7
over 5 years	276,454	18·8

Ministerial Visits

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has anything to add to his reply of 18 January, *Official Report*, column *506*, relating to overseas visits by Ministers in his Department.

Mr. Fowler: I regret that there was an omission in my earlier reply. The full test should read as follows:

A total of 25 official overseas visits were made by Ministers in my Department during the period January 1983 to December 1987, excluding short-term visits made specifically to attend conferences held by international bodies, for example, EC, OECD, ILO.

Details are as follows:

Dates	*Country visited*
19 July to 29 July 1983	Netherlands
23 September to 28 September 1983	France

Dates	Country visited
1 October to 7 October 1983	United States of America
17 October to 20 October 1983	Federal Republic of Germany and Belgium
20 November to 22 November 1983	Federal Republic of Germany
25 September to 5 October 1984	Hong Kong and Japan
11 December to 8 February 1984	France
7 February to 8 February 1985	Italy
3 July to 5 July 1985	Republic of Ireland
25 August to 3 September 1985	Federal Republic of Germany/Switzerland/Denmark
15 November to 20 November 1985	United States of America
11 December to 15 December 1985	Hong Kong and China
26 January to 28 January 1986	France
30 March to 8 April 1986	United States of America
5 April to 8 April 1986	Sweden
23 May to 1 June 1986	Japan
13 July to 16 July 1986	United States of America
6 November to 17 November 1986	Hong Kong and China
17 November to 20 November 1986	France
5 January to 12 January 1987	Israel
8 January to 15 January 1987	Japan
5 March to 11 March 1987	United States of America
23 March to 25 March 1987	Berlin
13 September to 15 September 1987	Federal Republic of Germany
22 January to 24 November 1987	Sweden

Industrial Skills

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is at present the average cost of training people in industrial skills.

Mr. John Cope *(holding answer 26 January 1988]:* The most recent estimate of employer spending on training comes from a survey conducted on behalf of the Manpower Services Commission by IFF research in 1984. It estimated employers invest on average £200 per employee per head on all types of training. More up to date and more detailed information is expected to become available later this year as part of a study of funding of vocational education and training being carried out by the MSC.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the total public investment in industrial skills, for each year since 1974, in 1986 values.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 26 January 1988]:* The information is not available in the form requested. However expenditure (at 1986 prices) by the Manpower Services Commission on vocational education and training each year since 1974 has been as follows:

	£ million
1974-75	262
1975-76	482
1976-77	635
1977-78	635
1978-79	738
1979-80	763
1980-81	798
1981-82	971
1982-83	1,070
1983-84	1,211
1984-85	1,263
1985-86	1,295
1986-87	1,447

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are, for each year since 1974, the figures for people trained for industrial jobs.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 26 January 1988]:* The information is not available in the form requested. Estimates are available from the labour force survey for the number of economically active people of working age receiving any job-related training during a four week reference period in the Spring of each year. Those estimates are as follows:

	million
1984	2·1
1985	2·5
1986	2·6

Estimates are not available prior to 1984.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

COCOM

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster by what percentage he intends to cut the COCOM international lists; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: The aim of the Department is to achieve maximum reduction of COCOM's international lists consistent with our national security interests. It is not practicable to express our objectives in percentage terms.

Insider Dealing

Mr. Battle: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when the investigation appointed on 18 December 1986 to look into the possibility of insider dealing by employees of his Department, the Office of Fair Trading and the Monopolies and Mergers Commission is due to report; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: The inspectors recently submitted an interim report to the Secretary of State. This has been passed to the Director of Public Prosecutions for his consideration.

Imports-Exports

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will give imports as a percentage of domestic sales of motor cars and exports as a percentage of domestic production for (i) United Kingdom, (ii) France, (iii) West Germany, (iv) Italy and (v) Japan for 1975 and each year from 1979 to 1987.

Mr. Butcher: So far as the United Kingdom, France and West Germany are concerned, I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave him on 26 January 1988, *Official Report*, columns 143-144.

Information on Italy and Japan is shown in the tables.

Trends in Italian car output
Italy

	Imports as a percentage of sales	*Exports as a percentage of production*
1975	n.a.	49
1979	38	44
1980	42	35
1981	n.a.	34
1982	n.a.	34
1983	37	35
1984	37	33
1985	40	32
1986	38	37

Trends in Japanese car output
Japan

	Imports as a percentage of sales	*Exports as a percentage of production*
1975	n.a.	40
1979	2	50
1980	2	56
1981	1	57
1982	1	55
1983	1	53
1984	1	56
1985	2	58
1986	2	59

Note: NA = Not available.
Source: Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders Ltd.

Business Consultancy Initiative

Mr. Blair: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will estimate, in respect of each region separately, for the years 1988-89 to 1990-91, the amount of money to be spent on the Government's business consultancy initiative announced in the recent White Paper on the future of his Department.

Mr. Butcher: The Government expenditure plans 1988-89 to 1990-91, published earlier this month, set out planned DTI expenditure on support for consultancy services under the business development initiative as follows:

	Plans £ million
1988-89	74
1989-90	91
1990-91	109

No regional breakdown is available. Consultancy support under the enterprise initiative is available to qualifying companies on a first come, first served basis.

New Enterprise Initiative (Blackpool)

Mr. Jack: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list in the *Official Report* the forms of help to all types of industry and commerce within the Blackpool travel-to-work area that will be available when his Department's new enterprise initiative is fully implemented.

Mr. Butcher: Under the Department's new enterprise initiative, which brings together both new and existing measures of support, industry and commerce within the Blackpool travel-to-work area may currently benefit from the marketing, design, quality and manufacturing initiative, the research and technology initiative, the export initiative and the business education initiative.

In April 1988, three further initiatives will be available to industry and commerce within the Blackpool TTWA — the business planning initiative, the financial and information system initiative, and the small firms merit award for research and technology (SMART).

A comprehensive range of further support services is available to all industry and commerce from the Department, either to complement action taken under the enterprise initiative or separately. These include overseas and United Kingdom market trade and business information, company registration advice and information, contract research, testing and analysis services through DTI's own research establishments, and advice and guidance on patent and trade mark issues.

All the enterprise initiative services to industry and commerce within the Blackpool TTWA will be administered from the Department's enterprise initiative offices in Manchester (75 Mosley street, Manchester M2 3HR Tel: 061-838 5011), supported by a new satellite office at Preston.

Royal United Services Institute

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he will list those publications by the Royal United Services Institute which he has approved for publication since 1979.

Mr. Butcher: I have no such knowledge of approving things for this publication and to refer back to 1979 would incur disproportionate costs.

Consumer Safety

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many prohibition orders and prohibition notices his Department has issued for each of the last five years, relating to consumer safety.

Mr. Maude: During the last five years, the following four prohibition orders and three prohibition notices have been made.

Prohibition Orders
The Toy Water Snakes (Safety) Order 1983[1]
The Gas Catalytic Heaters (Safety) Order 1983[2]
The Expanding Novelties (Safety) Order 1983[1]
The Scented Erasers (Safety) Order 1984[2]

Prohibition Notices
Automatic Rice Cooker (1983)

Sprint 0-6 T A Scissor Jack (1984)
Expanding Novelties known as New Grobots, New Grobugs and New Grobeasts (1985).

Note:
[1] Lapsed, goods having been removed from the market.
[2] Now covered by regulations made under the Consumer Safety Act 1978.

Consumer Protection

Mr. Neil Hamilton: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he has yet reached a decision on the concordat's proposals for regulations on misleading price indications under part III of the Consumer Protection Act 1987.

Mr. Maude: After careful consideration, in consultation with the concordat and others, and in the light of revision of the draft code of practice on price indications, I have concluded that there is no need at this stage for further regulation in three of the five areas proposed by the concordat.

The issues of introductory offers, worth and value claims and substantiation of price indications are now adequately covered by part III of the Consumer Protection Act and the draft code of practice. I have, however, concluded that there is a good case for regulations on the 28-day rule for comparisons with previous prices and on recommended prices, although in different terms from those proposed by the concordat. As required by the Act, my Department is today issuing a consultation paper seeking views on draft regulations to remove any possible uncertainty about whether comparisons which comply with the 28-day "rule" meet the requirements of the Act and to define "recommended price" and similar terms so as to ensure that comparisons with articial recommended prices are caught by the general offence. At the same time, we are seeking views on a revised and I believe much improved version of the draft code. Subject to the outcome of this consultation, I aim to bring the new legislation on price indications into force on 1 September 1988. Copies of the consultation paper will be placed in the Library.

Investments

Mr. Page: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he will clarify the definition of investments in schedule I to the Financial Services Act in respect of forward contracts and bank lending.

Mr. Maude: I have issued a statement giving the Government's view of the effect of certain of the definitions in schedule 1 to the Financial Services Act, defining investments and investment business. This covers the position of forward contracts and bank lending and certain other issues. I have placed a copy of my statement in the Libraries of both Houses.

Unit Trusts

Mr. Butterfill: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he has taken decisions on the regulations on pricing of authorised unit trusts to be made under the Financial Services Act 1986.

Mr. Maude: My Department has had useful discussions with a number of interested parties on this subject, taking forward the consultations started by the Securities and Investments Board. The Securities and Investments Board has been actively involved in our discussions on these issues and endorses the approach I have decided upon. Our aim has been to achieve a system which is fair to investors and provides as much flexibility for management groups as is consistent with this.

It was suggested to us that conflicts of interest between the manager's role as market-maker in dealing in units and his role as investment manager for the fund could be resolved only by confining managers to acting as agent in unit dealings. Although I do not intend to require this in the regulations, it is clearly a matter which deserves further study, and I welcome the intention of the Securities and Investments Board to look at it fully, in the light of experience of the new regulations.

I will shortly be laying regulations before the House, the main provisions of which will be as follows:

(i) In their dealings with trustees, managers will have to inform the trustee within 2 hours of the valuation point of the number and/or value of units they wish to create or cancel at that valuation. They may not give creation or cancellation orders at any other time. They must request at least sufficient units to enable them to fulfil all purchase orders taken. They must tell the trustee straight away if they revalue the fund.

(ii) In their dealings with unitholders, managers will be able to choose to deal with unit-holders on a forward basis only, at the price calculated following receipt of their order. If they wish to offer deals on the last valuation (backward basis) they must:
- decide their spread at the beginning of the dealing period and inform the trustee (this spread must be the one used for forward deals in the previous period)
- deal at this spread for all transactions except large ones unless they move to a forward basis for all deals
- cease to deal on a backward basis if they know, or have reason to believe, that the fund value has moved by 2 per cent. or more
- deal at a forward price if the unitholder requests it or if no price is agreed.

(iii) For large deals managers will be able to deal outside the spread notified to the Trustee provided that the price used is still within permitted units or deal on a forward pricing basis (within permitted limits). (Large deals will be defined as £15,000 or such larger amount as is stated in the scheme particulars.)

(iv) If the manager knows or has reason to believe that the fund value has moved by 2 per cent. or more he can as an alternative to complete revaluation, use a revaluation be reference to movements in an Index if the Trustee agrees and the composition of the Index reflects the composition of the fund.

(v) The manager will be able to choose the regular time of valuation but this must be stated in the scheme particulars and must not be two hours or less before the opening of the main market in which the fund is invested.

(vi) Unit prices will be calculated so as to reflect the net asset value of the fund on a buying or selling basis, and including any initial charge. Unit prices will have to be accurate to 4 significant figures both for transactions and publication in newspapers. For transactions rounding to the lowest unit of currency will also be permitted.

(vii) On contract notes and in newspapers, the cancellation price will need to be shown in addition to the ruling bid/offer price as appropriate. In addition on contract notes and at least weekly in the newspaper the initial charge as a percentage will need to be shown. The prices shown in the newspapers will have to be the most recent valuation available with the actual spreads used for deals (other than large deals).

(viii) Settlement within five days will be required for all trustee/manager dealings for all funds other than money market and gilts funds in which case the requirement will be to settle by the close of business on the next working day. In the case of manager — unitholder dealings the requirement will be to pay out on redemptions within five days of receipt of the relevant documents of title.

As the pricing regulations are likely to require changes in systems and working procedures, I intend to allow current lawful arrangements to continue until 1 July.

I have also received representation about the position of offshore funds. Such funds cannot be certain, at this stage, whether their home territory will be able to obtain designation under section 87 of the Act by "A" day, or that applications for their individual recognition under section 88 will have been determined by then. I therefore intend to permit offshore funds which have a listing on the stock exchange to continue, until 1 July, to promote by means of a prospectus.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Economic Strategy

10. **Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what discussions he has had with the trade unions in Northern Ireland on the Government's economic strategy.

Mr. Viggers: Since January 1986, Ministers have met trade union delegations on 12 occasions. A range of industrial and economic issues have been discussed.

Teachers

11. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has any proposals for changing the way teachers are trained in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: I do not intend to change the requirement that all courses of initial teacher training in Northern Ireland should meet the criteria of the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education which also apply in England and Wales. In line with my strategy for the promotion of education for mutual understanding in all sectors of education, I have however make it clear that I wish student teachers in the segregated colleges of education to have increased opportunities to meet each other, to undertake joint project work and to spend part of their professional training in cross-community school experience.

Lignite

12. **Mr. Beggs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has completed his evaluation of proposals to develop a minemouth power station to utilise lignite resources in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers: The evaluation of the proposals for provision of new generating capacity in Northern Ireland, including a possible minemouth lignite power station, has not yet been completed. We are currently awaiting revised bids from NIE and APCL which they have undertaken to submit by 31 January.

International Fund for Ireland

14. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what projects in Northern Ireland are currently in receipt of financial support from the International Fund for Ireland.

Mr. Stanley: The International Fund for Ireland is administered by an independent board appointed by her Majesty's Government and the Government of the Irish Republic. Details of applications for assistance and awards made are a matter for the board. A copy of the fund's press notices of 27 August and 10 December 1987 detailing programme allocations of £47·9 million and particular projects it is supporting, together with a copy of the fund's annual report, are available in the Library.

34. **Mr. Corbett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what financial contributions have been made by Her Majesty's Government to the International Fund for Ireland since its inception.

Mr. Stanley: None, because Her Majesty's Government already contribute very large sums through public expenditure programmes to the economic and social development of Northern Ireland.

The International Fund for Ireland is a vehicle for providing supportive Governments in other countries with the means of expressing their support in a practical way for a programme of economic and social development which was envisaged in article 10*(a)* of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

However, the cost of the accommodation and secretarial services necessary for the proper functioning of the fund, together with its general administrative and organisational expenses, are met jointly by the Governments of the United Kingdom and Ireland. Her Majesty's Government's contribution to these costs in the current financial year is estimated as £45,000.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

15. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he next plans to meet the Tanaiste, Mr. Lenihan, to discuss the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Mr. Tom King: I hope to do so very shortly.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the progress of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Mr. Tom King: Worthwhile progress continues under the agreement. In particular, priority is being given to enhancing security co-operation with the Republic of Ireland. This has obvious potential to benefit all sections of the community in Northern Ireland.

Political Parties (Co-operation)

16. **Mr. John M. Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received in the current year regarding co-operation between the constitutional parties in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tom King: I have received a number of such representations from leading members of the community who share my concern that ways should be found to bring about constructive dialogue and co-operation. It was in that spirit that I held a further meeting with the right hon. Member for the Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) and the hon. Member for Antrim (Rev. I. Paisley) on 26 January.

42. **Mr. Kilfedder:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received from the constitutional parties in Northern Ireland regarding political progress.

Mr. Tom King: I have received a number of such representations, expressing a range of views. If political

progress is to be achieved, there will need to be a constructive exchange of views both between the constitutional parties themselves and with the Government.

Animal Welfare

17. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he is taking to implement in Northern Ireland the recommendations of the Farm Animal Welfare Council on conditions at horse markets and sales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers: I have no plans to implement the recommendations of the Farm Animal Welfare Council on conditions at horse markets and sales in Great Britain. This is because the welfare of horses at any sale in Northern Ireland is already adequately controlled under the Welfare of Animals Act (NI) 1972.

Unemployment

18. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the trends in unemployment in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Viggers: In recent months, there has been a firm downward trend in unemployment in Northern Ireland. During the first half of 1987, seasonally adjusted unemployment dropped by an average of 300 per month whereas in the last six months the decrease was 1,000 per month. This indicates that the downward trend has quickened.

Air Travel (Belfast)

19. **Mr. Clifford Forsythe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he last met the chairman of the British Airports Authority to discuss facilities for Belfast-bound air passengers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State met the chairman of BAA, on 18 November 1987. The Secretary of State expressed his concern at the facilities at Heathrow for Belfast passengers. Further discussions at official level are continuing to explore ways of improving facilities.

Education Department

20. **Mr. Stevens:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the Education Department's capital budget for 1988-89.

Dr. Mawhinney: Almost £51 million.

Special Educational Needs

21. **Mr. Chapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what expenditure is planned in 1988-89 for schools for children with special education needs; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Estimated expenditure by the education and library boards in the 1988/89 financial year in respect of special education for pupils other than the mentally handicapped, is not yet available. The sum planned for teaching costs paid by my Department, in respect of these pupils is, however, £6·5 million.

In addition a sum of £8·9 million is planned for all recurrent services required for the education of mentally handicapped pupils, including teaching costs and a sum of about £2 million for capital expenditure.

Integrated Schools (Maintained Status)

22. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if his Department has any plans to change the criteria for giving maintained status to integrated schools; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: I am currently considering the matter and after deliberations hope to be able to make a statement shortly.

Intergovernmental Conference

23. **Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland which members of the ministerial team, and which officials from his Department, regularly attend the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference meetings.

Mr. Tom King: I and my right hon. Friend the Minister of State usually attend meetings of the Intergovernmental Conference. The joint statement issued after each meeting sets out details of Ministerial attendance. Official attendance varies. It is not in any event the practice to give names of officials attending.

24. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what subjects were discussed at his last meeting with representatives of the Government of the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Tom King: I refer the hon. Member to a reply I gave earlier to a question by the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen).

30. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he last met the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Ireland; and what was discussed.

Mr. Tom King: I refer the hon. Member to a reply I gave earlier to a question by the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen).

Stalker-Sampson Inquiry

25. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will make a further statement on his implementation of the Sampson report on matters connected with the administration of the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

33. **Mr. Clay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what discussions he has had recently concerning those aspects of the reports by Mr. Colin Sampson and others on alleged misconduct by officers of the Royal Ulster Constabulary which fall within his responsibility; and if he will make a statement.

35. **Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will make a further statement on his implementation of those parts of the Stalker-Sampson report on the Royal Ulster Constabulary which fall within his responsibility.

Mr. Tom King: I refer the hon. Members to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd).

Wages Act

26. **Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the likely effect on employment levels of his plans to extend the Wages Act to Northern Ireland.

Mr. Viggers: The Draft Wages (Northern Ireland) Order 1988 which was laid on 10 December 1987 will introduce reforms similar to those already in place in Great Britain under the Wages Act 1986. Attempts to estimate the effect on employment levels in Northern Ireland of these reforms are unlikely to be productive. However, in my opinion the adverse effects of over-regulation on business enterprise, which the order addresses, are such that the provisions of the proposed legislation can only assist employment.

Education Expenditure

27. **Mr. Knowles:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much he intends to spend on education in Northern Ireland in 1988-89; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Almost £800 million. This represents an increase of £48 million or nearly 6·5 per cent. over the estimated expenditure for the current year. The major increase is yet further evidence of the Government's commitment to education services in the Province.

Security

28. **Mr. Molyneaux:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the security situation.

41. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will make a statement on the security situation.

Mr. Tom King: I refer the right hon. Gentleman and my hon. Friend to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross).

Education Reform

29. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he intends to issue his consultation paper on educational reform in Northern Ireland.

Dr. Mawhinney: I plan to issue the paper next month.

Health Services

31. **Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he is satisfied with liaison between the health authorities in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, where patients are transferred between hospitals in the two territories.

Mr. Needham: Yes.

32. **Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what sums have been paid to the health services of the Republic of Ireland as reimbursements for the treatment of patients from *(a)* Northern Ireland and *(b)* Great Britain; what are the numbers of people treated; and if he will give any corresponding information for Republic of Ireland citizens treated in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: Payments under EC regulation 1408/71 as reimbursement for the treatment of patients from Northern Ireland in the Republic of Ireland were IR£2,191,170 in the financial year 1986-87.

Payments from the Republic of Ireland were £478,429 in 1986-87. The costs are estimated annually on an agreed formula and the numbers of people treated are not known. Information relating to Great Britain is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services.

Equal Opportunities (Report)

36. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he intends to publish a response to the report of the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights on equality of opportunity in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Viggers: The Government has welcomed the report of the Standing Advisory Committee on Human Rights. The report is being taken fully into account in the formulation of our detailed legislative proposals, and I hope to give a further indication of our views shortly.

Terrorism

37. **Mr. Maginnis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if there has been forthcoming any information which has led to the arrest and charging of the terrorists responsible for the massacre at Enniskillen or for any of the other 156 unsolved murders by terrorists in the constituency of the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone.

Mr. Stanley: The police have received a substantial amount of information from the public following the bombing at Enniskillen on 8 November 1987. A number of people have been interviewed but, as yet, no charges have been brought. RUC inquiries into this incident and other terrorist murders for which no-one has been charged, will continue.

Administration of Justice

38. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what initiatives have been taken under the Anglo-Irish Agreement to increase confidence in the administration of justice in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tom King: A number of measures have been introduced in the period since the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement as part of the Government's continuing commitment to enhancing public confidence in the administration of justice in Northern Ireland.

These measures include a reduction since 1985 of nearly 50 per cent. on average in the time between committal and trial; allowing more cases to be heard before a jury by extending the list of offences which the Attorney-General can certify out of the scheduled mode of trial; changes to the statutory guidelines on the admissibility of confession evidence; putting the onus on the prosecution in bail applications; and placing on a statutory basis the rights of a person detained under the emergency legislation to have someone informed of their arrest and to have access to a solicitor within 48 hours.

In addition, the maximum period that police can hold suspected terrorists under the emergency legislation without further ministerial authority has been reduced

from 72 to 48 hours; arrest powers under the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978 are exerciseable only on the basis of reasonable suspicion and the Act itself must now be re-enacted from scratch every five years. There are now also annual reviews of the operation of the Act and the Government are committed to the publication of a code of practice in relation to the exercise of emergency powers.

We continue to seek any ways in which we can increase still further public confidence in the administration of justice.

Northern Ireland Police Authority

39. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what discussions he has had with the chairman of the Northern Ireland Police Authority in the last month on operational police activities.

Mr. Stanley: None. Police operations are a matter for the Chief Constable of the RUC.

Milk and Beef Production

40. **Mr. Mallon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many meetings he has had during 1987-88 with the leaders of the two main farmers unions in Northern Ireland to discuss the problems of milk and beef production.

Mr. Viggers: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and my noble Friend, Lord Lyell, have frequent meetings with farmers and representatives of the farming community at which all aspects of the industry are discussed, including milk and beef production.

Victoria Primary School, Newtownards

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on how many occasions since 1 August 1987 teachers at Victoria primary school, Newtownards, have had to accept additional pupils into their classes due to the new guidelines for the provision of substitute teachers.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information sought is not held centrally.

New Power Station

Sir John Biggs-Davison: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what further discussions have been held with Northern Ireland Electricity and the Antrim Power Company Ltd. on the next power station for the Province; whether bids to build, own and operate it have been received from elsewhere; and when he expects to announce the result of the competition between the bidders.

Mr. Viggers: I met representatives of Northern Ireland Electricity and the Antrim Power Company Limited on 22 December 1987, when I invited them to review their proposals and submit revised bids by 31 January 1988. Decisions will be taken and announced as soon as possible after the revised bids have been received and evaluated. In addition to APCL, five other private sector submissions were received at the outset of the competition, but these are no longer in contention.

Water Availability (Fermanagh Lakes)

Sir John Biggs-Davison: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the general findings of the latest studies available to the Department of the Environment, Northern Ireland, of the quality of the water in the Fermanagh lakes; to what extent those studies have been carried out in co-operation with authorities and organisations across the border; and what are the present factors adverse to the health and quantity of fish and therefore to tourism.

Mr. Needham: The report "The Erne System: A Water Quality Study" which was published on 18 January 1988 was prepared by a working group drawn from the Departments of the Environment for Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, the Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland, An Foras Forbartha and Cavan, Monaghan, Leitrim and Donegal county councils. The study found that most of the lakes in the catchment are moderately to highly eutrophic, it drew particular attention to the over-enrichment due to phosphorus from sewage, industrial and agricultural sources; and has recommended remedial action. The health and quantity of fish did not fall within the terms of reference of this study. A copy of the report is now available in the Library.

Downe Hospital, Downpatrick

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proposals he has received from the Eastern Health and Social Services Board, with regard to provision for the replacement of the Downe hospital, Downpatrick; and if he will give top priority to approving and funding such a proposal.

Mr. Needham: None as yet, but the Eastern health and social services board has indicated that it foresees a need for the hospital's replacement at some stage after the end of the current planning period in 1992.

It would be inappropriate for me to speculate at this stage what degree of priority any such proposal might attract.

Roads (Skid Resistance)

Mr. Maginnis: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will introduce a similar programme to the Department of Transport's SCRIM project, to monitor the skid resistance of motorways and arterial routes; and what amount of extra cash he intends to make available for *(a)* the programme and *(b)* resultant remedial works during the next four years.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 27 January 1988]:* The Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland already makes substantial use of the SCRIM process to monitor the condition of road surfaces. £25·55 million is available in the current financial year for the structural maintenance programme, which includes use of SCRIM. A similar sum is expected to be allocated in future years.

Republic of Ireland (Car Exports)

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information he has as to the number of new cars which have been imported into the United Kingdom from the Republic of Ireland in each of

the last 12 months to the end of 1987; where the sales of these vehicles are concentrated in Northern Ireland; and what proportion of the market for new cars these imports represent in these areas.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 27 January 1988]:* The information is not available in the form requested. The number of new cars registered in Northern Ireland during each month of 1987, the number of such vehicles which originated in the Republic of Ireland and the percentage of the total which this latter figure represents are set out in the following table. No information is kept on the areas where vehicles are sold in Northern Ireland.

1987	*New Vehicles Registered*	*RoI Vehicles*	*Per cent.*
January	5,881	9	0·15
February	5,484	11	0·20
March	5,649	14	0·24
April	4,895	22	0·44
May	4,969	18	0·36
June	5,614	38	0·67
July	3,996	18	0·45
August	4,258	16	0·37
September	4,476	21	0·47
October	3,793	17	0·44
November	2,689	27	1·00
December	1,438	10	0·69
Total	53,142	221	0·46

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what inspection of new cars and other new vehicles imported from the Republic of Ireland are carried out to ensure that each such vehicle meets the standards laid down.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 27 January 1988]:* None.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he intends to take to ensure fair competition in the sale of new cars in Northern Ireland as between new cars imported into Northern Ireland from the Irish Republic and those which come into Northern Ireland via the manufacturers dealership.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 27 January 1988]:* I am satisfied with existing arrangements where all new cars on first registration in Northern Ireland with the exception of personal imports, must demonstrate that they meet prescribed standards. Pricing policy is a matter for the vehicle manufacturers, importers and dealers. I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Rating Reform

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* to show for 1987 (i) the number of *(a)* electors, *(b)* domestic ratepayers and *(c)* other ratepayers in each council district of Northern Ireland, (ii) the regional rate for Northern Ireland, (iii) the district rate for each council district in Northern Ireland, (iv) the sum needed per elector in each council district to raise a sum equal to the sums raised by the district rate from domestic hereditaments if such a district rate were replaced by a community charge, (v) the sums raised from domestic rates in each council district in Northern Ireland, in respect of the local rate, and (vi) the sums raised from non-domestic rates in each council district in Northern Ireland in respect of the regional rate.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 27 January 1988]:* The regional rate for Northern Ireland for 1987-88 is 113·53p in the pound. The other information requested is as follows.

District	*LG electors*	*Domestic ratepayers*	*Other ratepayers*	*District rate P in the £*	*Equivalent amount per elector £*	*Product of domestic district rate £*	*Product of non-domestic regional rate £*
Antirm	27,572	14,620	1,600	48·50	39·33	1,084,328	4,359,057
Ards	45,266	24,190	2,598	53·00	44·65	2,021,036	3,134,828
Armagh	35,417	16,876	2,347	38·00	25,64	908,066	2,277,692
Ballymena	39,304	19,736	2,435	39·85	31·84	1,251,524	3,936,617
Ballymoney	16,685	7,842	1,024	46·00	32,36	539,846	1,155,942
Banbridge	23,600	11,234	1,416	50·98	36·32	857,155	1,600,058
Belfast	220,326	116,480	20,885	80·03	57·36	12,638,575	33,670,233
Carrickfergus	21,627	12,012	980	59·41	48·99	1,059,578	2,896,270
Castlereagh	46,005	23,342	1,088	41·00	33.10	1,522,565	3,555,151
Coleraine	34,623	18,931	2,526	50·00	47·04	1,628,537	3,992,904
Cookstown	20,551	9,648	1,360	43·00	27·88	572,994	1,358,516
Craigavon	51,716	26,886	4,092	63·35	47·77	2,470,708	5,182,400
Derry	58,310	28,476	3,061	69·50	50·36	2,936,568	6,260,355
Down	37,269	18,480	2,452	60·00	45·85	1,708,762	2,636,116
Dungannon	30,991	14,660	2,153	44·00	26·41	818,430	2,041,618
Fermanagh	37,868	18,421	2,391	50·75	30·23	1,144,723	2,505,848
Larne	21,295	11,685	1,203	52·55	39·04	831,333	1,843,049
Limavady	17,514	8,433	937	40·95	30·84	540,046	1,343,320
Lisburn	61,551	32,404	2,720	49·75	44·71	2,751,956	6,145,444
Magherafelt	24,378	10,796	1,504	41·05	26·00	633,859	1,388,224
Moyle	10,210	5,323	749	65·75	50·04	510,938	618,481
Newry and Mourne	54,709	26,161	3,616	59·70	38·65	2,114,606	3,722,467
Newtownabbey	52,718	27,500	2,035	57·24	47·17	2,486,901	5,436,749
North Down	50,089	27,007	1,998	60·90	64·70	3,240,534	3,730,825
Omagh	29,884	13,806	1,762	51·65	32·49	970,832	2,216,695
Strabane	24,023	11,172	1,361	54·00	31·76	762,926	1,331,844

Salmon and Grilse

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what number of salmon and grilse have been taken by *(a)* rod anglers, *(b)* draft nets *(c)* drift nets and *(d)* other nets in Northern Ireland in each of the last 20 years to the end of 1987.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 27 January 1988]:* No information is available for catches by rod anglers. The information requested for catches by commercial nets is shown below. This information relates to Northern Ireland other than the Foyle area:

Year	*Draft nets*	*Drift nets*	*Other nets*
1968	4,510	2,489	14,322
1969	3,113	5,258	8,556
1970	3,780	6,786	7,884
1971	3,258	6,923	6,617
1972	9,475	n/a	n/a
1973	4,375	2,321	n/a
1974	9,104	n/a	n/a
1975	4,743	n/a	n/a
1976	7,603	1,010	3,992
1977	7,623	1,176	5,796
1978	11,684	1,980	7,088
1979	6,878	990	5,886
1980	4,493	1,179	9,642
1981	2,738	992	4,916
1982	5,913	1,041	8,075
1983	5,780	1,231	8,106
1984	3,416	662	9,740
1985	1,896	1,010	6,448
1986	1,759	479	9,650
[1]1987			

[1] Not yet available.

Cars (Pricing Policy)

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information he has as to the pricing policy by the manufacturers of cars in respect of comparable models between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 27 January 1988]:* None.

Vehicle Imports

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what regulatory restrictions apply to the importation of *(a)* new cars and *(b)* new vans and other commercial type vehicles from the Irish Republic into Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 27 January 1988]:* I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Unit Labour Costs

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give United Kingdom relative unit labour costs in normalised currencies, based on the International Monetary Fund spending for 1984, 1985, 1986 and 1987.

Mr. Lilley: International Monetary Fund measures of actual and normalised relative unit labour costs are published in *Economic Trends*, page 46.

Data Transfer

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what will be the purpose and nature of data to be transferred to Customs and Excise from the Department of Health and Social Security, the Inland Revenue, and the Home Department; and how many data records it is envisaged will be annually transferred from each of these three Departments to Her Majesty's Customs and Excise, broken down by Department;

(2) what will be the purpose and nature of data to be transferred to the Home Department from the Department of Health and Social Security, the Inland Revenue, and Her Majesty's Customs and Excise; and how many data records it is envisaged will be annually transferred from each of these three Departments to the Home Department, broken down by Department.

(3) what will be the purpose and nature of data to be transferred to the Inland Revenue from the Department of Health and Social Security, the Home Department and Her Majesty's Customs and Excise; and how many data records it is envisaged will be annually transferred from each of these three Departments to the Inland Revenue, broken down by Department;

(4) what will be the purpose and nature of data to be transferred to the Department of Health and Social Security from the Inland Revenue, the Home Department and Her Majesty's Customs and Excise; and how many data records it is envisaged will be annually transferred from each of these three Departments to the Department of Health and Social Security, broken down by Department;

Mr. Brooke: The information is not held centrally. The proposed Government data network is intended primarily for intra-departmental data traffic. Where interdepartmental exchanges or accesses are intended, use of GDN would not alter the requirement for the Department owning the data to authorise transfer.

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what will constitute the transfer of data in an authorised manner on the Government data network; and how many individual civil servants in the Department of Health and Social Security, the Inland Revenue, the Home Department and Her Majesty's Customs and Excise are likely to be able to carry out an authorised transfer of data.

Mr. Brooke: The majority of data transfers over the Government data network will occur within a Department, but whether a transfer is internal or interdepartmental, the data owner will still have to authorise it.

The number of staff involved will vary according to the system or application concerned. Information will not be held centrally.

Data Banks

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide a list of all existing or planned computer data banks holding personal information in the Department of Health and Social Security, the Inland Revenue, the Home Department and Her Majesty's Customs and Excise, including the number of records, number of terminals and the nature of the information stored.

Mr. Brooke: The nature of the information stored is set out in the appropriate departmental entries in the Data Protection Register, a copy of which is in the Library. I regret that the other information requested is not available centrally.

Privatisation (Accountancy Fees)

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the aggregate of the fees paid to the largest eight accountancy firms in respect of all privatisation issues undertaken since 1979.

Mr. Norman Lamont: For commercial reasons, it is not the practice to reveal the fees paid to particular advisers.

Accountancy Firms (Tax Planning)

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide an estimate of the tax lost to the Revenue in 1987 as a direct consequence of tax planning by accountancy firms.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Channel Islands

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the estimated annual loss to the Exchequer in tax revenue resulting from the use of the Channel Islands as a tax haven for individuals and companies.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I regret that it is not possible to provide such an estimate.

BP Shares

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether the BP underwriting agreements with overseas institutions allows the BP shares taken up by such entities to be held by United Kingdom affiliates or branches such that any losses on these shares would be deductible in computing United Kingdom corporation tax or capital gains tax.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Overseas underwriters acquiring shares in BP in their own name were not constrained by the underwriting agreement in the holding of those shares.

Underwriting Commissions

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide an estimate of the revenue lost to the Exchequer in 1986-87 and 1987-88 through the exemption of pension funds from tax on underwriting commissions.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The taxation affairs of pension funds are dealt with by local tax offices. The information requested is not centrally available and to obtain it would involve disproportionate cost.

Third World Debt

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has about the total holdings of Third world debt by United Kingdom clearing banks.

Mr. Lilley: The clearing banks identify their exposure to a number of developed and developing countries in their published reports and accounts. The latest such information was published last July by the main United Kingdom clearing bank groups in their 1987 interim results.

Income Tax Exemptions

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the change in Treasury income during the 1988-89 financial year resulting from confining all income tax exemptions to an upper limit of 20 per cent.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 19 January 1988]:* The yield in a full year, at 1988-89 levels of income, from restricting all income tax reliefs to 20 per cent. of income after deduction of personal allowances would be about £2¼ billion. This estimate assumes that the 1987-88 income tax regime is indexed to 1988-89 according to the statutory formula and that there is no change in taxpayers' behaviour.

Income Tax

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make an estimate of the change in Treasury income during the 1988-89 financial year resulting from setting income tax rates as follows: nil to £5,200 at 20 per cent., £5,201 to £9,500 at 25 per cent., £9,501 to £13,000 at 30 per cent., £13,001 to £18,000 at 35 per cent., £18,001 to £24,000 at 40 per cent., £24,001 to £30,000 at 50 per cent., £30,001 to £39,000 at 55 per cent., and £39,001 or more at 60 per cent.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 19 January 1988]:* The direct revenue cost in a full year at 1988-89 levels of income of the proposed regime would be about £5·5 billion more than the cost of indexation of the current income tax regime, in accordance with the statutory formula. This estimate assumes that the regime would retain the indexed levels of personal allowances and that the wife's earnings election is made where it is beneficial. No other allowance is made for possible changes in taxpayers' behaviour.

Personal Allowances

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make an estimate of the change in Treasury income during the 1988-89 financial year resulting from setting income tax allowances at the following rates: single person £2,600, married male nil, partners income £2,600, children £1,560, blind £600, widower £1,560, single person aged 60 to 74 years £3,130, married person aged 60 to 74 years £4,950, maximum allowance for people aged 60 to 74 years £10,500, single person aged 75 years £3,350, married person aged 75 plus years £5,230, and maximum allowance for people aged 75 plus years £10,500.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 19 January 1988]:* The direct revenue cost in a full year at 1988-89 levels of income of the proposed regime would be just over £1 billion more than the cost of indexation of the current tax regime in accordance with the statutory formula. The estimates assume that the wife's earninings election is made where it is beneficial, but no other allowance is made for posssible changes in taxpayers' behaviour.

Taxpayers (Statistics)

Mr. Jack: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide a table showing the number of *(a)* taxpayers and *(b)* taxpayers with children, in each of the following taxable income brackets: nil to £5,000, £5,001 to £7,500, £7,501 to £10,000, £10,001 to £12,500, £12,501 to £15.000, £15,001 to £17,500, £17,501 to £20,000, £20,001 to £22,500, £22,501 to £25,000, £25,001 to £30,000 and £30,000 and over; and if he will further break down the information for each taxable income bracket into the categories: married, single and self-employed.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 20 January 1988]:]:* The table gives estimates of tax units (ie single people or married couples) who have some income tax liability in 1987-88. Figures are given *(a)* for all tax units and *(b)* for tax units with children for each specified range of gross income assessed for income tax purposes.

(a) Tax units[1] with income tax liability in 1987-88

Gross Income £ per year	*Single People '000s*	*Married Couples '000s*	*[2]Self-employed '000s*	*[1]All tax units '000s*
under 5,000	3,000	260	230	3,260
5,000— 7,500	2,640	1,300	370	3,950
7,500—10,000	1,840	1,880	390	3,720
10,000—12,500	950	2,060	320	3,010
12,500—15,000	410	1,800	220	2,210
15,000—17,500	230	1,270	170	1,500
17,500—20,000	130	980	110	1,030
20,000—22,500	90	500	80	590
22,500—25,000	40	400	60	440
25,000—30,000	50	430	90	480
over 30,000	90	610	240	700
Total	9,460	11,430	2,280	20,900

(b) Tax units[1] with children with income tax liability in 1987-88

Gross Income £ per year	*Single People '000s*	*Married Couples '000s*	*[2]Self-employed '000s*	*[1]All tax units '000s*
under 5,000	60	100	30	150
5,000— 7,500	110	510	120	630
7,500—10,000	110	930	160	1,040
10,000—12,500	50	1,120	150	1,170
12,500—15,000	30	1,000	100	1,030
15,000—17,500	10	620	70	630
17,500—20,000	10	500	50	500
20,000—22,500	10	280	40	290
22,500—25,000	[3]—	210	30	210
25,000—30,000	[3]—	210	40	210
over 30,000	10	310	110	320
Total	400	5,780	890	6,180

[1] Single people and married couples.
[2] Tax units in which at least one individual is assessed for tax on self-employment income; self-employed tax units are included in the figures for single and married couples tax units as appropriate.
[3] Negligible.

Mortgage Interest Tax Relief

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will *(a)* publish a table on restructuring mortgage interest tax relief to different rates of taxation for 1987-88, *(b)* report how many mortgagors receive relief at rates in excess of the basic rates of income tax and *(c)* report how many persons currently paying tax only at standard rate would pay tax at a higher rate if mortgage tax relief were removed from higher rates of tax; and what would be the additional income to the Exchequer, in the manner of his answer of 8 April 1986, *Official Report*, column *100*.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 26 January 1988]:* The direct revenue yields in a full year, at 1987-88 levels, from restricting mortgage interest relief are as follows. The estimates make no allowance for the effect of any consequential changes to the distribution of outstanding mortgages.

Rate of mortgage interest relief per cent.	*Direct revenue yield £ million*
15	2,240
20	1,440
25	650
27	330

It is estimated that, in 1987-88, about 930,000 mortgagors will have received relief at rates in excess of the basic rate of income tax. Of these, about 190,000 who are currently liable only at basic rate are kept out of higher rates by virtue of their mortgage interest relief.

Taxes

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing total taxes as a proportion of gross domestic product in each year since 1978-79.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 26 January 1988]:* Following is the information:

Total Taxes and National Insurance Contributions as a Percentage of Money GDP

	Percentage
1978-79	33·8
1979-80	35·1
1980-81	36·3
1981-82	39·4
1982-83	38·9
1983-84	38·5
1984-85	39·1
1985-86	38·5
1986-87	37·9

Northern Ireland (Vehicle Imports)

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the time lapse between the importation of a new vehicle into Northern Ireland from the Republic of Ireland and the payment of value added tax on such a vehicle; and whether he has any plans to reduce that period.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 27 January 1988]:* Value added tax is payable at the time of importation or may be deferred, under guarantee arrangements, until the 15th day of the month following importation.

There are no plans to reduce the period of payment by deferment.

Undeclared Taxes

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what was the total value of undeclared taxes other than value added tax and income tax discovered and recouped by his Department in each year since 1979;

(2) what was the total value of undeclared income tax discovered and recouped by his Department in each year since 1979.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answers 20 January 1988]:* Records are not kept of the amounts of individual taxes recouped as a result of investigations. However, the total amounts — including, where appropriate, interest and penalties — of income tax, corporation tax and capital gains tax are as follows:

	£ million
Year to 31 October	
1979	111·6
1980	137·9
1981	165·1
1982	265·6
Year to 31 March	
1983	304·8
1984	399·2
1985	594·4
1986	694·5
1987	741·3

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what has been the percentage change in the value of under-declarations of taxes other than value added tax and income tax discovered per tax control officer since *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1984;

(2) what has been the percentage change in the value of under-declarations of income tax discovered per income tax control officer since *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1984.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answers 20 January 1988]:* For the reasons given in my earlier replies to the hon. Member, it is not possible to give this information. However the percentage increases in the average amounts of income tax, corporation tax and capital gains tax — including interest and penalties — recovered by each Inland Revenue investigator were as follows:

	Per cent.
1980 to 1987	172
1984 to 1987	61

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what has been the average increase in the value of the under-declarations of taxes other than income tax and value added tax discovered per tax control officer in each year since 1979;

(2) what has been the average increase in the value of under-declarations of income tax discovered per income tax control officer in each year since 1979.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answers 20 January 1988]:* For the reasons given in my earlier replies to the hon. Member, it is not possible to give this information. However, the estimated average increase in the amount of income tax, corporation tax and capital gains tax — including interest and penalties — recovered by each Inland Revenue investigator over each preceding year since 1979 is £20,451.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what is his estimate of the ratio of current employment costs of the tax control officers to undeclared taxes, other than income tax and value added tax, discovered and recouped; and what are the figures for each year since 1979;

(2) what is his estimate of the ratio of current employment costs of the income tax control officers to undeclared income tax discovered and recouped; and what are the figures for each year since 1979.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answers 20 January 1988]:* For the reasons given in my earlier replies to the hon. Member, it is not possible to give figures for individual taxes. Moreover cost-yield ratios for Inland Revenue investigators have only been produced for the years 1983-84 onwards, and figures for earlier years could not be produced except at disproportionate cost. Figures are kept separately for the Inland Revenue's main investigation sections and are as follows:

	1983-84	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
Tax offices	1:6	1:6·8	[1]1:17	[1]1:13
Inquiry branch	1:12·5	1:17·6	1:17	1:16
Special offices	1:17	1:27	1:25	1:31
PAYE audit	1:4	1:5·5	1:5·7	1:6

[1] An improved way of estimating the yield in Tax Districts from technical adjustments means that these figures are not wholly comparable with those for earlier years. There were also some exceptionally large settlements in 1985-86.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the increase in the value of under-declarations of income tax discovered per income tax control officer in each year since 1979.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 20 January 1988]:* For reasons given in my earlier replies to the hon. Member, it is not possible to give this information. However the increases in the estimated average amounts of income tax, corporation tax and capital gains tax—including interest and penalties — recovered by each Inland Revenue investigator over each preceding year are as follows:

	Average estimated yield per Investigator £	*Estimated increase over previous year* £
1980	83,122	—
1981	83,978	856
1982	122,622	38,644
1983	122,164	(458)
1984	140,415	18,251
1985	185,692	45,277
1986	212,256	26,564
1987	226,282	14,026

Tax Control Officers

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how many tax control officers, other than those dealing with value added tax and income tax, are at present employed in the United Kingdom; and what are the corresponding figures for each year since 1979;

(2) how many income tax control officers are at present employed in the United Kingdom and in Wales and England; and what are the corresponding figures for each year since 1979.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answers 20 January 1988]:* Inland Revenue investigation officers do not, in general, deal exclusively in particular taxes and it is not possible to give separate figures for those engaged on imcome tax compliance and those engaged on other taxes. Moreover, for many staff, work on avoidance and evasion is only a part of their duties. However, the total number of staff units employed throughout the UK in dealing with avoidance and evasion of income tax, corporation tax and capital gains tax for each of the years 1980-87 (the figure for 1979 is not available) were as follows:

	Number
1980	1,659
1981	1,966
1982	2,166
1983	2,495
1984	2,843
1985	3,201
1986	3,272
1987	3,276

ENVIRONMENT

Community Alarm Systems

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to how many local authorities maintain community alarm services for residents in their own homes.

Mrs. Roe: The Department does not hold this information.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what specific provision is made in (1) grant related expenditure assessments and (2) Government spending plans for local authority housing or personal services for the maintenance of community alarm services.

Mrs. Roe: It is for local authorities to decide what resources to devote to alarm systems. Grant related expenditure assessments and capital allocations take account of authorities' needs to spend on the elderly and disabled.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he intends to make any assessment of the number of residents covered by community alarm schemes, or to offer any guidance to local authorities on their provision.

Mrs. Roe: We have no plans to seek information on the numbers covered by alarm systems. Guidance on their provision has been give to local authorities.

Fuller Peiser (Fees)

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his answers of 14 January, *Official Report*, column *358*, and 19 January *Official Report*, column *603*, he will give the fees earned by Fuller Peiser for *(a)* its commission for the Property Services Agency at Rosyth and Devonport dockyards and *(b)* its management of the sale of the assets of Aycliffe and Peterlee new town corporation; whether either of these commissions were gained as a result of competitive tendering; and what guidance has been given to the Property Services Agency on competitive tendering for property management, disposal, and consultancy.

Mrs. Roe: The commission at the Rosyth and Devonport Dockyards was let to Fuller Peiser in competition with several other firms of agents. The appointment of Fuller Peiser to market the industrial assets of Aycliffe and Peterlee was also subject to competition and my Department was involved in the development corporation's selection of agents. It is not the Department's practice to publish information about the fees paid. It is PSA's normal policy for all forms of agency and consultancy except for minor sales to invite competitive tenders from firms with the appropriate expertise for the task.

Control of Pollution Act 1974

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to review the operation of section 27 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974.

Mr. Moynihan: I see no reason to do so.

Rating Reform

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate, on the basis of the 1987-88 budgets and consistent with figures published by his Department during 1987, the total fully-introduced community charge bills of households with one, two, three, four, five and six adults for each authority in Great Britain.

Mr. Ridley: Yes. The answers are respectively one, two, three, four, five and six times the figures for illustrative community charges published on 29 June in respect of England, 3 July in respect of Wales and 10 July in respect of Scotland. For those on low incomes, assistance will be available through income support and community charge rebates.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate, on the basis of 1987-88 budgets, and consistent with figures published by his Department during 1987, the total fully-introduced community charge bills of households with one, two, three, four, five and six adults, where each of those adults is on maximum benefit, for each authority in Great Britain.

Mr. Ridley: Yes. The answers are respectively 0·2, 0·4, 0·6, 0·8, one and 1·2 times the illustrated community charge figures published on 29 June in respect of England and 3 July in respect of Wales. For Scotland the answers are respectively one, two, three, four, five and six times the illustrative rebated community charge figures given to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Griffiths) on 1 December at column *520*, by my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Scottish Office.

Local Authorities (Payment of Bills)

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidance he has given, or will give, to local authorities on the payment of bills from suppliers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The payment of bills from suppliers is a matter for local authorities and on which they have received advice from the Audit Commission.

My right hon. Friend has not given guidance; nor has he plans to do so.

County Halls

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give details of the current use of each of the county halls following the abolition of the metropolitan county councils.

Mr. Chope: All the county halls of the former metropolitan county councils are currently used for administrative purposes.

Local Government Reform

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is yet in a position to give an analysis of the financial and staff savings in respect of each of the abolished metropolitan councils.

Mr. Chope: The functions which successor authorities have inherited from the former metropolitan county councils have, in large measure, been amalgamated with their pre-abolition functions. The data which the Secretary of State receives from those authorities does not therefore separately identify expenditure incurred on their inherited functions.

The residuary bodies established to wind up the affairs of the abolished county councils estimate that some £114·85 million of MCC closing revenue balances and some £47·3 million capital receipts arising from their own disposals of surplus capital assets will be available for distribution to all rating authorities in the MCC areas by 31 March 1989.

We announced in February last year that some 6,300 posts had been saved immediately on abolition. These savings are not available by individual MCCs. However, we estimate that long term savings to ratepayers of some £100 million per annum will result from staff savings following abolition. About half these savings will be as a direct result of the abolition of the MCCs.

Wildlife Division

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the responsibilities of the wildlife division in his Department.

Mr. Moynihan: The functions and duties of the wildlife division are listed in the Department's management information system for Ministers. A copy of MINIS 8 is available in the Library of the House.

Vicuna

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from the Peruvian embassy in London in respect of vicuna stocks in the United Kingdom and Hong Kong; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: In 1987, the Peruvian embassy sought details of the amounts and destinations of trade in vicuna, and stock levels of vicuna available in the United Kingdom market. It was not possible to provide a full answer because there is a discrepancy between United Kingdom and Japanese statistics. This is being fully investigated and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office advised the embassy accordingly. No representations have been received from the embassy about vicuna stocks in Hong Kong.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give details of all vicuna products exported to Japan in each of the past five years.

Mr. Moynihan: Full details are not yet available. I will write to the hon. Member.

Rhinoceros Products

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps have been taken by Her Majesty's Government to implement the resolution agreed at the CITES conference in Ottawa in July 1987 on the trade in rhinoceros products; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: The United Kingdom is pursuing a detailed response to this resolution with our European Community partners.

In the meantime, however, EC regulation 3626/82 which has implemented the convention on international trade in endangered species of wild fauna and flora within the European Community since 1 January 1984, already bans international trade in rhinoceros products for commercial purposes and their sale within the United Kingdom. Only limited exceptions may be made to this ban under the provisions of the regulations and, in deciding whether to permit an exception, the United Kingdom now takes the rhinoceros resolution into account.

Cumbria (RSG)

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the value in money terms of the domestic resource equalisation component in the rate support grant settlement to the county of Cumbria for each financial year since 1978-79.

Mr. Chope: The information is as follows:

	£ million
1981-82	11·2
1982-83	12·3
1983-84	14·0
1984-85	15·6
1985-86	17·6
1986-87	20·1
1987-88	21·0
1988-89	23·8

Information is not available for years prior to the introduction of the present rate support grant arrangements in 1981-82.

Rates (Summonses)

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what figures he has on the numbers of the issue of summonses for the alleged non-payment of rates to households which have already paid their rates in London boroughs over the most recent period for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Rate collection statistics produced by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy show that in 1986-87, 962 summonses for non-payment of rates were issued by Greater London boroughs. Information is not collected on how many of these summonses were issued to ratepayers who had already paid their rates, but I have no reason to believe the numbers involved are significant.

Derelict Land

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what resources are being made available under the derelict land programme in 1988-89; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: The resources available for derelict land reclamation under the derelict land grant programme will be about £76·2 million in 1988-89. In real terms, these resources are over 80 per cent. greater than those available in 1979-80 and will maintain the momentum of this programme which, since 1979, has funded the reclamation of nearly 11,000 hectares of derelict land. Additional resources for derelict land reclamation are provided through urban development corporations. As in previous years, more than 90 per cent. of derelict land grant will be spent in the areas of greatest need in the north and midlands.

I am keen to encourage the growing participation of private firms in land reclamation and I have set aside an allocation of £7·66 million for this sector. But, outside UDC areas, local authorities will continue to play the major role in reclamation and the resources I have made available for these schemes total £68·27 million.

I have approved a new rolling programme for the reclamation of the extensive areas of dereliction in the Leeds-Liverpool canal corridor, while continuing existing rolling programmes outside UDC areas. Total expenditure on the 13 local authority rolling programmes approved for 1988-89 will be over £21 million.

I have allocated a further £8·75 million to continue support for the reclamation of the former Consett and Corby steelworks (£3·75 million), and to investigative and remedial works on limestone workings in the black country (£5 million). The non-local authority allocation will allow further work to be carried out on major schemes such as the north Tees power station in Cleveland (£0·495 million) and the former Dunlop site at Speke, Merseyside (£0·4 million).

My allocations include more than £8 million for the reclamation of coal-mining and related dereliction. This is larger even than year's record figure and shows the Government's continued support for good quality schemes in coalfield areas.

Priorities for derelict land reclamation remain as set out in my Department's circular 28/85—"Reclamation and Re-use of Derelict Land". This stressed the importance of schemes designed to reclaim urban especially inner-city land for housing, and industrial and commercial end uses. These priorities will be reflected in the schemes which will be supported in 1988-89.

County Hall, London

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to make an announcement on the future use of county hall.

Mr. Chope: I have nothing to add to my reply of 28 October 1987, at columns *275-76*, to my hon. Friend for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway).

SOCIAL SERVICES

Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale Health Authority

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the current planned levels of establishment for medical staff in the Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale health authority; and what are the current levels of staff in post.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that the information is not held centrally in the form requested. The hon. Member may wish to take his query up with the chairman of the Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale health authority.

Lancashire Ambulance Service

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the overall percentage change between 1979 and 1987 in *(a)* the number of patient miles for (i) emergency and (ii) non-emergency and *(b)* the number of patient journeys on the same basis, in the Lancashire ambulance area.

Mrs. Currie: The available information is given in the table.

AMBULANCE SERVICES 1979-1986
Lancashire Ambulance Authority

	1979	*1986*	*1979-86 percentage change*
Number of patient-journeys (thousands)			
Emergency	53·8	56·1	4·3
Non-emergency	601·6	539·3	−10·4

	1979	*[1]1985-86*	*1979-85/86 percentage change*
Number of patient miles (thousands)			
Emergency	479·1	594·9	24·2
Non-emergency	3,316·1	3,593·7	8·4

[1] Figures supplied by York health authority.

Nurses

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many district nurses there were in *(a)* the Burnley constituency and *(b)* the Pendle constituency in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mrs. Currie: Information for constituencies is not available centrally. Staff in post figures for the Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale district health authority are shown in the table and have been obtained from the annual census of non-medical manpower.

NHS District Nurses[1] in post in Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale DHA

30 September	*whole-time equivalents[2]*
1982	99
1983	101
1984	98
1985	95
1986	94

Source: DHSS annual census of NHS non-medical manpower.
Notes:
[1] Includes district nurses, district nurse practical work teachers, registered and enrolled nurses assisting district nurses, holders of dual posts (district nurse/midwife) and bank district nurses.
[2] Figures independently rounded to nearest whole-time equivalent.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give details for the last five years of average earnings of registered nurses showing what percentage is *(a)* basic weekly earnings and *(b)* additions to basic weekly earnings.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 16 December 1987]:* Information for the years from 1983-84 to 1986-87 is set out in the table:

	Average gross weekly earnings £	*Percentage basic pay Per cent.*	*Percentage addition Per cent.*
1983-84	140·49	85	15
1984-85	149·59	87	13
1985-86	160·08	88	12
1986-87	183·34	88	12

Information is not available for earlier years on a comparable basis.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the level of average earnings for registered nurses as a proportion of average earnings for each of the last five years.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 16 December 1987]:* Information for the years from 1983-84 to 1986-87 is set out in the table:

	Average earnings of registered nurses[1] £pw	*Percentage of all average earnings[2]*
1983-84	140·49	88
1984-85	149·59	87
1985-86	160·08	87
1986-87	182·34	92

Information for earlier years is not available on a comparable basis.
Notes:
[1] *Source:* DHSS.
[2] *Source:* New Earnings Survey—All full-time adult employees.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many nurses left the employment of each of the district health authorities in each year from 1979 to 1987.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 26 January 1988]:* I regret that the information requested is not collected centrally. Some information will, however, become available later this year as a result of the introduction of improvements in National Health Service information systems.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what percentage of nurses up to and including senior nurse 7, in each of the health regions had *(a)* at least one overtime payment and *(b)* more than 12 overtime payments, during the year 1986-87, and at what estimated cost in each case.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 26 January 1988]:* I regret that information in the form requested is not held centrally.

Mentally Handicapped Persons

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his estimate of the number of mentally handicapped people who have had their transfer facilitated from National Health Service hospitals to the community since 1978.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that I am unable to give my hon. Friend the exact information requested. Information on numbers of mentally handicapped people settled in the community is not centrally collected.

The table shows the number of people who have been discharged each year into the community after a stay of five years or more in hospital.

Discharges[1] from mental handicap hospitals and units in England after durations of stay of five years or more

Year	*Discharges[1]*
1980	657
1981	764
1982	764
1983	967
1984	1,375
1985	1,522
1986	1,951

[1] Excludes transfer to other NHS hospitals and special hospitals.

Waiting Lists (North East Thames Region)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will provide a table of waiting lists in the North East Thames regional health authority area for each year since 1979.

Mr. Newton: The requested information is given in the table.

Patients on in-patient waiting in North East Thames region

Month	*Year*	*Total cases*
March	1979	57,180
September	1979	53,146
March	1980	52,205
September	1980	49,032
March	1981	47,950
September	1981	48,515
March	1982	48,447
September	1982	58,207
March	1983	60,381
September	1983	58,911
March	1984	63,497
September	1984	63,563
March	1985	66,705
September	1985	66,406
March	1986	71,934
September	1986	74,926
March	1987	76,019

NHS (Special Duties Payments)

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) whether he will make a statement on the decision by the National Health Service management to withdraw the proposal for flat rate payments for special duties;

(2) what are the implications of the decision to withdraw the proposal for flat rate payment for special duties for the future of the current percentage payments to nursing staff;

(3) what are his proposals for the future of special duty payments for nursing staff.

Mr. Newton: The management side of the Nursing and Midwifery Staffs Negotiating Council indicated that, since there was no realistic prospect of agreeing joint evidence on a new structure for special duty payments to put to the Nurses Pay Review Body for its current review, it felt the appropriate course was for the review body itself to be invited to consider the level of such payments as part of its work on nurses' pay issues as a whole. It will be for the review body to decide whether it wishes to make any recommendations.

Benefits

Miss Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how he intends to publicise the major benefit changes due to take place in April, including the replacement of supplementary benefit and family income supplement with income support and family credit; and whether such publicity will be made available in the major ethnic minority languages.

Mr. Portillo: The Department is taking several measures to ensure that this April's social security reforms receive adequate publicity.

A series of factsheets on the social security reforms have been produced and are available free of charge to members of the public from social security offices.

Next month there will be an advertising campaign in the regional press on the new housing benefit scheme. Similar campaigns will follow in March to publicise the introduction of income support (national press), the new arrangements for widows (regional press), and the introduction of family credit (national press). The family credit campaign will also feature a TV commercial.

Posters will publicise the changes in main post offices and social security offices, and copies of these will be sent to other agencies for display. Leaflets are being redesigned and rewritten in line with the Department's communications strategy of improving the quality of information on social security benefits. The leaflets will be available from the usual outlets.

There are no plans at present to issue additional publicity in minority languages specifically on the reforms. However, there will be a new translation of the English-language leaflet FB 2 "Which benefit?", which will be published later this year in seven languages. This will provide a general overview of all social security benefits including the reformed ones.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services which categories of recipients of benefits will gain a special payment following the discovery of the error in the retail prices index; and how many claimants of each benefit will so qualify.

Mr. Scott: The benefits which qualify a recipient for a special payment in the first week of February and the numbers of recipients of each are shown in the table. A recipient may qualify under more than one benefit.

Qualifying benefits for February special payment and number of recipients of each (thousands)

	Number
Attendance Allowance	635
Industrial Death Benefit	30
Industrial Disablement Benefit	200
Invalid Care Allowance	105
Invalidity Benefit	995
Mobility Allowance	495
Retirement Pension	9,725
Severe Disablement Allowance	265
Supplementary Pension	1,875
War Pensions	265
Widows' Benefits	380

In addition, the few thousand people who receive child's special allowance, guardian's allowance, or benefit under the pneumoconiosis and byssinosis and workmen's compensation schemes will receive special payments.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services which categories of recipients of benefits will not gain a special payment following the discovery of the error in the calculation of the retail prices index; and how many claimants are currently drawing these benefits.

Mr. Scott: Affected benefits for which no special payment will be made and the estimated number of recipients of each are shown in the table. Beneficiaries may be receiving more than one of these benefits or they may be receiving them in addition to a benefit which qualifies for the special payment.

Benefits affected by the error in the retail price index for which no special payment will be made and the estimated number of recipients of each (thousands).

	Number
Family Income Supplement	210
Housing Benefit	7,000
Maternity Allowance	40
Sickness Benefit	90
Supplementary Allowance	3,285
Unemployment Benefit	845

Thames Health Regions

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the total expenditure on laundry, cleaning and catering services for each of the four Thames health regions in each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Mrs. Currie: Following in the information requested:

Region	*1984-85 £000*	*1985-86 £000*	*1986-87 £000*
North West Thames			
Laundry	4,638	4,604	4,465
Domestic/Cleaning	35,573	35,557	30,001
Catering	26,958	26,852	27,925
North East Thames			
Laundry	5,649	5,709	5,727
Domestic/Cleaning	45,158	42,612	41,337
Catering	30,991	30,427	30,464
South East Thames			
Laundry	5,737	5,571	5,612
Domestic/Cleaning	37,084	35,087	33,641
Catering	28,858	29,048	29,146
South West Thames			
Laundry	4,697	4,361	4,611
Domestic/Cleaning	28,453	26,404	24,004
Catering	24,256	24,426	24,890

Source: Annual financial accounts of regional and district health authorities comprising the four Thames regions.

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the annual per capita expenditure in terms of persons resident within the region for each of the four Thames health regions in each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Mrs. Currie: Following is the information requested:

Hospital and Community Health Services
Total per capita expenditure

Region	*1984-85 £*	*1985-86 £*	*1986-87 £*
North West Thames	218	228	242
North East Thames	254	261	280
South East Thames	229	240	258
South West Thames	213	223	238

Sources:

(a) Annual accounts of regional and district health authorities comprising the four Thames regions.

(b) Mid-year estimates of population 1984, 1985 and 1986 (Office of Population Censuses and Surveys).

Notes:

1. Expenditure on family practitioner services is excluded: such expenditure is accounted for by family practitioner committees (FPCs) and cannot strictly be attributed to particular regions. However, prior to 1 April 1985 many of the health districts within each region had an associated FPC and those districts' total expenditure for 1984-85 included small, not separately identifiable elements relating to FPC administrative expenses.
2. The population figures used make no allowance for people resident in one region who receive treatment in another or for differences in morbidity and age/sex structure of particular populations.

Rental Purchase Schemes

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his Department's policy on meeting the full cost of weekly payments for the purchase of housing under rental purchase schemes, including capital, assuming all other factors within the housing benefit scheme justify that level of payment.

Mr. Portillo: Payments under rental purchase schemes, including payments of capital, have been eligible for help through housing benefit since the introduction of the scheme in 1982. It is for local authorities to decide on the level of weekly rent (including payments under a rental purchase agreement) which should be taken into account in calculating entitlement to housing benefit but we expect local authorities to use their powers under the housing benefit regulations to restrict benefit if the level of the payment is unreasonable in a particular case. We understand that some local authorities have exercised these powers to restrict benefit to rental purchasers.

The arrangements for helping rental purchasers with their housing costs differ from the arrangements for other people buying their home. Housing benefit is not available for owner-occupiers' mortgage payments. For people who are buying their home with a mortgage and who are not in full-time employment help with mortgage interest payments is available through supplementary benefit but capital repayments are not eligible for assistance. These arrangements will be carried forward in the income support scheme to be introduced in April 1988. In the light of concern about the level of some rental purchase payments and the need to ensure that help given to rental purchasers is fair in comparison with the assistance given to other people buying their homes we are currently reviewing the arrangements for providing help with rental purchase payments.

Mersey RHA

Mr. Butler: to ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the percentage change in the number of day cases in the Mersey regional health authority between 1978 and the latest available year.

Mrs. Currie: Between 1978 and 1986 the number of day cases treated in Mersey region increased by 89·3 per cent., from 41,787 to 79,098.

Hospital Beds

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the recommended level of medical beds in the North Staffordshire district hospital authority hospital complex; and what the actual number was on 8 January.

Mrs. Currie: Decisions on the level of provision of medical beds, as for all specialties, are a matter for regional and district health authorities. For further information the hon. Member may therefore care to write to the chairman of North Staffordshire district health authority. The latest information held centrally on the average daily available beds in North Staffordshire health authority is given in the table.

Average daily available beds in NHS hospitals, 1986, North Staffordshire district health authority

	Average daily available beds
Medical	442·7
Total	3,296·1

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will set out in the *Official Report* in tabular form the number of beds in use in the National Health Service since 1979; and if he will indicate the percentage increase or decrease each year.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested is given in the table, together with in-patients treated over the period.

NHS hospitals in England

Year	*Average daily number of available beds*	*Percentage change on previous year*	*Discharges and deaths*	*Percentage change on previous year*	*Throughput*[1]
1979	361,670	−2·0	5,400,120	0·6	14·9
1980	355,978	−1·6	5,670,001	5·0	15·9
1981	351,669	−1·2	5,759,877	1·6	16·4
1982	348,104	−1·0	5,719,634	−0·7	16·4
1983	343,091	−1·4	6,018,585	5·2	17·5
1984	334,513	−2·5	6,177,545	2·6	18·5
1985	325,487	−2·7	6,353,812	2·9	19·5
1986	315,714	−3·0	6,413,789	0·9	20·3

[1] Number of cases per available bed.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the number of National Health Service beds occupied and unoccupied by category in the Central Nottinghamshire health authority area for the years 1979 to 1987 inclusive.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 15 January 1988]:* The information requested is given in the table.

Number of National Health Service beds available and occupied by specialty in the Central Nottingham health authority[1] *for the years 1979 to 1982 (latest available)*

Specialty	*Average daily number of available beds 1979*	*Average daily bed occupation 1979*	*Average daily number of available beds 1980*	*Average daily bed occupation 1980*	*Average daily number of available beds 1981*	*Average daily bed occupation 1981*	*Average daily number of available beds 1982*	*Average daily bed occupation 1982*
General medicine	128·4	90·7	124·3	86·1	125·0	84·6	121·1	85·9
Paediatrics	19·4	12·5	20·2	13·8	20·9	14·3	19·9	12·4
Thoracic medicine	—	—	—	—	—	—	5·1	1·4
Dermatology	16·8	6·8	17·0	5·4	16·0	6·3	15·9	5·9
Rehabilitation	50·8	32·3	49·9	31·7	48·7	29·9	45·3	19·8
Rheumatology	11·3	10·3	12·0	10·1	12·0	9·2	12·0	9·0
Geriatrics	399·0	340·9	395·7	338·6	395·5	345·1	397·3	336·0
Younger disabled	20·0	16·6	20·0	16·5	20·0	17·0	20·0	16·0
General surgery	160·3	117·9	154·5	115·0	155·5	106·5	151·0	101·6
ENT	26·2	13·3	26·1	13·3	25·6	12·2	26·2	9·2
Trauma and orthopaedic	216·0	148·6	218·1	142·1	217·2	156·2	216·9	139·6
Ophthalmology	19·7	9·1	19·9	9·2	20·0	10·4	20·0	6·8
Urology	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Oral surgery	2·2	0·6	2·2	0·6	2·3	0·7	2·2	0·4
Gynaecology	46·2	31·5	45·3	32·8	45·6	32·2	45·4	25·2
Obstetrics	83·0	51·7	79·0	53·5	71·1	51·5	76·6	49·3
S.C.B.U.	28·0	14·3	28·0	14·0	28·0	12·3	28·0	12·2
Mental handicap	539·0	470·9	538·2	464·0	532·0	448·2	527·9	422·8

Specialty	Average daily number of available beds 1979	Average daily bed occupation 1979	Average daily number of available beds 1980	Average daily bed occupation 1980	Average daily number of available beds 1981	Average daily bed occupation 1981	Average daily number of available beds 1982	Average daily bed occupation 1982
Mental illness	84·9	74·9	85·0	76·7	85·0	77·5	85·0	77·0
G.P. Maternity	42·0	15·2	29·6	11·7	26·3	10·7	20·4	10·4
Pre-convalescent	62·5	43·7	62·0	40·1	25·0	18·0	57·9	33·9
Convalescent	29·2	16·6	29·0	18·5	66·3	37·7	28·9	19·3
Staff Wards	4·0	—	4·0	—	4·0	—	4·0	—
Unclassified	2·3	—	0·9	—	1·1	—	1·3	—
I.C.U.	6·0	—	5·9	—	6·0	—	6·0	—
TOTAL	1,997·2	1,518·4	1,966·8	1,493·7	1,949·1	1,480·5	1,934·3	1,394·1

[1] Prior to National Health Service re-structuring in 1982 was Mansfield and Newark health district.

Number of NHS beds available and occupied by specialty in the Central Nottingham HA[1] for the years 1979 to 1986 (latest available)

Specialty	Average daily no. of available beds 1983	Average daily bed occupation 1983	Average daily no. of available beds 1984	Average daily bed occupation 1984	Average daily no. of available beds 1985	Average daily bed occupation 1985	Average daily no. of available beds 1986	Average daily bed occupation 1986
General medicine	121·4	87·8	125·6	94·6	124·3	93·0	125·8	94·0
Paediatrics	19·5	12·9	28·4	13·7	26·8	14·2	24·0	14·4
Thoracic medicine	5·1	0·8	5·1	1·2	5·0	1·0	4·8	1·0
Dermatology	15·6	7·9	9·9	6·5	8·0	5·6	7·8	5·3
Rehabilitation	56·0	17·1	46·5	19·4	45·5	12·8	36·3	5·5
Rheumatology	12·0	8·6	12·0	9·3	13·0	11·3	12·4	9·3
Geriatrics	399·1	338·6	384·1	334·6	383·9	328·4	382·6	329·2
Younger disabled	20·0	17·2	20·0	16·8	20·0	16·0	20·0	14·1
General surgery	154·7	109·4	154·6	107·7	145·0	101·0	137·6	86·9
ENT	29·5	14·0	27·5	15·7	26·8	16·6	26·5	15·9
Trau and orth	214·9	148·9	215·1	139·4	213·9	140·5	220·1	144·5
Ophthalmology	19·9	11·2	19·9	9·2	18·8	9·0	18·3	9·7
Urology	0·6	0·6	0·9	0·9	8·9	6·2	16·8	11·3
Oral surgery	2·3	0·6	2·0	0·5	2·0	0·5	2·1	0·5
Gynaecology	44·5	31·1	43·3	30·3	43·5	30·2	43·4	29·1
Obstetrics	76·6	43·1	77·4	40·3	75·6	43·2	75·4	42·3
S.C.B.U.	28·0	8·3	28·0	9·2	28·0	9·3	28·0	10·2
Mental handicap	486·0	414·9	477·0	396·0	427·9	378·2	361·6	311·2
Mental illness	85·0	78·1	100·8	87·8	104·0	95·3	104·0	94·4
G. P. Maternity	18·5	10·9	17·4	9·6	18·3	10·1	18·1	10·1
Pre-convalescent	39·8	27·8	19·0	12·3	20·0	11·3	18·1	6·4
Convalescent	28·8	18·7	29·7	14·1	28·9	13·1	28·5	13·8
Staff Wards	4·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Unclassified	0·4	—	0·3	—	0·3	—	0·2	—
I.C.U.	6·0	2·5	6·0	2·3	5·9	2·6	6·0	2·3
Total	1,888·2	1,411·0	1,850·5	1,371·4	1,794·3	1,349·4	1,718·4	1,261·4

[1] Prior to NHS re-structuring in 1982 was Mansfield and Newark HD.

Social Security Appeals

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average time being taken for the hearing of appeals by social security appeal tribunals *(a)* nationally and *(b)* in Preston.

Mr. Portillo: The national administrative statistics for social security appeal tribunals, which are the source for average durations between the lodging of appeals and hearing, are not disaggregated for areas smaller than a social security region.

In Great Britain for the quarter ending 31 March 1987 (the latest available figures), the average time taken between lodgement and hearing of an appeal was 18·2 weeks. In north western region for the same period, the average time taken between lodgement and hearing was 16·5 weeks.

Hospital Travel Costs (Cornwall)

Mr. Harris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give details of increased claims for his Department's assistance on travel to hospital in Cornwall since the Cornwall hospital car service was abolished at the end of November 1987.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that this information is not held centrally.

Schoolchildren (Diet)

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has concerning the school campaign for reaction against meat; if the advice given to schoolchildren not to eat meat has been considered by his Department in relation to any advice he may give concerning the diet of schoolchildren; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: I understand that this is a Vegetarian Society campaign aimed at schoolchildren, but I am awaiting details from the society. The Department's medical advisers make no specific recommendation that schoolchildren should or should not eat meat. However, they advise that meat is an important source of many nutrients and that people who choose not to eat meat should take particular care that their diet compensates for any resultant imbalance.

Infant Mortality

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the underlying causes of cot deaths in England and Wales in 1985 and 1986 where sudden infant death is not the underlying cause of death.

Mrs. Currie: The table shows the underlying cause of death (excluding sudden infant death syndrome) for deaths under one year of age where cot death or a similar term was mentioned on the death certificate for England and Wales for 1985 and 1986.

Number of deaths under one year of age with any mention of cot death or similar term by underlying cause (excluding sudden infant death syndrome) England and Wales 1985-86

ICD number	*Underlying cause of death*	*Number of deaths*
1985		
007.1	Giardiasis	1
008.6	Enteritis due to specified virus	1
009.1	Colitis, enteritis and gastroenteritis of presumed infectious origin	2
054.9	Herpes simplex without mention of complication	1
055.9	Measles without mention of complication	1
079	Viral infection in conditions classified elsewhere and of unspecified site	
079.0	Adenovirus	1
079.8	Other	1
254.8	Other disease of thymus gland	2
270.1	Phenylketonuria	1
276.0	Hyperosmolality and/or hypernatraemia	1
277.0	Cystic fibrosis	1
331.8	Other cerebral degeneration	1
343.9	Infantile cerebral palsy, unspecified	1
348.1	Anoxic brain damage	1
382.9	Unspecified otitis media	2
427.5	Cardiac arrest	1
428.0	Congestive heart failure	1
428.9	Heart failure, unspecified	1
429.0	Myocarditis, unspecified	1
437.1	Other generalized ischaemic cerebrovascular disease	1
464.0	Acute laryngitis	1
464.2	Acute laryngotracheitis	1
465.9	Acute upper respiratory infection of unspecified site	14
466.0	Acute bronchitis	15
466.1	Acute bronchiolitis	4
472.0	Chronic rhinitis	1
478.7	Other diseases of larynx, not elsewhere classified	1
480.9	Viral pneumonia, unspecified	5
481	Pneumococcal pneumonia	1
482.3	Pneumonia due to Streptococcus	1
485	Bronchopneumonia, organism unspecified	7
486	Pneumonia, organism unspecified	5
490	Bronchitis, not specified as acute or chronic	2
491.1	Mucopurulent chronic bronchitis	1
493.9	Asthma, unspecified	1
514	Pulmonary congestion and hypostasis	4
516.8	Other alveolar and parietoalveolar pneumopathy, other	3
518.4	Acute oedema of lung, unspecified	1
519.8	Other diseases of respiratory system, not elsewhere classified	10
742.1	Microcephalus	2
742.4	Other specified anomalies of brain	1
745.4	Ventricular septal defect	3
745.6	Endocardial cushion defects	1
746.3	Congenital stenosis of aortic valve	1
746.9	Unspecified anomalies of heart	1
747.0	Patent ductus arteriosus	1
749.0	Cleft palate	1
753.2	Obstructive defects of renal pelvis and ureter	1
761.5	Multiple pregnancy	3
762.3	Placental transfusion syndromes	1
765	Disorders relating to short gestation and unspecified low birthweight	
765.0	Extreme immaturity	1
765.1	Other preterm infants	1
770·8	Other respiratory problems after birth	3
771.1	Congenital cytomegalvirus infection	1
771.8	Other infection specific to the perinatal period	1
799.1	Respiratory failure	6
E911	Inhalation and ingestion of food causing obstruction of respiratory tract or suffocation	10
1986[1]		
009.1	Colitis, enteritis and gastroenteritis of presumed infectious origin	2
038.0	Streptococcal septicaemia	1
041	Bacterial infection in conditions classified elsewhere and of unspecified site	
041.0	Streptococcus	1
041.5	Haemophilus influenzae	1
049.0	Lymphocytic choriomeningitis	1
136.9	Unspecified infectious and parasitic diseases	1
276.5	Volume depletion	2
286.6	Defibrination syndrome	1
320.0	Haemophilus meningitis	1
345.9	Unspecified epilepsy	1
348.1	Anoxic brain damage	1
348.5	Cerebral oedema	3
382.9	Unspecified otitis media	8
416.0	Primary pulmonary hypertension	1
428.1	Left heart failure	1
429.3	Cardiomegaly	1
464.1	Acute tracheitis	1
464.3	Acute epiglottitis	1
465.9	Acute upper respiratory infection of unspecified site	17
466.0	Acute bronchitis	9
466.1	Acute bronchiolitis	7
478.2	Other diseases of pharynx, not elsewhere classified	1
480.9	Viral pneumonia, unspecified	4
481	Pneumococcal pneumonia	1
482.3	Pneumonia due to Streptococcus	2
482.4	Pneumonia due to Staphylococcus	2
485	Bronchopneumonia, organism unspecified	1
486	Pneumonia, organism unspecified	11
490	Bronchitis, not specified as acute or chronic	1
514	Pulmonary congestion and hypostasis	3
516.8	Other alveolar and parietoalveolar pneumopathy, other	3
519.8	Other diseases of respiratory system, not elsewhere classified	7
572.8	Other sequelae of chronic liver disease	1
742.1	Microcephalus	2
742.9	Unspecified anomalies of brain, spinal cord and nervous system	1
745.5	Ostium secundum type atrial septal defect	2
747.3	Anomalies of pulmonary artery	1
747.5	Absence of hypoplasia of umbilical artery	1

ICD number	Underlying cause of death	Number of deaths
748.4	Congenital cystic lung	1
749.0	Cleft palate	1
758.0	Down's syndrome	1
765	Disorders relating to short gestation and unspecified low birthweight	
765.1	Other preterm infants	3
767.0	Subdural and cerebral haemorrhage	2
799.1	Respiratory failure	4
799.9	Other ill-defined and unknown causes of morbidity and mortality	1
E911	Inhalation and ingestion of food causing obstruction of respiratory tract or suffocation	9
E967.9	Child battering and other maltreatment by unspecified person	1

[1] Excludes deaths under 28 days of age.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many housing benefit claimants have had their benefit reduced by non-dependant deductions over the past year; and what this represents as a percentage of the total of housing benefit claimants;

(2) if he will estimate the total number of non-dependants in respect of whom reductions of housing benefit are currently being made.

Mr. Portillo: Figures are not available either for the total number of housing benefit claimants or for the number affected by the non-dependant deduction provisions. The available information shows that, as at autumn 1986, 710,000 housing benefit recipients had a non-dependant deduction made in respect of one or more non-dependants. This represents 10 per cent. of the total number of housing benefit recipients.

Information on the number of non-dependants in respect of whom reductions of housing benefit are being made is not available in full. In 1986 the total number of non-dependants for whom reductions were made in certificated housing benefit cases was 370,000, but I regret that no information is available in this form for standard housing benefit.

Income Support Scheme

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many claimants, and what percentage of total claimants, will be eligible for transitional payments under the income support scheme at the Huyton and St. Helens offices of his Department.

Mr. Portillo: I regret that this information is not available.

Operations (Costs)

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the latest estimate available to him of the cost of the following operations in *(a)* National Health Service hospitals and *(b)* private hospitals in England for (i) hysterectomy, (ii) tonsillectomy, (iii) hernia, (iv) hip replacement, (v) heart by-pass and (vi) varicose veins.

Mrs. Currie: A study carried out by the Department in 1982 found that the average costs of a hysterectomy and herniotomy in a sample of NHS and private hospitals were approximately as follows (in current prices):

	NHS hospitals £	Private hospitals £
Hysterectomy	1,200	1,800
Herniotomy	650	890

The estimates we have for the other operations listed apply to NHS hospitals only and are as follows (in current prices):

	Cost per case £	
Hip replacement	3,300	based on estimate made in 1984
Heart by pass	3,300	study by Trent Region 1987

All these figures should be treated as broad approximations only. Clinical practices may have changed since the estimates were made. In particular, cost per case treated has been falling over recent years due to a steady fall in the average length of in-patients stay.

National Health Service Management Board

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services on what dates during the last 12 months the National Health Service Management Board met; and on each occasion what were the principal items discussed.

Mr. Newton: Over the last 12 months the NHS Management Board has met on 16 occasions. Details of the board's agenda and deliberations are not made public.

Dental and Ophthalmic Services

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what percentage of the total cost of general dental service treatment was derived from patient charges in each of the years 1978 to 1986 inclusive;

(2) what percentage of the total cost of National Health Service ophthalmic services was derived from patient charges in each of the years 1978 to 1986 inclusive.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested is available only in relation to financial years and is set out in the table.

Percentage of total cost of services met by patients charges, England[1]

Year	General Dental services	General Optical services
1978-79	20	34
1979-80	21	31
1980-81	22	28
1981-82	24	26
1982-83	26	[2]19
1983-84	27	27
1984-85	27	25
1985-86	30	[3]8
1986-87	30	—

Notes

[1] Figures rounded to nearest whole number.

[2] Charges fell as percentage of cost on account of arrears payments of fees to opticians.

[3] The supply of NHS spectacles was discontinued from this year for those who paid charges.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will increase the payment scale of National Health Service dentures to ensure that elderly people can be provided with well-fitting, good quality dentures.

Mrs. Currie: Under their NHS terms of service general dental practitioners must supply dentures which fit properly and which are made of first-class quality materials, fit for their purpose. The fees payable are reviewed regularly to ensure that dentists are remunerated sufficiently to meet these requirements for patients of any age.

Meningitis

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many cases of meningitis were declared in each region during the years 1984 to 1987 inclusive.

Mrs. Currie: Meningitis may be caused by a number of different organisms. The hon. Member may be particularly interested in meningococcal meningitis: the table shows notifications of cases for this and for all forms of acute meningitis.

Number of notifications of acute and meningococcal meningitis
England and Wales, Standard regions, 1984 to 1987

Area	*1984*		*1985*		*1986*		*[1]1987*	
	A	*M*	*A*	*M*	*A*	*M*	*A*	*M*
ENGLAND AND WALES	1,230	401	1,531	549	2,172	870	2,567	1,090
North	44	17	56	20	127	59	153	73
Yorkshire and Humberside	208	32	242	52	368	117	376	125
East Midlands	70	25	88	37	129	53	132	64
East Anglia	38	16	61	20	49	15	58	19
South East	379	135	453	191	576	225	846	332
South West	92	29	137	44	169	82	191	84
West Midlands	98	37	125	49	237	93	280	105
North West	223	76	285	97	370	159	390	215
Wales	78	34	84	39	147	67	139	73

[1] Provisional.
A = Acute meningitis (all forms).
M = Meningococcal Meningitis.

NHS (Patient Charges)

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the percentage of the total cost of the National Health Service derived from patient charges in each of the years 1978 to 1986 inclusive.

Mrs. Currie: I refer the hon. Member to table 11.1 (National Health Service Sources of Finance) in "Public Expenditure on the Social Services", Social Services Committee 1986-87 (HC 413).

Laxoberal

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the cost to the National Health Service of Laxoberal and its generic substitute separately in a full year.

Mr. Newton: The generic name for Laxoberal is sodium picosulphate elixir. Under the selected list scheme general practitioners are required to use this generic name on National Health Service prescriptions. In England in 1986, the latest year for which information is available, the net ingredient cost of prescriptions for sodium picosulphate elixir dispensed by retail pharmacists was some £55,000.

Information about hospital prescribing of this drug is not available.

Junior Hospital Doctors

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what regulations govern the maximum permitted working hours for junior hospital doctors; and if he has any plans to change these.

Mr. Newton: The terms and conditions of service of hospital medical and dental staff have been approved by the Secretary of State under the National Health Service (Remuneration and Conditions of Service) Regulations 1974. These prohibit regular rota commitments which require a junior doctor to be on duty on average for more than one night and one weekend in two. Health authorities have been asked to avoid, wherever possible, regular rota commitments more onerous than one in three. Officials are currently discussing with the profession's representatives the scope for further progress towards this objective.

Artificial Limbs

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if, pursuant to his answer of 21 January, *Official Report*, columns *847-8*, he will describe how the Disablement Services Authority is strengthening controls on the quality of artificial limbs and their fitting; and if he will ensure that people attending at all limb fitting centres are told that complaints are welcome and that they will be pursued; and if he will give the number of complaints so far received by the authority.

Mr. Scott: These are matters for the Disablement Services Authority, to whom the right hon. Member should address his questions.

Waiting Lists (Yorkshire)

Mr. Lofthouse: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will provide a table of waiting lists in the Yorkshire regional health authority area for each year since 1979.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 19 January 1988]:* The requested information is given in the table.

Patients on in-patient waiting in Yorkshire region

Month and year	*Total cases*
March 1979	53,540
September 1979	47,223
March 1980	42,490
September 1980	40,982
March 1981	41,101
September 1981	37,701
March 1982	37,764
September 1982	53,033
March 1983	53,236
September 1983	49,363
March 1984	48,387
September 1984	47,026
March 1985	47,211
September 1985	45,763
March 1986	45,440
September 1986	46,597
March 1987	47,643

NHS Funding

Mr. Hawkins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what increase in National Health Service funding would be necessary in the coming year to cover agreed pay rises and to allow over costs to rise by the national rate of inflation; and what additional amount would be needed to cover pay rises from the current year which were not fully funded.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 26 January 1988]:* Health authorities plan on the assumption that pay and price increases must be met from within the total resources available to them. It is too early to predict the level of pay inflation in 1988-89. The Government will, however, continue to assess carefully the cost of NHS pay awards and their implications for health authorities.

Pay awards in 1987-88 will add an estimated £620 million to health authority expenditure. Authorities have met these costs from allocations which have increased nationally by almost £980 million and from cash releasing cost improvements which this year are expected to yield £150 million.

AIDS

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will seek powers to give directions to holiday tour operations to include within tour brochures advice in relation to protection against AIDS, including that relating to obtaining medical treatment involving the use of blood, blood products and hypodermic syringes.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 26 January 1988]:* The Department's health advice to those travelling overseas is at present being revised and will be issued in two new leaflets: "The Traveller's Guide to Health—Before You Go" (SA40) and "The Traveller's Guide to Health—While You Are Away" (SA41). These leaflets include advice on taking precautions against AIDS and refer to the risk associated with medical treatment requiring surgery, injections or blood transfusions. We are receiving excellent co-operation from travel agents' representatives in the distribution of these leaflets to their member agencies and we see no need for further powers.

NHS (Pay and Conditions)

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list all the agreements relating to pay and conditions in force in the National Health Service in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1988, and if he will place copies, as well as a summary of each agreement's main terms and conditions, in the Library.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 26 January 1988]:* I am arranging to place in the Library as much information as possible about current agreements on pay and terms and conditions of service of National Health Service staff. I regret that comparable information in respect of 1979 cannot be provided without incurring disproportionate cost.

Accident and Emergency Services (Greenwich)

Mrs. Rosie Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to ensure that there are sufficient beds and medical staff to enable accident and emergency cover at both Greenwich district hospital and the Brook hospital to be open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 27 January 1988]:* The services in question are the responsibility of Greenwich health authority. The authority has taken positive steps to ensure that accident and emergency cover at both the Brook and Greenwich district hospitals is provided round the clock. To that end it has, for example, stepped up specialist nurse recruitment. The health authority is confident that the two departments will be able to cope with all but major emergencies. In the event of a major emergency, contingency plans have been made for other local hospitals, for example, Lewisham and Bexley to provide the necessary cover.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 29 January 1988

HOME DEPARTMENT

Police Computers

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will publish the number of police officers for each year since 1979, who have been disciplined following complaints of misuse of information held on police computers.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information is not readily available, and could be obtained only with difficulty and at disproportionate cost.

Member's Question (Cost)

Mr. Knowles: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will estimate the cost in time and money of the preparation for an answer to the oral question put down by the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) for answer on 21 January, which was subsequently withdrawn by the hon. Member on 20 January.

Mr. Douglas Hurd: About two and a half hours, at a total cost of about £50.

Crime (Wolverhampton)

Mr. Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many crimes, in their various categories, took place in Wolverhampton during *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1987.

Mr. John Patten: I refer the hon. Member to the annual report of the chief constable of the West Midlands. The figures that are regularly collected centrally relate to entire police force areas; they are published each year in the Command Paper "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales" (tables 2.4. to 2.6 in the issue for 1986, Cm. 233). Copies of both publications are available in the Library. Figures for 1987 are not yet available.

Custodial Remand

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what restrictions are placed on the letters which can be received by people who have been remanded in custody to await sentence.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The receipt of letters is regulated by prison rule 34 and standing order 5B copies of which are available in the Library. The following is a summary of the main provisions concerning convicted prisoners awaiting sentence. One letter may be received on the prisoner's reception into prison and thereafter two a week, though governors have discretion to allow more. If a correspondent makes a practice of sending an excessive number of letters, the governor may return them. Correspondents who make a practice of sending overlong letters may be asked to confine future letters to four sides of paper and, if they ignore the request, the governor may return subsequent overlong letters. There is no restriction on the frequency or length of letters from a legal adviser in connection with legal proceedings to which a prisoner is a party. Letters may be stopped if they contain material which is prohibited for example, for security reasons.

Radio

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether he will publish a digest of the responses to the Green Paper "Radio: Choices and Opportunities".

Mr. Renton: No, but I am placing in the Library a list of all those who responded.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department for what period of time the franchises for *(a)* independent commercial, *(b)* independent local and *(c)* community radio stations will extend.

Mr. Renton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to a similar question from him on 27 January at column *253*.

Radio Authority

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what powers the radio authority will have to prevent advertising or sponsorship influencing the editorial output of stations.

Mr. Renton: We envisage that the legislative proposals which my right hon. Friend will bring before Parliament will include provision for the radio authority to issue a code of practice covering these matters, adherence to which will be a licence condition.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the radio authority will have regional offices to supervise and monitor community radio stations.

Mr. Renton: This will be a matter for the radio authority.

Radio (Advertising)

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what estimates he has of radio's projected share of national advertising revenue over the next five years;

(2) if he will publish any estimates he has of radio's projected share of national advertising revenue over the next five years.

Mr. Renton: Our plans for independent radio will leave it well placed to increase its share—currently just over 2 per cent.—of total national advertising. Projections of this sort depend on a variety of assumptions, and I have not yet seen one which takes account of our announcement on 19 January. But it was forecast last year that radio advertising revenue could be over £270 million by 1995.

Visitors (Visas)

Mr. Soames: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has on the effects

of the imposition of visas on admissions and the refusals of those seeking entry as visitors from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nigeria and Ghana; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: The available information, comparing the first nine months of 1987 with the same period in 1986, for nationals of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Ghana is given in the following table. Corresponding figures are not given for Nigeria because visas were not introduced there until February 1987. Although there was no delay in issuing visitor visas, the numbers of visitors seeking admission fell—if at different rates—from each of the four countries between the first nine months of 1986 and 1987. Because of these falls and because of the limitations of the port refusal figures described in the second footnote to the table, refusal rates before and after visas were introduced cannot usefully be compared, particularly when it is too early to judge how far travel patterns have changed permanently. The Government will continue to monitor the situation.

Visitors admissions and refusals 1986-87

	Bangladesh	*India*	*Pakistan*	*Ghana*
Visitor admissions				
January to September 1986	9,280	141,090	69,590	21,120
January to September 1987[1]	7,200	118,200	52,200	14,000
Initial refusals (all categories) at the ports				
January to September 1986	1,180	3,450	2,070	1,440
January to September 1987[2]	1,080	660	390	480
Visitors refused entry clearance abroad				
January to September 1986	380	150	30	n/a
January to September 1987	1,340	3,880	5,470	1,920

n/a—Not available.

[1] Estimates based on admissions in January to August grossed up using the pattern of admissions in 1986.

[2] Almost entirely persons who had arrived before mid-October 1986 but who, due to backlogs at the ports, were not 'initially refused' until 1987 (these refusals cannot be differentiated in the figures); and persons without a visa, for which there was no equivalent category of refusal in 1986.

Royal Prerogative

Mr. Robert B. Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will make a statement on recent allegations concerning the use of the royal prerogative in connection with security operations.

Mr. Douglas Hurd: Yes. At no time have the Goverment asserted that any of the alleged actions which have featured in recent newspaper articles could lawfully be done under the prerogative when they would otherwise be criminal offences.

Birmingham Pub Bombings

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether, following the decision of the Court of Appeal to uphold the convictions of the men in the Birmingham pub bombings case, he has any plans to recommend the exercise of the royal prerogative of mercy in their cases.

Mr. Hurd: I have noted the decision of the Court of Appeal and I understand that an application is to be made for leave to appeal to the House of Lords. Where, following a reference by me, the Court of Appeal has considered the issues at length, I would not think it right to intervene in the absence of any indication from the courts that I should consider doing so.

ENVIRONMENT

Lambeth (Rate Capping)

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will modify the proposed rate limitations for Lambeth in the light of representations made to him.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend is considering the representations made to him by Lambeth and other authorities on the maximum rates he has proposed for 1988-89, and will reach a view shortly.

Portable Antiquities

Mr. Cormack: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to publish his consultative document on portable antiquities.

Mr. Moynihan: Very soon.

Berkshire Structure Plan

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to publish his decisions relating to the review of the Berkshire structure plan.

Mrs. Roe: My right hon. Friend published his modifications to the submitted replacement structure plan for Berkshire yesterday.

PSA and Crown Suppliers

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met the controller of the Crown Suppliers; and if he will make a statement on what was discussed.

Mr. Chope: Ministers meet the controller of the Crown Suppliers whenever they need to do so in connection with the management of his business.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

AIDS

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the implications for medical aid to developing countries of the recent evidence showing that AIDS may be spread through a mother's milk.

Mr. Eggar: Breast feeding has important health benefits for mothers and children in developing countries. The role of breast milk in HIV transmission is not fully understood. The World Health Organisation has considered the issue with care and advises that for the present breast feeding should continue to be promoted and supported. I have placed a copy of the WHO statement on this subject in the Library of the House.

Population Projects

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list in the *Official Report* the organisations which requested assistance with the eight population projects or projects with a population component on which preparatory work was in hand on 31 December 1987; and if he will list the date on which each request was received.

Mr. Eggar: My hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development will write to the hon. Member shortly.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Blair Allison and Co.

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Attorney-General what action has been taken to recover legal aid monies paid from public funds to Messrs. Blair Allison and Co. when they were acting as uncertificated solicitors.

The Attorney-General: The legal aid area office in Birmingham is looking into the matter. I will write to the hon. Member when those inquiries are complete.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Schools (Discipline)

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he has taken to monitor the growth of violence in schools and the number of attacks on teachers; and what have been the results.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) on 11 January at column *53*.

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received seeking the establishment of an inquiry into the issues of discipline in schools and violence against teachers; and what response he has made.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Professional Association of Teachers has written to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister asking her to establish a commission of inquiry into discipline in schools throughout the United Kingdom. The Government are still considering the association's proposal.

Schoolchildren (Benefits)

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many means-tested schemes are run by his Department; if he will give in tabular form details of the number of children claiming such benefits; and if he will give comparable data for 1979.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Department is responsible for the assisted places scheme and for the music and ballet scheme, both of which came into operation in September 1981. The number of pupils claiming fee remission in the academic year 1986-87 was as follows:

	Number of pupils
Assisted places scheme	22,853
Music and ballet scheme	496

Local education authorities operate their own schemes of assistance to pupils, for example, for school clothing, and are required to offer free school meals to certain pupils. The numbers receiving free school meals were:

	Number of pupils
October 1979	899,000
October 1986	1,144,000

Details of the take-up of other schemes run by local education authorities are not available.

Research Councils

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many directions under section 2 of the Science and Technology Act 1965 have been made to research councils in each of the last 10 years; and for each of the last four years what directions were given.

Mr. Jackson: I am not aware of any direction to a research council under section 2 of the Science and Technology Act 1965 in any of the last 10 years.

Teachers

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are the latest figures he has for the recruitment of teachers in Northumberland in the shortage subjects.

Mrs. Rumbold: There are no unfilled vacancies in Northumberland in the shortage subjects at present.

WALES

Health Authorities (Voluntary Aid)

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the total amount given by way of voluntary aid to each health authority in Wales during the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Peter Walker: The only information held centrally is that relating to donations and legacies in health authorities' income and expenditure trust funds accounts. Details for 1986-87 are given in the following table:

District Health Authority	Subscriptions donations and grants £000	Legacies £000	Total £000
Clwyd	217	89	306
East Dyfed	236	38	274
Gwent	181	21	202
Gwynedd	205	28	233
Mid Glamorgan	294	42	336
Pembrokeshire	132	2	134
Powys	58	3	61
South Glamorgan	345	12	358
West Glamorgan	298	19	317
Wales	1,966	254	2,220

Figures may not add up due to rounding.
Source: Health Authorities Annual Accounts

Cash Limits

Sir Raymond Gower: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he proposes to make any change to the cash limit on class XVII, vote 5.

Mr. Peter Walker: Yes. The cash limit on class XVII, vote 5 is being reduced by £900,000 to £213,669,000. This reduction will offset a corresponding increase to class XIII, vote 10 which will enable the Welsh Arts Council to complete the purchase of the Sherman theatre from University college, Cardiff.

DEFENCE

Defence Contracts (Prosecutions)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will name the individuals and their companies who were involved in the eight prosecutions since 1979 over defence contracts.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 18 January 1988]:* Of the eight prosecutions since 1979 over defence contracts, successful cases were brought against the following employees or directors:

Norman Edward Gough
Margaret Storrar
Charles Richardson
William Galloway MacLeod
John Leslie Nixon
William John Cackett
Peter Riley Roberts
Neil Leslie Sayer
Duncan Graham McLachlan
John Keith Tooley
Malcolm Allen

No prosecutions were brought against the companies associated with the individuals mentioned above; therefore it would be inappropriate to give details of the companies.

Foxhunter

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what problems there have been over the procurement of software for Foxhunter.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 22 January 1988]:* While some of the problems encountered during the development of the Foxhunter radar have been software-related, radars which operate to an agreed interim standard are now in service with the Royal Air Force. A programme of modifications which will achieve the required performance has been agreed, and negotiations with Marconi defence systems on a firm price contract to complete this work are nearing completion.

Blue Vixen Radar Programme

Dr. Hampson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what cost over-runs have been incurred with the Blue Vixen radar programme.

Mr. Sainsbury: None.

Nuclear Weapons (Targeting)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with his French counterpart about co-ordinated nuclear weapons targeting; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Details of the discussions between the British and French Governments on nuclear matters are confidential.

Royal Marines

Mr. David Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has for the future of R company, Royal Marines; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: All aspects of future Royal Navy and Royal Marines manpower are kept under consideration. No decisions have been taken in the case of R company Royal Marines.

Cruise Missiles

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the modernisation and deployment of cruise air-launched missiles will be discussed at the next summit meeting of Nato alliance leaders.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I expect a wide range of issues relating to the security of the NATO Alliance to be discussed, including the need to maintain modern and effective nuclear and conventional forces.

Property Services Agency

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what studies and reports have been and are being undertaken by his Department into the operation of the Property Services Agency from 1979 up to the latest date available.

Mr. Freeman: It is not the practice of the Ministry of Defence to conduct studies into the working of another Department. The Property Services Agency is required to examine its own operational efficiency. However, a number of initiatives have been taken jointly by MOD, PSA and central Departments to improve the effectiveness of the PSA's defence works and estate management. For example, in 1980 a review under Sir Derek Rayner studied the economy with which new building works were carried out and more recently the National Audit Office studied the control and management of the defence estate. These reports recommended further work which is being carried out jointly by MOD and PSA.

Royal Navy Task Group

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he plans next to deploy a Royal Navy task group beyond the NATO area.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I am glad to say that we plan to deploy a Royal Navy task group to the far east, Australia and Indian ocean area, leaving the United Kingdom in June. The group, which will be led by HMS Ark Royal, will represent the Royal Navy at the fleet review in Sydney to celebrate the Australian bicentenary. It will spend some six months on deployment, before returning to the United Kingdom in December. Detailed planning of the deployment is still in progress. Further details, including visits to particular countries by ships of the group, will be announced in due course.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Private Bills

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many private Bills have been laid before Parliament in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Wakeham: The numbers of private Bills (including personal Bills and substituted Bills) first deposited in each of the last 10 Sessions are as follows:

Session	*Number of Bills*
1987-88	29
1986-87	25
1985-86	36
1984-85	36
1983-84	32
1982-83	18
1981-82	32
1980-81	26
1979-80	28
1978-79	21

TRANSPORT

Severn Bridge

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what his estimate is in current cost terms of the aggregate revenue specified as recoverable under the Severn Bridge Tolls Act 1965 between 1988 and 2005;

(2) if, pursuant to his answer of 14 December 1987, *Official Report*, columns *421-2*, he will show the calculations by which he derives the need for tolls on the Severn bridge to rise by about 70 per cent. and be maintained in real terms to achieve the objective set out in the Severn Bridge Tolls Act 1965.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: At current toll levels, updated in line with a low rate of inflation, revenue in the period 1988-2005 is estimated to be about £230 million to £260 million depending on assumptions about the rate of traffic growth. The debt of £77 million at the end of the 1986-87 financial year is estimated to rise by the end of that period, because of continuing annual deficits, to between £270 million and £310 million.

A 70 per cent. tolls increase introduced immediately and maintained in real terms should, assuming high traffic growth and low inflation, enable debt to be eliminated by about the end of the period of 40 years specified in the Severn Bridge Tolls Act 1965.

Carlton PSV Limited

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will make a statement on the safety record of Carlton PSV Limited, following its acquisition of the Yelloway and SVT fleets;

(2) if he will set up an inquiry into the safety record at Carlton PSV Limited.

Mr. David Mitchell: The safety record of PSV operators is a matter for the traffic commissioners. I understand that Carlton PSV Limited does not hold an operator's licence in its own right. In June 1987 the North-Westerm traffic commissioner took action against Yelloways' licence, reducing the number of vehicles it could operate from 50 to 35.

Mersey Tunnels

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what is the current level of capital debt on the Mersey tunnels;

(2) what was the cost of operating the Mersey tunnels in the latest available year.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The passenger transport authority's published account for 1986-87 show that at the end of the financial year debt was £108·9 million and operating expenses £6·15 million.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the toll income from the Mersey tunnels over the last five available yars.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The published accounts show that the annual toll income has been as follows:

	£ million
1982-83	8·19
1983-84	8·15
1984-85	8·03
1985-86	8·13
1986-87	10·04

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what were the debt charges payable on the Mersey tunnels over the last five available years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The published accounts show that the debt charges in each year were as follows:

	£ million
1982-83	9·56
1983-84	9·62
1984-85	8·69
1985-86	10·36
1986-87	13·64

Pensioners (Travel Passes)

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will seek powers to enable him to compel London boroughs to issue new travel passes to pensioners from 1 April; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: No. Adequate safeguards exist in the London Regional Transport Act 1984, which provides a reserve free travel scheme to come into effect in any year

that the London local authorities fail to reach agreement on a satisfactory uniform concessionary travel scheme for pensioners and disabled people. I am pleased to see that for the next two years the London local authorities have reached agreement on the continuance of the present voluntary arrangements. The associated reissue of passes to pensioners is an administrative matter for LRT.

A358 (Speed Limit)

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to respond to the application from Somerset county council for a 40 mph speed limit on the A358 Cross Keys to Pen Elm section.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: An application has not yet been received.

Morningside (Railway Line)

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the original source of the information given by officials of his Department that the railway line through Morningside was maintained only to freight standard; when and how the error was discovered; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: When providing the draft of a reply to a letter in November 1987 an official misread the description of the status of the railway line through Morningside and thought that it was only maintained to freight standards. This does not imply a lower standard of maintenance but that certain signalling requirements, which are applicable to passenger railways, are not necessarily provided. The error was discovered last week when a newspaper reporter, who had been in touch with British Railways, challenged the statement in the letter. The Morningside line, although not at present regularly used by passenger trains, is nevertheless signalled and maintained to passenger standards.

Nuclear Material (Transportation)

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he takes to monitor the quality of railway track supporting trains carrying nuclear material; and if he will make it his policy to request British Rail to upgrade such track.

Mr. David Mitchell: Once a railway is opened the railway operator has the responsibility of maintaining the track to a standard fit for the traffic it has to bear; there are no statutory powers available to require the operator to make any improvements. The measure of his performance in meeting this responsibility forms part of the analysis in the "Annual Report on the Safety of Railways in Great Britain", copies of which are in the Library. It is not intended to take special steps to monitor the quality of track for any particular traffic.

Motor Cyclists

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many motor cyclists are killed or injured on Britain's roads; and what is the casualty rate for motor cycles and for cars.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The casualty rate for motor cycle users is 14 times that for car users.

Motor cyclists are 40 times more likely to be killed or seriously injured than car drivers.

Some 43 per cent. of motor cycle rider casualties are aged 16 to 19.

In 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 52,280 people were killed or injured on two-wheeled motor vehicles in Great Britain. This is a reduction of 26·2 per cent. on 1980.

The overall casualty rate for two-wheeled motor vehicles is down by 18·4 per cent. to 977 per 100 million vehicle kilometres. A total of 10,311 of the casualties in 1986 were on mopeds and 41,969 were on motor cycles (including scooters). The casualty rate for car users is 65·66 casualties per 100 million vehicle kilometres, a reduction of 9·7 per cent. on 1980.

In order to obtain a clearer picture of the nature and distribution of accidents involving two-wheeled motor vehicles the Transport and Road Research Laboratory is undertaking a study of the accident experience of a random sample of 10,000 riders. This work forms part of a wider TRRL research programme aimed at developing methodology for identifying those groups of the riding population most at risk and subsequent driving techniques to reduce their risk.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the effect of the Transport Act 1981 on the numbers of motorcyclists taking training and the on-road test; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Transport Act 1981 sought to encourage learner riders to take proper training by introducing a two-part test for motor cyclists, part 1 being a new off-road test of machine handling skills. The Act also imposed a two-year limit on provisional motorcycle licences with a two year's ban if both parts of the test had not been passed in the two years.

The proportion of new riders taking training has risen from about 10 per cent. in 1980 to about 30 per cent. in 1986. It is estimated that up to 80,000 new riders each year take to the road without any formal instruction, supervision or training. The two-year provisional licence restriction has failed to increase the proportion of provisional licence holders who take and pass the test. The total passing the test each year has fallen by about 50 per cent. Of those who take the test 75 per cent. now pass compared with 55 per cent. before the 1981 Act.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

South Africa

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his progress in securing the South African Government's grant of clemency in relation to the Sharpeville Six.

Mrs. Chalker: In February 1986, Her Majesty's ambassador expressed to the South African Government our concern at the death sentences and at allegations that some of the accused had been tortured. After their appeals had been dismissed last December, the members of the European Community made a collective appeal for clemency. We also supported a statement issued on behalf of the United Nations Security Council. We have since reiterated our concern direct to the South African Government.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he, or any of the Ministers in his Department, have any plans to seek to visit refugee camps or townships of the Republic of South Africa so as to ascertain the conditions prevailing there; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: No ministerial visits to South Africa are at present planned.

Central America Peace Summit

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government support the final agreement reached at the Central America peace summit held over the weekend of 16 and 17 January in San Jose, Costa Rica, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Yes. We and our European Community partners issued a statement on 26 January supporting the declaration signed by the Central American Presidents and urging them to fulfil all their outstanding obligations under the Guatemala peace agreement unconditionally and without delay.

Japan (Nuclear Power Discussions)

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, on his recent trip to Japan, he discussed with members of the Government or nuclear industry *(a)* the transport of plutonium from the United Kingdom to Japan, *(b)* the Japanese contract for the use of the British Nuclear Fuels Limited thermal oxide reprocessing plant for reprocessing light water reactor fuel at Sellafield, *(c)* the current operational and safety status of the Tokai Mura British-designed Magnox nuclear plant, *(d)* the safeguarding of Japanese plutonium returned to Japan from Sellafield or *(e)* other nuclear energy.

Mr. Eggar: No.

Nuclear Test Ban

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in regard to the current United States-Soviet discussions in Geneva on nuclear testing and verification of a nuclear test ban, what information he has on which specific verification problems are understood to exist; and when he expects the United Kingdom to join the negotiations.

Mr. Eggar: The current round of United States/Soviet negotiations is aimed at agreeing verification methods to allow ratification of the threshold test ban and peaceful nuclear explosions treaties. The difficulty is that of verifying that a nuclear test has not exceeded the 150 kilotons threshold. The verification problems associated with a comprehensive test ban are even more intractable since their solution demands the detection and identification of nuclear tests of very low yield. The United Kingdom does not participate in the current negotiations which are concerned with two bilateral treaties to which the United Kingdom is not a party; nor will we take a decision on future participation until the prospects for a successful outcome are clearer.

Sellafield

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has concerning the attempts by the Energy Research and Technology Committee of the European Parliament to obtain from the European Commission documentation of safeguards facility attachments for Sellafield's reprocessing line, for EURATOM safeguards inspectors.

Mr. Eggar: We are aware of the Committee's interest in obtaining from the Commission details of safeguards arrangements at Sellafield. I understand that the Committee is consulting the European Parliament's Committee on Legal Affairs following the Commission's refusal to disclose details of these arrangements.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Work Force (Religious Denominations)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what percentage of workers in Harland and Wolff, Shorts, the fire service, the health and social services and the ambulance service, and Mackies and Ford automobile, respectively, are *(a)* Catholic and *(b)* Protestant.

Mr. Viggers: We do not have all the information requested. The religious composition of work forces is available only in respect of the organisations listed, and at the dates specified.

Organisation	*Percentage Catholic*	*Percentage Protestant*	*Date*	*Source*
Shorts	10	87	November 1987	Fair Employment Agency
Fire Authority (full-time firemen only)	16	82	1980	Fair Employment Agency (1984)
Southern Area Health Board	47	49	1984	Fair Employment Agency Report (1986)
Ambulance Service	24	74	1983	Fair Employment Agency Report (1985)
Ford Motor Company	38	57	May 1987	Company Report (1987)

Cars and Vans (Imports)

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what regulatory restrictions apply to the importation of *(a)* new cars and *(b)* new vans and other commercial type vehicles from the Irish Republic into Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 27 January 1988]:* My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland makes regulations for the registration of imported vehicles and construction and use requirements for vehicles intended to be used on the roads in Northern Ireland.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

COCOM

Mr. Bruce: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what consultations he has had with the European Commission regarding COCOM; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: I have not had any consultations with the European Commission regarding COCOM.

Self-Regulating Organisations

Mr. Warren: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on progress in the establishment of the self-regulating organisations to be established under the Financial Services Act.

Mr. Maude: The Securities and Investments Board has now recognised three self-regulating organisations under the Financial Services Act 1986. These are the Financial Intermediaries, Managers and Brokers Regulatory Association (recognised on 14 December 1987), the Association of Futures Brokers and Dealers (recognised on 13 January 1988) and the Investment Management Regulatory Association (recognised on 27 January 1988). Two other self-regulating organisations, the Securities Association and the Life Assurance and Unit Trust Regulatory Organisation, have applied to the board for recognition. These applications are still being considered.

THE ARTS

Glasgow

Mr. McTaggart: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he plans to visit any cultural establishments in Glasgow in the near future.

Mr. Luce: I have no plans to visit Glasgow in the near future but hope to have the opportunity to do so, in view of the city's preparations for its year as European City of Culture in 1990.

SCOTLAND

Renal Units

Mr. McTaggart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the recommended ratio of nursing staff to patients in renal units; and what the ratio is at Glasgow royal infirmary.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There is no nationally recommended ratio of nursing staff to patients in renal units in Scotland. The ratio of nursing staff to patients receiving dialysis within the renal unit at Glasgow royal infirmary is 8·6:38. In addition, two nurses are employed to assist the 67 patients receiving continuous ambulatory peritoneal dialysis, who attend the unit as out-patients.

Health Board General Managers (Correspondence)

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer in the *Official Report*, 19 January, column *665*, if the Scottish Home and Health Department's letter, dated 11 December 1987 and issued over the signature of Hugh Morison to health board general managers, was intended to be a legally binding directive to health boards under the terms of the National Health Service (Scotland) Act (1978) section 2.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Under section 2 of the National Health Service (Scotland) Act 1978 health boards are appointed by the Secretary of State to act on his behalf in administering the Health Service. They are therefore under an obligation to act in accordance with Government policy and to give effect to instructions issued by the Secretary of State. The letter of 11 December from the Scottish Home and Health Department sets out firm instructions by the Secretary of State on action boards are to take, and they are obliged to implement them.

Gualin National Nature Reserve

Mr. Allan Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether the Nature Conservancy Council has now negotiated a management agreement with the owners of Gualin national nature reserve in Sutherland to protect it from damage caused by sporting activities; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 21 January 1988]:* I understand that the Nature Conservancy Council concluded a nature reserve agreement in 1971 with the then owner of Gualin estate. The council has obtained a legal opinion on the terms of that agreement which states that there is a right of vehicular access for estate purposes including the exercise of fishing rights by the present owners. The council has been unable to negotiate any change to that agreement. I understand that the owners of the estate have applied for planning permission to construct an access route within the Gualin national nature reserve, and that the council has indicated that it is willing, subject to planning permission being granted, to consider financial assistance towards the cost of constructing the route as a means of reducing the prospect of damage to the special interest of the reserve.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Thames Health Regions

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will list the total expenditure on capital projects in each of the four Thames health regions in each of the last three years for which figures are available; (2) if he will list the total annual expenditure of each of the four Thames health regions in each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Mrs. Currie: Following is the information requested:

Hospital and Community Health Services[1] Total Expenditure
£ thousand

	Revenue	*Capital*	*Revenue and Capital*
North West Thames			
1984-85	701,170	55,369	756,539
1985-86	728,848	64,906	793,754
1986-87	777,781	66,543	844,324
North East Thames			
1984-85	881,326	66,652	947,978
1985-86	914,188	65,932	980,120
1986-87	976,100	75,904	1,052,004

	Revenue	Capital	Revenue and Capital
South East Thames			
1984-85	772,108	49,853	821,961
1985-86	807-525	55,181	862,706
1986-87	857,088	76,517	933,605
South West Thames			
1984-85	586,260	42,174	628,434
1985-86	608,276	52,859	661,135
1986-87	650;071	54,172	704,243

[1] Includes ambulance, blood transfusion and other services.
Source: Annual accounts of regional and district health authorities comprising the four Thames regions.
Note: Expenditure on family practitioner services is excluded: such expenditure is accounted for by family practitioner committees (FPCs) and cannot strictly be attributed to particular regions. However, prior to 1 April 1985 many of the district health authorities within each region had an associated FPC and those authorities' expenditure totals for 1984-85 include small elements relating to FPC administrative expenses which are not separately identifiable.

Income Support Scheme

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many claimants will be eligible for transitional payments under the income support scheme throughout the United Kingdom.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is not available for Northern Ireland. The estimated number of claimants in Great Britain who will receive a transitional addition is 1.4 million.

Infant Mortality

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the total numbers of sudden infant deaths in 1985 and 1986 and the numbers which occurred at ages *(a)* under one month, *(b)* one month, *(c)* two months, *(d)* three months, *(e)* four months, *(f)* five months and *(g)* six to 11 months.

Mrs. Currie: The information is given in the table.

Numbers of deaths under one year of age with any mention of cot death, sudden infant death syndrome or similar term on the death certificate, by age at death
England and Wales
1985 and 1986 (provisional)

Age at death	1985	1986
Total under one year	1,301	1,506
Under one month	64	85
One month but under two months	233	279
Two months but under three months	317	332
Three months but under four months	242	269
Four months but under five months	149	180
Five months but under six months	104	117
Six months but under one year	192	244

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the number of neonatal, post neonatal and infant deaths among male, female and all babies in England and Wales and the rate per 1,000 live births in 1985 and 1986.

Mrs. Currie: The information is given in the table.

Neonatal, post neonatal and infant mortality by sex (numbers and rates)
England and Wales
1985 and 1986

	Neonatal deaths		Post neonatal deaths		Infant deaths	
	Number	[1]Rate	Number	[1]Rate	Number	[1]Rate
1985						
Male	2,005	6·0	1,505	4·5	3,510	10·4
Female	1,526	4·8	1,105	3·5	2,631	8·2
Total	3,531	5·4	2,610	4·0	6,141	9·4
1986						
Male	2,031	6·0	1,693	5·0	3,724	11·0
Female	1,458	4·5	1,131	3·5	2,589	8·0
Total	3,489	5·3	2,824	4·3	6,313	9·6

[1] Rate per 1,000 live births.
Neonatal deaths: deaths in the first 28 days of life (27 completed days).
Postneonatal deaths: deaths at ages 28 days and over, but under one year.
Infant deaths: deaths at ages under one year.

Abortions

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what was the most commonly mentioned ground upon which abortion was performed after 18 weeks gestation in England and Wales in the latest year for which figures are available; and what percentage of all abortions after 18 weeks falls into this category;

(2) what was the most frequently noted number of previous children had by women upon whom abortions were performed after 18 weeks in England and Wales in the latest year for which figures are available; and what percentage of all abortions after 18 weeks falls into this category;

(3) what was the most commonly noted age group of women upon whom abortions were performed after 18 weeks in England and Wales in the latest year for which figures are available; and what percentage of all abortions after 18 weeks falls into this category;

(4) what was the most commonly noted marital status of women upon whom abortions after 18 weeks were performed in England and Wales in the latest year for which figures are available; and what percentage of all abortions after 18 weeks falls into this category;

(5) what was the most commonly noted category of premises in which abortions were performed after 18 weeks in England and Wales in the latest year for which figures are available; and what percentage of all abortions after 18 weeks was performed in such premises.

Mr. Newton: The information is given in the table.

Notifications of abortions carried out under the Abortion Act 1967 at gestation 18 completed weeks and over most common age group, marital status, number of previous children, category of premises and statutory grounds. Numbers and percentages. England and Wales, residents and non-residents. 1986

	Number	*Percentage of total*
Total at 18 completed weeks and over	8,276	100·0
Age group 20-24 years	2·742	33·1
Marital status: single	6,123	74·0
Number of previous live or stillborn children: 0	5,770	69·7
Category of premises: non-NHS	7,097	85·8
Statutory grounds: 2 (alone)[1]	7,270	87·8

[1] Grounds 2: the continuance of the pregnancy would involve risk of injury to the physical or mental health of the pregnant woman greater than if the pregnancy were terminated.

Residential Care

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when Lady Wagner's review of residential care for the elderly was begun; and what factors are preventing its publication before January 1989.

Mrs. Currie: When the appointment of Lady Wagner as chairman of the review of residential care was announced by the National Institute for Social Work in December 1985 it was stated that the review would cover residential care for people of all ages and was expected to be completed in two years. The timing of the publication of the report is a matter for the institute and Lady Wagner but we understand it is planned for the near future.

Registered Homes Act 1984

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to publish the national report of his Department's Social Services Inspectorate on the application of the Registered Homes Act 1984.

Mrs. Currie: We expect the report to be published shortly.

Private Residential and Nursing Homes

Mr. Thornton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on progress on the establishment of national standards governing private residential and nursing homes and on the provision of a national inspectorate for such homes.

Mrs. Currie: The Residential Care Homes Regulations 1984 and the Nursing Homes and Mental Nursing Homes Regulations 1984 set out the facilities and services to be provided in these homes. An independent working party convened by the Centre for Policy on Ageing produced in the same year a code of practice for residential care, "Home Life", which was endorsed by my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Social Services and for Wales. The following year the National Association of Health Authorities published a handbook for health authorities, "Registration and Inspection of Nursing Homes". Any changes in the existing arrangements for registration and inspection would need to take account of what is said about homes in the reports expected shortly of Lady Wagner's review of residential care, Sir Roy Griffiths' overview of community care and the Social Services Inspectorate's report on the implementation of the Registered Homes Act 1984.

Medical Laboratory Scientific Officers

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to respond to the letter dated 25 September 1987 from the assistant general secretary of the Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staffs asking him to meet a delegation of hon. Members to discuss the situation of medical laboratory scientific officers employed in the National Health Service.

Mrs. Currie: It would have been inappropriate for Ministers to meet ASTMS during the recent pay negotiations. I understand that pay increases for 1987-88 were settled on 16 November 1987 and the management side agreed to put forward proposals for a comprehensive grade restructuring for medical laboratory scientific officers as soon as possible. As these points were the major agenda items it was unclear, in the absence of further correspondence whether the union wished to pursue their request for a meeting.

Eastbourne Conference

Mr. Gow: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) whether he will list those who were present at the meeting attended by the Minister for Health at the Grand hotel, Eastbourne, on 20 January; and those who stayed at the Grand hotel at public expense for the night of either 19 or 20 January;

(2) which Ministers in his Department attended a meeting at the Grand hotel, Eastbourne, on 20 January; on what date was the date and place of that meeting decided and by whom; and what was the total cost to public funds of that meeting.

Mr. Moore: The conference held in Eastbourne on 20 January was arranged last year by my officials and the Inter-Regional Secretariat so that Health Ministers could discuss a wide range of official business with the fourteen RHA chairmen and other NHS representatives. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Health, my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security and I attended the meeting along with Sir Roy Griffiths in his capacity as deputy chairman of the NHS Management Board. Thirty-two of the 35 people attending the conference stayed overnight in Eastbourne on 19 January. The total cost of the conference is estimated to be about £4,000.

Medicines (Licence Exemption Applications)

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average length of time taken in each of the last three years by his Department to process applications made under article 3 of the Medicines (Exemption from Licences) (Special and Transitional Cases) Order 1971 as extended by article 3 of the Medicines (Exemptions from Licences) (Manufacture and Assembly Temporary Provisions) Order 1972.

Mr. Newton: The average length of time taken to process applications under this order for the last three years is as follows:

	Weeks
1985	6
1986	7
1987	10

Food Imports (Radioactivity)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what food imports have been refused entry to the United Kingdom since 26 April 1986 due to levels of radioactivity above the permitted limit; what was their country of origin; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: Central records on the monitoring of food imports by port health authorities for radiation contamination following the Chernobyl nuclear accident show that consignments of dried prunes from Romania, and hazelnuts, laurel bay leaves, oregano and sage from Turkey have exceeded maximum permitted levels. All consignments concerned have been refused entry into the United Kingdom.

Port health authorities are continuing to monitor food imports from countries outside the European Community in accordance with the latest European Council regulation (EEC No. 3955/87 of 22 December 1987).

Trichloro Ethylene

Mr. John Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many cases of deaths and injuries have been reported in each of the last 10 years from the effects of the use of trichloro ethylene in industry.

Mr. Nicholls: I have been ask to reply.

The information available is shown in the table. The figures given up to and including 1985-86 are for incidents of gassings caused by trichloro ethylene in factory premises which have been notified to the Health and Safety Executive's Factory Inspectorate and medically confirmed by the Employment Medical Advisory Service. For 1986-87 the numbers are for all persons affected by accidental exposure to trichloro ethylene reported under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1985 (RIDDOR).

Persons affected by exposure to trichloroethylene

Year	*Number of cases*	*Of which fatal*
1977	14	0
1978	10	0
1979	12	0
1980	7	1
1981	4	0
1982 and first quarter of 1983[1]	4	0
1983-84	4	0
1984-85	1	0
1985-86	4	0
1986-87	[2]8	0

[1] From 1 April 1983 the statistics were kept by financial year rather than calendar year.
[2] Provisional.

Girocheques (North Tyneside)

Mr. Ted Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to eliminate the failure of Girocheques to reach claimants on a Saturday morning in North Tyneside, by moving the Thursday signing on to a Wednesday; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: I have been asked to reply.

I am naturally concerned about unemployed people not getting their benefit cheques in time for the weekend.

However, there have been no reported incidents of widespread delay in the North Tyneside area over recent months. In the case of delays being reported, we would approach the Post Office for improvement in its service where necessary. It is not practical for operational reasons to move Thursday signers to the earlier day of Wednesday.

District Health Authorities

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services by how much each district health authority in Nottinghamshire overspent in the last financial year; and what estimate he has of projected overspend in the current year.

Mrs. Currie: *[holding answer 18 December 1987]:* The following information is derived from the 1986-87 annual accounts of the district health authorities concerned. This shows the extent to which these districts relied on their accumulated balances to fund their total expenditure:

Health authority	*Total available funds (excluding balances)*	*Total expenditure*	*Net addition to/(use of) balances*
Bassetlaw	15,662	15,582	80
Central Nottinghamshire	50,699	51,508	(809)
Nottingham	145,631	146,129	(498)

The Trent regional health authority is responsible for monitoring its districts' income and expenditure under/overspending positions and the hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman of that authority who may be able to assist with the information required for the last financial year and the current year.

The Department does not routinely collect over/underspending information for individual district health authorities. Regular formal monitoring of the income and expenditure position of authorities is, however, to be introduced.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Income Tax

Mr. Higgins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* showing, as a percentage, the top marginal rates of tax on personal income, including as appropriate income tax, special contributions, supertax, surtax, surtax surcharge and investment income surcharge, levied since 1957-58 on individuals in the United Kingdom, showing the level of gross income, at both current and 1987 constant prices, assuming the income to be that of a married man with two children, at which the top marginal rate of tax is first applied and also showing the dates of changes in the top marginal rates.

Mr. Lawson: The information is given in the table:

Married man with two children (under 11)

	Top marginal rate of tax[1] on earned income		*Gross earned income at which top marginal rate of tax first applied*	
			Current prices	*1987-88 prices[2]*
	per cent.	*per cent.*	*£*	*£*
1957-58	92·50		15,279	129,129
1958-59	92·50		15,279	126,218
1959-60	88·75		15,279	125,914
1960-61	88·75		15,279	124,218
1961-62	88·75		18,847	147,837
1962-63	88·75		18,847	142,814
1963-64	88·75		18,901	141,036
1964-65	88·75		18,901	135,611
1965-66	96·25		18,879	129,391
1966-67	91·25		18,879	124,725
1967-68	91·25		18,879	121,823
1968-69	91·25		18,900	115,631
1969-70	91·25		18,900	109,991
1970-71	91·25		18,920	102,600
1971-72	75·44	(88·75)	20,776	103,126
1972-73	79·69	(93·75)	20,776	96,323
1973-74	75·00	(90·00)	21,175	88,857
1974-75	83·00	(98·00)	21,345	75,989
1975-76	83·00	(98·00)	21,435	61,243
1976-77	83·00	(98·00)	21,685	53,741
1977-78	83·00	(98·00)	22,821	49,617
1978-79	83·00	(98·00)	25,735	51,671
1979-80	60·00	(75·00)	26,815	46,473
1980-81	60·00	(75·00)	29,895	44,582
1981-82	60·00	(75·00)	29,895	39,938
1982-83	60·00	(75·00)	33,945	42,369
1983-84	60·00	(75·00)	38,795	46,283
1984-85	60·00		41,255	46,822
1985-86	60·00		43,655	46,803
1986-87	60·00		44,855	46,580
1987-88	60·00		44,995	44,995

[1] 1957-58 to 1970-71: standard rate plus highest rate of surtax.
1971-72 to 1972-73: standard rate plus highest rate of surtax. The figures in brackets represent the top marginal rate of tax on investment income.
1973-74 to 1983-84: Highest rate of income tax. The figures in brackets represent the top marginal rate on investment income assuming a minimum at current prices of £2,000 of investment income 1973-74 to 1977-78; £2,250, 1978-79; £5,000, 1979-80; £5,500, 1980-81 to 1981-82; £6,250, 1982-83; £7,100, 1983-84.

[2] By reference to movements in the general index of retail prices.

Changes in tax rates apply from 6 April.

Dover Eastern Docks

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received since 1 October 1987 regarding queues of lorries at Dover eastern docks; whether such representations referred to manpower shortages in Her Majesty's Customs and Excise; what proposals he has to remedy the queuing; and if he would make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: No such representations have been received since 1 October 1987. Queues can build up from time to time due to peaking of traffic. The peaking can become acute in the late evening and early hours of the morning as many vehicles load during the day and use the night hours for the Channel crossing.

Significant changes in import and export documentation were introduced throughout the European Community on 1 January 1988. Problems experienced at Dover in early January due to errors or incorrect documentation are steadily being overcome.

Government Data Network

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if, pursuant to his answer of 18 December 1987, *Official Report*, column 847, he will publish estimates available to him on the value for money to be achieved from the Government data network.

Mr. Brooke: No. Value for money information will be available only after tenders are received and compared to the costs of alternatives. Tender details will be commercially confidential and will not be disclosed publicly.

Premium Bonds

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what have been the administrative costs of running the premium bond system in each of the last five years.

Mr. Lilley: The administrative costs of running the premium bond system were as follows:

Year to 31 March	*£ million*
1983	26·0
1984	23·7
1985	21·9
1986	21·0
1987	20·2

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many valid premium bonds there have been in the United Kingdom in each of the last five years.

Mr. Lilley: The number of valid premium bonds—including those held by people abroad, which are not recorded separately—was as follows:

At 31 March	*Million*
1983	1,586
1984	1,674
1985	1,768
1986	1,833
1987	1,916

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much prize money for premium bonds was not claimed in each of the last five years.

Mr. Lilley: The prize money not claimed as at November 1987 for prize draws was as follows:

Prize draws in year to 31 March	*£*
1983	511,000
1984	618,000
1985	808,000
1986	1,124,000
1987	1,637,000

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much money was paid out in prize money for premium bonds in each of the last five years.

Mr. Lilley: Premium bond prizes — including unclaimed prizes not yet paid out—were as follows:

Year to 31 March	*£ million*
1983	104·2
1984	110·2
1985	121·7
1986	135·0
1987	141·0

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much money the Treasury received from premium bonds, excluding prize money paid out and administrative costs, in the last five financial years.

Mr. Lilley: The total money received by the Treasury from premium bonds was as follows:

Year to 31 March	*Total net investment £ million*
1983	80
1984	88
1985	94
1986	65
1987	83

These figures take no account of prize money paid out or administrative costs.

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people in the United Kingdom owned premium bonds in each of the last five years.

Mr. Lilley: The number of premium bond holdings—including holdings by people abroad, which are not recorded separately—was as follows:

At 31 March	*Million*
1983	26·0
1984	24·8
1985	24·7
1986	24·6
1987	24·4

Inland Revenue (Reply-Paid Envelopes)

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the Inland Revenue's practice on the issue of business reply-paid envelopes with tax returns and other correspondence.

Mr. Norman Lamont: It has in the past been the practice to issue a business reply-paid envelope with all tax returns and with correspondence needing a reply. It has been decided to limit this practice with general effect from April 1988 to cases where payment of tax due is being requested (where the present first-class reply service will remain unchanged) and to a few other special circumstances. The resulting savings in 1988-89 are estimated at about £2 million.

Turtle (Rayleigh)

Dr. Michael Clark: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will indicate the whereabouts and state of health of the turtle, seized on 18 December 1987 under endangered species legislation by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise from Swallow nurseries, Rayleigh; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 18 January 1988]:* I am writing to my hon. Friend, and will place a copy of the letter in the Library of the House.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Food Quality

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if, in the light of the recent public analyst's report of a steady improvement in compliance with standards set for the quality of food, he will indicate what steps he is taking to ensure that a proper balance is being followed as between prosecution and written warnings for offences under current regulations.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I am not aware of the public analyst's report to which my hon. Friend has referred nor, therefore, of the conclusions which it makes. Enforcement of the current regulations on food quality standards is a matter for the local enforcement authorities and the courts; there is no statutory provision in them for the issue of written warnings.

Radiation

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions he plans with farmers in areas affected by fall-out from Chernobyl concerning prospects for the current year.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I have no plans at present for any general discussions with farmers in these areas, but my Department is carrying out a number of research programmes including the assessment of the likely uptake of caesium 137 in upland vegetation this season and will be keeping farmers informed of the results of their work.

Rainfall Levels

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information concerning rainfall levels in the United Kingdom on 2 and 3 May 1986 was passed between the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Meteorological Office; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My Department was in close contact with the Meteorological Office in the initial stages following the Chernobyl accident when information on rainfall for the period including 2-3 May 1986 was used by us to help identify those areas most likely to be affected by significant radioactive deposition. Subsequently MAFF obtained information on actual deposition patterns from ground surveys of radioactive material deposited on vegetation commissioned from the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology and from its own monitoring. However, the Meteorological Office continued to provide information in relation to this period following further work up of data, at various times during 1986 and 1987.

Pigmeat

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much Danish pork and Danish bacon has been imported into Britain in the last 12 months.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Provisional figures for 1987 indicate that about 38,000 tonnes of pork and 128,000 tonnes of bacon were imported into Britain from Denmark.

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the subsidy per tonne on Danish port and Danish bacon.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The monetary compensatory amounts which are payable on imports into the United Kingdom from Denmark are currently £53·85 per tonne for pig carcases and £68·93 per tonne for bacon sides.

Radioactivity (Farm Restrictions)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the number of farms, the number of sheep and the area of land, in acres, under restriction in England as a result of radioactivity from the Chernobyl accident; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: About 116,000 acres with some 80,000 sheep on about 150 holdings are currently under restriction in England as a result of radioactivity from the Chernobyl accident.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about current proposals to reform the common agricultural policy.

Mr. MacGregor: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave on 25 January, at columns *52-3*, to my hon. Friend the Member for Wansdyke (Mr. Aspinwall).

Animal Welfare

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to give the proposed code of practice on horse markets and other sales legal status; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The Government are proposing to make an order on horse sales, which will lay down the basic requirements and will have the status of a statutory instrument made under the Animal Health Act 1981. In addition, we are proposing to issue a code of practice, which will be for guidance only, and which will not have any legal status.

Knackerries

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will place in the Library, copies of all correspondence to appropriate knackerries dealing with natural death in the restricted area of Cumbria from 20 June 1986 to date.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I refer the hon. Gentleman to my replies of 1 December and 10 December 1987 at columns *541-2* and *259* respectively. One knacker in Cumbria was given a consent to receive meat from one sheep from the restricted area on condition that it was not used for human or animal food.

Letters to slaughterhouses, livestock markets and showgrounds, advising them of the restrictions on movement and slaughter of sheep, were copied to all knackers in Cumbria.

I am placing copies of the consent and the letters in the Library of the House.

Bentonite

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what research his ministry is undertaking on the use of bentonite to alleviate the problems of radioactive caesium in upland farms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Research initiated by my Department has identified the use of bentonite, applied to upland pasture or added to sheep and cattle feed, as one means of reducing radiocaesium levels in the animals concerned, but a practicable method of general application is not presently available.

Set-aside Scheme

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on how the EEC proposals for land set-aside will affect less-favoured areas.

Mr. MacGregor: The Council of Ministers is still considering the Commission's latest suggestions on the terms of a Community set-aside scheme. In discussions of those I am having careful regard to the interests of producers in less-favoured areas as well as those in other parts of the country.

Departmental Expenditure

Mr. Stevens: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether it is intended to change the cash limit on any departmental Vote for which he has responsibility.

Mr. MacGregor: Yes. Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate, the

cash limit for class IV, vote 5 (Departmental Research Advisory Services and Administration) will be increased by £900,000 from £206,219,000 to £207,119,000 to make provision for reduced appropriations in aid due to a delay in recovery of costs in the operation of the pesticides approvals scheme. The increase will be offset by a reduction of £900,000 to the cash limit on class IV, Vote 4 (Other Agricultural and Food Services, and Support for the Fishing Industry) from £142,676,000 to £141,776,000, reflecting a reduced requirement for grants for the encouragement of co-operation in agriculture and horticulture and will not therefore add to the planning total of public expenditure.

ENERGY

Gas Pipes

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how he ensures acceptable levels of public safety with regard to cast iron gas pipes susceptible to corrosion and fractures used by British Gas; what standards exist for systems of inspection, maintenance and repair of such pipes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: I have been asked to reply.

The responsibility for ensuring acceptable levels of public safety from cast-iron gas pipes lies with British Gas plc under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The Health and Safety Executive is the enforcing authority.

EMPLOYMENT

NUM (President)

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to meet the president of the National Union of Mineworkers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: I have no such plans.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the percentage increase in *(a)* employment and *(b)* unemployment in each parliamentary constituency, grouped by region and county (i) each year since 1979, (ii) over the period since 1979 as a whole, (iii) from mid 1979 to mid 1986 and (iv) since mid 1986.

Mr. Cope: Figures of employment by constituency are available only from the censuses of employment in September 1981 and September 1984. Figures for unemployment by constituency are available only from June 1983 and are in the Library. I am sending the hon. Member the available information.

Special Employment Measures

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the currently estimated gross and net costs for each financial year since 1982-83 for the following special employments measures: (i) the community programme, (ii) the enterprise allowance scheme, (iii) the young workers scheme, (iv) community industry, (v) the job release scheme and (vi) the job splitting scheme.

Mr. Cope *[pursuant to his reply 4 December 1987, c. 773-74]:* I regret that there was an error in the table providing estimated gross costs for the employment measures. The gross costs of the enterprise allowance scheme (EAS) for 1983-84 and 1984-85 should be £23·2 million and £76·7 million and not £25 million and £79·6 million as given in the table.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 1 February 1988

HOME DEPARTMENT

Police Computers

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) whether there are plans to upgrade the current police national computer link into a fully integrated network which would allow connections between any police computer on the network;

(2) if he will state the extent to which the new packet switched network for the police national computer will involve the linking of police computers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: Work is in hand to replace the current police national computer network by an X25 packet switched network which will be compliant with the Government Open Systems Interconnection Protocol (Wide Area Networks) standard. This network would provide a means of linking police computers.

Immigration (Inquiries)

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if interpreters are available at all international airports in the United Kingdom to deal with immigration inquiries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: The immigration service employs eight full-time interpreters, all of whom are stationed at Heathrow. Between them they are able to offer interpretative facilities in seven languages. At the last count over 1,500 immigration officers and chief immigration officers were drawing qualifying allowances in 33 different languages. In addition, officers in charge at all ports are authorised to use hourly-paid interpreters when necessary, drawn from lists of suitable persons kept locally.

Mr. Hui Yat-Chi

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he decided to allow Mr. Hui Yat-Chi to remain in the United Kingdom; why he did not notify the hon. Member for Bradford, West of his decision; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: On 23 June 1987, I wrote to the hon. Member to advise him that Mr. Hui's immigration status was under investigation and said I would write to him again if it was decided to remove Mr. Hui from this country. In the event, inquiries by the immigration service established that Mr. Hui entered this country lawfully and was deemed to have indefinite leave to remain here. Mr. Hui's representatives were notified of this on 28 November 1987.

Crown Prerogative

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the issue to chief constables of a circular inviting them to apply to his Department for equipment denied to them by their respective police authorities was in exercise of power under prerogative of the Crown.

Mr. Hurd: The arrangements for the supply of equipment to chief officers of police set out in the circular were made in exercise of my powers which exist both under the Police Act 1964 and the royal prerogative. The Court of Appeal, in a unanimous judgment, has recently upheld the grounds on which I acted.

Firearm Certificates

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many holders of *(a)* shotgun licences and *(b)* firearms certificates there are in each Birmingham parliamentary constituency, by name, at the latest convenient date and in each of the preceding two years.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information available centrally on shotgun and firearm certificates on issue relates to police force areas and for 31 December 1986 is published in tables 2 and 4 of Home Office statistical bulletin issue 2/88, a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the current arrangements for maintaining and regularly updating a register of shotgun licences and firearms certificates reported to the police as lost or stolen; how often such a list is circulated to police forces in England and Wales; and what arrangements are made in relation to ammunition reported stolen.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There is no register of shotgun and firearm certificates reported to the police as lost or stolen. Ammunition reported as stolen would, as is the case with firearms and shotguns, be placed on the police stolen property index.

Drink-Driving Offenders

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give details of the number of drink-driving offenders found guilty who are repeat offenders for the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The available information on findings of guilt for offences of driving, etc. with alcohol above the prescribed limit is published annually in "Offences Relating to Motor Vehicles, England and Wales, Supplementary Tables", Table 5 of the issue for 1986, copies of which are in the Library. Information on repeated convictions for these offences is not available.

Radio

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the licences for independent trust radio and community radio stations will be assigned by competitive tender.

Mr. Renton: No.

Police Constable (Abscondment)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis on the incident on 23 January involving the abscondment with firearms and ammunition of a police constable in Chingford.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand an inquiry is in hand.

Dr. Frank Skuse

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has anything to add to previous statements made concerning the circumstances, and reasons for the retirement of Dr. Frank Skuse, in the light of evidence presented at the hearing by the court of appeal of the case against the six men convicted of the Birmingham bomb offences.

Mr. John Patten: No.

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on what day the order was given to Dr. Frank Skuse to leave the Chorley laboratory by 31 October 1985.

Mr. John Patten: On 23 July 1985 Dr. Skuse was notified that his last day of service would be regarded as 31 October 1985. This arrangement ws confirmed in a letter dated 3 October 1985.

TLC Tests

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether his Department treats the TLC tests as a unique test for the presence of nitroglycerine.

Mr. John Patten: No. It is our normal practice to carry out confirmatory tests for the presence of nitroglycerine when the TLC test is used.

Drink-driving Accidents

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions for drink and driving accidents causing *(a)* death, *(b)* injuries and *(c)* damage to property for each year since 1974, have resulted in (i) acquittals, (ii) guilty verdicts, (iii) imprisonment, (iv) fines and (v) compensation to the victims.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Information on court proceedings and sentencing at all courts in England and Wales for driving, etc. after consuming alcohol or taking drugs is published annually in "Offences Relating to Motor Vehicles, England and Wales, Supplementary Tables" (tables 1, 2, 5 and 8 of the issue for 1986). Information on compensation orders could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Information on deaths, injuries and property damage resulting from these offences is not collected centrally; however, information is published in "Road Accidents, Great Britain, 1986" on the number of persons killed or injured in accidents where the driver failed a roadside screening breath test. Copies of both publications are in the Library.

ENVIRONMENT

Rights of Way

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will designate in 1988 a public right of way day in order to promote public awareness of their ancient rights.

Mr. Moynihan: Improved public awareness of the opportunities for countryside access is already a key objective in the Countryside Commission's revised policies for enjoying the countryside announced last September. We do not intend to designate a public right of way day in 1988.

Housing Defects (Correspondence)

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to reply to Easington district council on matters raised in correspondence dated 16 August 1985 regarding new town transferred housing defects.

Mrs. Roe: We have been in touch with Easington about the issues it raised with us, and I hope a substantive reply can be sent shortly.

Smoke Detectors

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what talks he has had with district councils to discuss the installation of smoke detectors in every home; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Roe: My Department is currently undertaking a study of the potential of automatic smoke detection as a means of improving life safety in residential buildings and a review of other research. The results of the review will be published. We will certainly inform the local authority associations of the outcome and give them the opportunity to discuss the implications.

Estate Action

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the bids made by the London borough of Greenwich for assistance under the Estate Action programme during 1988-89, indicating when he expects to make a decision on each.

Mrs. Roe: The London borough of Greenwich has submitted nine bids for Estate Action resources in 1988-89:

Continuation schemes	£
Barnfield estate	1,102,000
Hughesfield estate	130,000
Valley Grove estate	796,000
	Bid for additional resources
Schemes to start in 1988-89	
Cardwell estate	655,000
Cherry Orchard/Mascalls	640,000
Connaught estate	738,000
Ferrier estate	1,100,000
Hughesfield phase II	551,000
Meridian house, Azof street	110,000

Local authorities have been requested to submit outline bids by the end of January and we will tell them as soon as possible which bids we should like them to work up more fully. Approvals and additional allocations will follow as soon as councils can give us firm information on costs, phasing and other elements of their schemes.

Charity Commissioners Building (Redevelopment)

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will use his powers to call in the plans for redevelopment of the site of the former Charity Commissioners building in Ryder street, SW1; and

whether he will inquire into the reasons why certain residents and business ratepayers were not informed of these projected developments.

Mr. Waldegrave: Planning permission for this development was granted on 26 November 1987 by Westminster city council, as local planning authority. It is therefore no longer open to my right hon. Friend to call in the planning application.

Shared Ownership

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the Government's future plans for the extension of shared ownership schemes.

Mrs. Roe: The Government have promoted shared ownership since they came into office, as an important means of helping those who could not otherwise afford to buy their own homes.

Until now, shared ownership has been developed largely by housing associations and local authorities. We believe that it could be made much more widely available if it were financed privately. That is why we legislated in the Housing and Planning Act 1986 to exempt certain shared ownership leases from the Rent Act.

The regulations which bring those provisions into force have now been made. I hope that housing associations, financial institutions and others will take full advantage of the opportunities which this opens up.

Homeless Persons

Mr. Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list, for all local authorities in the south-west region, the amount they applied for and received of the £1·3 million allocated to the south-west region as part of the additional £44·7 million made available for housing projects for the homeless.

Mr. Waldegrave: The information is as follows:

Local authority	*Bid £'000*	*Allocation £'000*
Avon		
Bath	450	150
Bristol	250	200
Woodspring	450	—
Cornwall		
Caradon	75	—
Carrick	82	—
Kerrier	310	—
Penwith	200	—
Restormel	185	—
Isles of Scilly	320	160
Devon		
Exeter	184	—
South Hams	200	—
Teignbridge	60	—
Torridge	40	—
Dorset		
Bournemouth	200	—
East Dorset	150	—
North Dorset	210	210
Poole	130	100
Purbeck	257	125
West Dorset	500	—
Weymouth and Portland	360	160
Gloucestershire		
Cheltenham	500	—
Gloucester	400	—
Stroud	400	—
Somerset		
Mendip	220	—
Sedgemoor	200	—
South Somerset	150	80
Taunton Dene	175	—
Wiltshire		
Kennet	200	115
North Wiltshire	300	—
West Wiltshire	210	—

Of the additional £44·7 million announced by my right hon. Friend on 3 November, £25·7 million was allocated for schemes to combat homelessness.

Aycliffe and Peterlee Development Corporation

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will give details of the bid made by Helicon Bar for the assets of the Aycliffe and Peterlee development corporation; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will give details of the management team's bid for the assets of the Aycliffe and Peterlee development corporation; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Roe: No. It would breach commercial confidentiality to give details of the bids received.

Planning Appeals

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in descending order those 100 local authorities with the highest number of planning applications sent on appeal to the Secretary of State, and the number of appeals for each local authority in the last three available years.

Mr. Waldegrave: The following table lists, in descending order, the 100 local authorities against whose decisions the highest number of planning appeals were lodged in 1986. In addition, the table includes for each authority the number of planning appeals lodged in 1984 and 1985.

Local authority	*Appeals received*		
	1986	*1985*	*1984*
Bromley	254	182	196
Camden	205	133	139
Chelmsford	195	203	130
Westminster	181	164	122
Wycombe	177	105	91
New Forest	167	146	134
Windsor and Maidenhead	159	120	130
Sevenoaks	159	124	88
Horsham	157	118	98
Newbury	148	102	93
Birmingham	146	133	117
South Oxfordshire	144	142	116
South Cambridgeshire	135	123	107
Torbay	127	100	108
Wealden	126	129	104
Epping Forest	126	124	106
Reigate and Banstead	124	105	78
Bristol	123	119	92

Local authority	Appeals received 1986	1985	1984
Hounslow	123	122	78
Wokingham	122	105	92
Macclesfield	122	92	67
Leeds	121	133	134
Harrow	120	76	59
Chichester	119	105	103
East Hampshire	117	84	57
Wimborne	115	104	78
Croydon	114	116	85
Mid Sussex	113	100	81
Maidstone	112	73	79
Waverley	111	125	102
Barnet	111	91	74
Enfield	111	80	87
Tandridge	108	85	97
Reading	107	81	88
Basingstoke and Deane	106	92	96
Stroud	105	83	86
Mid Bedfordshire	104	76	60
Winchester	103	116	74
Kensington and Chelsea	102	107	79
East Devon	100	90	63
Test Valley	100	67	67
Guildford	100	103	105
Bradford	100	71	81
Wansdyke	99	65	35
Basildon	99	83	107
Chiltern	98	70	81
Forest of Dean	97	73	85
West Dorset	96	62	70
Vale of White Horse	93	50	51
Kirklees	92	88	83
Greenwich	92	62	54
Brighton	90	55	32
North Devon	89	59	70
Salisbury	88	78	50
Northavon	87	61	73
Teignbridge	87	64	56
Wychavon	87	82	77
East Hertfordshire	87	90	67
Ealing	87	58	65
Richmond upon Thames	86	85	70
St. Albans	85	93	109
Elmbridge	85	88	62
Hammersmith and Fulham	85	65	71
Aylesbury Vale	84	72	62
Dacorum	84	55	69
North Norfolk	83	60	69
West Oxfordshire	83	68	80
South Hams	82	72	83
Solihull	82	96	79
Hart	81	54	62
South Norfolk	81	57	58
Mendip	81	52	49
Southwark	81	73	46
South Buckinghamshire	80	79	69
Tunbridge Wells	80	79	76
Runnymede	80	75	70
Tendring	79	71	57
Woodspring	78	102	83
Rother	78	77	53
Brentwood	78	63	57
Eastleigh	78	39	29
Harrogate	78	86	74
Mole Valley	78	75	56
Redbridge	78	79	75
North Bedfordshire	77	56	74
Lewes	77	35	47
Wirral	76	65	34
Three Rivers	75	74	55
Cambridge	74	65	42
Braintree	74	72	56
Carrick	73	68	69
Fareham	73	59	55
East Lindsey	73	63	68
South Somerset	73	65	67
Hillingdon	73	81	60
South Lakeland	72	46	60
Kingston upon Thames	72	74	74
Suffolk Coastal	71	62	30
Bracknell	70	63	47
Stratford-on-Avon	70	64	73

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of planning application appeals he has received from applicants in the Chelmsford local authority area in the last three available years; and how many appeals were successful.

Mr. Waldegrave: The table shows the number of planning appeals received against decisions of Chelmsford borough council in each year from 1 January 1984 to 31 December 1986, and the number allowed:

Year	Appeals received	Appeals allowed
1984	130	32
1985	203	64
1986	195	85

New Towns (Insurance)

Sir Anthony Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what requirements are laid down by his Department for the insurance of property and persons in new towns; what are the risks covered; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Roe: Subject to the general statutory requirements, new town development corporations are free to decide to what extent they should insure.

Land Disposal

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for each year since 1974 *(a)* nature reserve lands, *(b)* public right of way paths, *(c)* common lands, *(d)* conservation areas which have ceased to be available to the public and have been given for the use of (i) Army training and exercise, (ii) shopping centres and (iii) other property development purposes.

Mr. Moynihan: This information is not available in the form requested. In general, the public have no legal right to access to nature reserves, commons or in conservation areas except where a right of way exists. Rights of way cannot be extinguished for any purpose other than by order made by the highway authority, or an application to the magistrates court. Such orders require confirmation by my right hon. Friend only when an objection is received.

Safety Glass

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he has taken to accelerate the introduction of safety glass and glazing into domestic premises.

Mr. Trippier: A consultation letter on stage 2 of the review of the building regulations, which was issued on 15 December 1986, included a proposal that a requirement for safety glazing of doors and low level glazing should be

included in the regulations. There has been a generally favourable response. We intend to consult on detailed proposals and advice as soon as the British Standards Institution has completed its current work on the revision of the relevant standard.

Rating Reform

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what the effects of the poll tax will be on youngsters' sports and football clubs, which lease recreation and sports grounds from local authorities and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: Sports clubs are not directly affected by the introduction of the community charge. Where they remain in sole occupation of property they will normally pay rates at a uniform rate in the pound on up-to-date rateable values following revaluation in 1990. Non-profit-making sports clubs will continue to be eligible for rate relief of up to 100 per cent. at the discretion of local authorities.

Rating Revaluations

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment for how long owners or occupiers will have a right of appeal against the revaluation of their property under regulations governing the revaluation of business and commercial property in conjunction with the reform of local government finance.

Mr. Howard: We have published a proposal to limit the time for lodging appeals against the new valuation list to six months. We are still considering the responses to that, and to a number of other proposals, and hope to make a statement shortly.

Game Licences

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many game licences were issued in each category during each of the last five years; what revenue was in in each category, respectively; and what were the administrative costs involved.

Mr. Moynihan *[pursuant to his reply 25 January 1988, c. 46]:* The figures for game licences issued in England and Wales for 1986-87 were incorrect.

The correct figures are as follows:

1986-87

	Number issued	*Revenue (£)*
Game (Red)	23,425	140,550
Game (Green)	630	2,520
Game (Blue)	9,818	39,272
Game (Occasional)	1,081	2,162
Game (Dealer)	1,324	5,296
Game (Keeper)	785	3,140
TOTALS	37,063	192,940

WALES

Motorway Network

73. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to improve the motorway network in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The Government's motorway and trunk road programme in Wales is set out in "Roads in Wales 1985".

Religious Education

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many local education authority high schools in Wales have already phased out religious education as an option in the fourth and fifth General Certificate of Secondary Education years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Information is not available in the form requested. According to figures supplied by the Welsh Joint Education Committee, 198 out of 230 maintained secondary schools in Wales entered candidates for GCE or CSE examinations in religious studies or scripture in 1987.

A lack of examination candidates in a school in a particular academic year does not necessarily indicate that the subject is not offered as an option in that school.

The Education Act 1944 requires schools to provide religious instruction for all children of compulsory school age. The proposals in the Education Reform Bill, now before the House, reaffirm this requirement.

Radiation

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the number of farms, the number of sheep and the area of land, in acres, under restriction in Wales as a result of radioactivity from the Chernobyl accident; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: There are, under restriction in Wales, some 416 holdings, covering about 210,000 acres and containing about 300,000 sheep.

Public Appointments

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list all the appointments made by him since May 1979 to public office.

Mr. Peter Walker: This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Private Patients

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give for 1985, 1986 and 1987 *(a)* the number of paybeds, *(b)* the number of discharges and deaths of private patients, *(c)* the average number of paybeds occupied by private patients daily and *(d)* the percentage occupancy, for each district health authority.

Mr. Peter Walker: The information, which is available only for 1985 and 1986, is given in the table:

	[1]Beds Authorised	Discharges and Deaths	Average Daily Occupied Beds	[2]Percentage
1985				
Clwyd	12	621	4·11	34
East Dyfed	7	273	3·15	45
Gwent	1	—	—	—
Gwynedd	8	270	3·90	49
Mid Glamorgan	3	40	0·26	9
Pembrokeshire	3	104	1·10	37
Powys	—	—	—	—
South Glamorgan	12	84	1·53	13
West Glamorgan	4	127	0·63	16
1986				
Clwyd	12	487	5·78	48
East Dyfed	7	332	3·56	51
Gwent	6	—	—	—
Gwynedd	8	277	3·63	45
Mid Glamorgan	3	83	0·82	27
Pembrokeshire	3	102	2·27	76
Powys	—	—	—	—
South Glamorgan	12	75	1·56	13
West Glamorgan	3	167	1·00	33

[1] As at 31 December.
[2] Approximate measure, calculated as the ratio of the third and first columns.

Inward Investment

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what progress has been made with the Chinese Textile Mill inward investment project.

Mr. Peter Walker: I understand that Nantong has withdrawn from the potential joint venture project with Tootal plc. The levels of assistance potentially available to the project have been confirmed to both partners and the Chinese have indicated their intention to continue to seek industrial and trade opportunities in Swansea.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when WINvest started negotiations with each of the Japanese companies which he recently announced as coming to Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: Initial contacts with these companies were made in August 1986, June 1987 and July 1987.

NHS Expenditure

Mr. Alan Williams To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the average annual percentage increase at 1987-88 prices in National Health Service expenditure in Wales *(a)* since 1978-79 and *(b)* 1973-74 to 1978-79.

Mr. Peter Walker: Between 1978-79 and 1987-88 expenditure in real terms has increased by 36·3 per cent. giving an average annual percentage increase of 4 per cent. and between 1974-75 and 1978-79 by 9·5 per cent., giving an average annual percentage increase of 2·4 per cent. The information requested is not available prior to 1974-75 because in 1974 there was a National Health Service reorganisation which included the transfer of a whole range of services including school health and ambulance and community health services from local authorities to the National Health Service.

The right hon. Gentleman was perhaps wanting to compare the performance of the two Governments. I have only been able to give him the figures from the first to the last year of the Labour Government which, as he sees, shows an annual increase of 2·4 per cent. per annum. The equivalent figures for the Conservative Government are from 1979-80 to 1987-88. During this period there has been an increase in real terms of 36·1 per cent., giving an annual average percentage increase of 4·5 per cent.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Religious Education

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the prospects for religious education as an examination subject after the implementation of the Education Reform Bill.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Government have made it clear that they do not intend to prescribe the amount of time to be devoted to any subject in the school curriculum. It will be up to schools to determine how much time they spend on each subject and the range of subjects in which pupils are entered for public examinations. We believe that study of the foundation subjects of the national curriculum might take around 70 per cent. of curriculum time or more if schools and pupils so choose. This leaves ample time for study of religious education as an examination subject and there is no reason to think that schools will not continue to put in as many examination entries as hitherto.

Local Education Authorities (Employees)

Sir Peter Hordern: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, how many were employed in local education authorities who were neither lecturers nor teachers in 1961, 1971, 1981 and at the latest convenient date.

Mrs. Rumbold: Figures for 1961 and 1971 are not available centrally; the numbers of full-time equivalent staff employed in local authorities in education in England and Wales who were neither lecturers nor teachers were 398,000 at March 1981 and 402,000 (provisional) at June 1987, the latest available date.

Assisted Places

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what plans he has to expand the assisted places scheme among *(a)* public schools and *(b)* state schools;

(2) how many public schools have applied to join the assisted places scheme;

(3) if he will publish the numbers of pupils on the assisted places scheme and their schools for each year since the scheme began;

(4) if he will publish the names of *(a)* state schools, *(b)* public schools and *(c)* other schools participating in the assisted places scheme.

Mr. Dunn: The assisted places scheme exists to give help with tuition fees at certain independent secondary schools to the parents of able children who might not otherwise attend those schools. A complete list of the participating schools in England and numbers of assisted pupils attending each school from 1985 onwards is given below. To provide a detailed breakdown of places before this date would incur disproportionate cost, and total figures only are given for the years 1981-84. As originally planned the scheme would have reached just over 33,000 places in England and Wales when fully developed. The Government now intend to raise that target to an eventual 35,000.

Independent secondary schools in England were invited in October 1987 to apply to join the scheme or to take up additional places if they were already participants. The responses received are now under consideration. One hundred and twenty six new schools have applied to join the scheme and are being considered against the same criteria as apply to existing participants.

Total number of assisted place holders

School	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
Abbey School	60	57	69
Abingdon School	85	82	90
Aldenham School	13	16	24
Alice Ottley School	55	65	70
Alleyn's School	158	184	198
Arnold School	59	67	76
Ashford School	41	41	43
Bancroft's School	60	68	76
Bath High School	76	85	90
Batley Grammar School	198	220	249
Bedales School	2	5	9
Bedford High School	81	91	92
Bedford Modern School	131	138	136
Bedford School	69	75	76
Dame Alice Harpur School	131	134	145
Belvedere School	132	150	163
Berkhamsted School	33	33	29
Berkhamsted School for Girls	25	28	28
Birkenhead High School	185	226	258
Birkenhead School	193	226	245
Bishop's Stortford College	18	23	30
Blackheath High School	82	95	101
Bolton School (Boys)	186	221	262
Bolton School (Girls)	183	214	251
Bradfield College	4	1	0
Bradford Girls' Grammar School	44	48	58
Bradford Grammar School	150	179	201
Brentwood School	86	97	101
Brighton and Hove High School	146	164	152
Brighton College	69	86	99
Bristol Cathedral School	109	126	150
Bristol Grammar School	194	232	263
Bromley High School	93	107	120
Bruton School for Girls	110	123	127
Bury Grammar School (Boys)	153	181	198
Bury Grammar School (Girls)	182	209	229
Canford School	28	34	35
Carmel College	64	71	91
Casterton School	41	42	43
Caterham School	106	104	109
Central Newcastle High School	85	103	112
Charterhouse	14	14	14
Cheadle Hulme School	101	117	129
Chigwell School	57	65	70
Churcher's College	87	98	112
City of London School	100	111	124
City of London School for Girls	82	94	104
Clifton College	50	59	67
Clifton High School	46	48	52
Colfe's School	154	175	183
Colston's School	78	87	89
Colston's Girls' School	105	125	145
Coventry Schools	177	213	245
Cranleigh School	37	39	38
Croydon High School	95	105	119
Culford School	40	45	46
Dame Allan's Boys' School	111	131	142
Dame Allan's Girls' School	106	115	127
Dauntsey's School	47	50	54
Denstone College	91	106	114
Dulwich College	219	245	273
Edgehill College	94	111	123
Eltham College	83	90	104
Emanuel School	224	260	289
Epsom College	32	30	30
Exeter School	136	153	164
Farnborough Hill School	148	170	181
Felsted School	40	44	47
Forest School	115	126	138
Friends' School	74	79	79
Godolphin and Latymer School	149	169	182
Gresham's School	9	10	10
Haberdashers' Aske's School, Elstree	172	207	229
Haberdashers' Aske's School for Girls, Elstree	119	122	137
Hampton School	154	174	197
Harrogate College	16	17	18
Hereford Cathedral School	181	210	233
Highgate School	36	32	33
Hulme Grammar (Boys)	159	185	203
Hulme Grammar (Girls)	141	153	178
Hymers College	133	141	152
Ipswich High School	114	126	136
Ipswich School	59	69	79
James Allen's Girls School	119	145	157
John Lyon School	86	93	94
Kent College	62	71	80
King Edward's School at Bath	99	113	128
King Edward's School, Birmingham	222	260	281
King Edward VI High School, Birmingham	149	160	173
King Edward VII School, Lytham	168	195	214
King Edward VI School, Norwich	91	105	101
King Edward VI School, Southampton	184	197	222
King Edward's School, Witley	55	67	76
King's College School	75	86	93
King's High School for Girls, Warwick	136	153	170
King's School, Chester	73	79	94
King's School, Macclesfield	144	157	177
King's School, Rochester	51	56	57
King's School, Worcester	93	120	136
Kingston Grammar School	110	128	129
Kingswood School	36	37	36
Kirkham Grammar School	39	55	63
Lady Eleanor Holles School	56	66	74
La Sagesse Convent School	120	136	143
Latymer Upper School	244	275	291
Leeds Girls' High School	105	122	127
Leeds Grammar School	168	177	194
Leys School	27	28	29

School	1985	1986	1987
Liverpool College	122	150	174
Lord Wandsworth College	63	73	78
Loreto Convent Grammar School	59	66	71
Loughborough Grammar School	98	111	120
Loughborough High School	77	90	94
Magdalen College School	100	111	117
Malvern College	50	54	57
Manchester Grammar School	205	235	271
Manchester High School	129	143	165
Maynard School	136	159	158
Merchant Taylors' School, Liverpool	149	169	186
Merchant Taylors' School for Girls, Liverpool	123	149	171
Merchant Taylors' School, Northwood	73	81	85
Mill Hill School	60	64	78
Monkton Combe School	32	37	38
Mount St. Mary's College	59	64	59
Newcastle Under Lyme School	340	408	459
Northampton High School	171	182	178
North London Collegiate School	59	64	73
Norwich High School	153	170	171
Nottingham Girls' High School	154	165	188
Nottingham High School	50	70	89
Notting Hill and Ealing High School	72	95	116
Old Palace School	147	166	195
Oxford High School	68	84	97
Perse School for Boys	45	51	57
Perse School for Girls	68	73	79
Plymouth College	141	169	182
Pocklington School	113	126	131
Portsmouth Grammar School	131	164	188
Portsmouth High School	127	140	149
Putney High School	91	98	105
Queen Elizabeth Grammar School, Blackburn	202	220	246
Queen Elizabeth Grammar School, Wakefield	127	143	153
Queen Elizabeth's Hospital School, Bristol	120	144	168
Queen Mary School, Lytham	193	215	237
Queen's College, Taunton	54	60	63
Queens College, London	54	60	68
Queen's School, Chester	70	79	84
Ratcliffe College	37	46	52
Redland High School	60	69	79
Red Maid's School	121	140	157
Reigate Grammar School	79	94	109
Repton School	33	40	45
Rossall School	31	35	43
Royal Grammar School, Guildford	107	118	116
Royal Grammar School, Newcastle	231	287	308
Royal Grammar School, Worcester	105	144	185
St. Albans School	109	119	124
St. Albans High School for Girls	48	58	59
St. Ambrose College	76	77	87
St. Anselm's College	139	167	175
St. Bede's College	157	194	213
St. Bees School	67	76	82
St. Benedict's School	58	64	71
St. Catherine's School	24	29	36
St. Dunstan's College	133	149	160
St. Edmund's College, Ware	52	63	65
St. Edward's College, Liverpool	273	330	385
St. George's College	21	30	28
St. Helen's School	29	32	28
St. John's College	142	158	181
St. John's School, Leatherhead	8	14	15
St. Joseph's College	60	68	76
St. Joseph's Convent	103	117	121
St. Mary's College	185	220	246
St. Mary's Convent	76	84	95
St. Mary's Hall	29	40	49
St. Maur's Convent	51	60	62
St. Paul's School	64	71	72
St. Paul's Girls' School	50	52	63
St. Peter's School	82	111	124
St. Swithun's School	3	5	3
Salesian College	84	85	86
School of St. Helen and St. Katherine	75	92	103
Sedbergh School	19	24	27
Sheffield High School	80	84	99
Shrewsbury High School	69	69	85
Sir William Perkin's School	80	84	87
South Hampstead High School	56	60	64
Stamford School	58	62	71
Stamford High School	51	56	64
Stockport Grammar School	195	227	269
Stonyhurst College	25	28	24
Stowe School	7	5	5
Streatham Hill and Clapham High School	121	135	154
Sutton High School	55	61	66
Sutton Valence School	36	46	50
Sydenham High School	87	95	109
Talbot Heath School	122	135	139
Taunton School	38	44	50
Tonbridge School	2	3	2
Trent College	96	114	116
Trinity School of John Whitgift	104	125	136
Truro School	80	95	110
Truro High School	55	54	55
University College School	52	60	69
Upton Hall Convent School	122	143	153
Ursuline High School	102	118	133
Wakefield High School	115	127	143
Walthamstow Hall	55	78	77
Warwick School	124	126	137
Wellingborough School	49	54	55
Wellington College	38	43	44
Wellington School	165	190	199
Wells Cathedral School	62	66	66
West Buckland School	28	40	52
Westminster School	11	20	26
Whitgift School	77	90	101
William Hulme Grammar School	155	181	207
Wimbledon High School	56	58	63
Winchester College	21	24	25
Wisbech Grammar School	145	192	236
Withington Girls' School	73	81	89
Wolverhampton Grammar School	224	250	260
Woodbridge School	77	93	101
Woodhouse Grove School	82	103	113
Wycliffe College	39	43	42
TOTAL	21,412	24,478	26,900

Total numbers of assisted place holders 1981 to 1984

	Number
1981	4,185
1982	8,616
1983	13,102
1984	17,386

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many applications have been received for places under the assisted places scheme in Cheshire; and if he will give comparable figures for previous years.

Mr. Dunn: The recruitment of assisted pupils is a matter for the schools participating in the scheme. Information regarding applications for assisted places is not collected centrally.

Student Grants

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what would be the cost, at 1986-87 prices, of restoring student grants to the 1979 level.

Mr. Jackson: Approximately £97 million.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what would be the cost at 1986-87 prices of restoring the level of student transport costs to their 1979 level.

Mr. Jackson: To restore the arrangements for reimbursement which existed in 1979 would cost about £10 million at 1986-87 prices.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his estimate of the cost, at 1986-87 prices, of ending parental contribution in respect of student grants.

Mr. Jackson: Over £300 million.

School Meals

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many children are receiving free school meals in Blyth Valley, Northumberland.

Mr. Dunn: In October 1986, the latest date for which data are available, 5,841 pupils in Northumberland received free school meals. Information for Blyth Valley is not separately available.

Pupil-Teacher Ratios

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give the total number of pupils on school rolls and the pupil-to-teacher ratio in primary schools in Northumberland for each year since 1979.

Mr. Dunn: The number of pupils on roll and the pupil-teacher ratio in maintained primary schools in Northumberland each year since 1979 were as follows:

January each year	*Pupils*[1]	*Pupil-teacher ratio*
1979	21,652	23·4
1980	21,167	23·1
1981	20,147	23·5
1982	18,649	23·4
1983	18,249	23·0
1984	18,528	23·3
1985	18,720	23·3
1986	18,938	23·3
1987	19,244	23·1

[1] Full-time equivalent pupils. Part-time pupils counted as 0·5.

Medicine Courses (Overseas Students)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the current minimum sum recommended for fees for postgraduate medicine courses undertaken by overseas students; how many such students were on courses of postgraduate medical training in 1979 and how many are now; and if he will reconsider Her Majesty's Government's decision to charge overseas students full fees for medical postgraduate courses.

Mr. Jackson: Universities are themselves responsible for setting tuition fees charged to their overseas students. The University Grants Committee recommend minima. For science and clinical courses in 1988-89 the annual recommended minima are: science, £5,180; clinical, £9,590.

In 1979 there were 1,204 full-time non-United Kingdom-domiciled students on postgraduate medicine and dentistry courses at universities in Great Britain. In 1986 the comparable figure was 1,179.

The overall number of postgraduate students from abroad in universities in Great Britain in 1986 was higher than in the late 1970s before the introduction of full-cost fees. My right hon. Friend sees no reason for considering a return to the previous system of subsidised fees.

Teachers

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) whether he intends to publish his reply to inquiries from the International Labour Office relating to the withdrawal of teachers' negotiating rights in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether he will place in the Library a copy of his supplementary response of 29 October 1987 in relation to the Green Paper "Teachers' Pay and Conditions"; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Evidence submitted by the Government is confidential to the International Labour Organisation and its Committee on Freedom of Association. When the Committee on Freedom of Association has considered the evidence it will be for the governing body of the International Labour Organisation to decide what to publish.

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he is taking to persuade firms to increase the experience of industry of teachers, especially in scarcity subjects.

Mrs. Rumbold: We are keen to build bridges between education and industry and to provide all teachers with experience of industry, not just those in shortage subjects. A series of regional conferences to promote collaboration between firms and local education authorities has been held to provide a number of opportunities for teachers in the shortage subjects to obtain industrial experience. The partnership schemes developed by British Petroleum with Hertfordshire and Humberside, and between British Telecom and Bradford local education authorities, should also assist teachers awareness of industry. We are taking every opportunity to persuade employers of the importance of links with education and the value of giving teachers industrial experience is one part of this strategy.

City Technology Colleges

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a statement on recent further developments towards establishing city technology colleges.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) and 1 December, at column *751*. Since then the Mercers' Company and Thamesmead Town have announced their intention to sponsor the establishment of a city technology college in Thamesmead.

Modern Languages

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will publish the latest available figures for the cost of training a teacher of modern languages.

Mrs. Rumbold: This information is not available.

Mathematics and Physics (Teacher Retraining)

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, whether he will make a statement on progress with the programme designed to retrain teachers for mathematics and physics; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: We believe that earmarked moneys available from April 1988, under the Government's local education authority training grants scheme, will allow the funding of a substantial proportion of the one-year retraining places for mathematics, physics and CDT teachers available at higher education institutions. Grant supporting £4 million of expenditure is ring-fenced for the secondment of teachers on to long courses in recognition of the serious difficulties experienced by some institutions last year. In addition, the scheme will support a further £10 million of expenditure by LEAs on in-service training, which can be used for funding one-year retraining courses, in mathematics and physics. The programme of funding in this area will be reviewed for 1989-90.

Education Reform Bill

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will list the additional staff required by his Department in 1988-89 to deal with the Education Reform Bill; and if he will state the additional cost.

Mrs. Rumbold: The recently published public expenditure White Paper, Cm 288, shows for 1988-89 planned staff numbers of 2,560 and running costs provision of £66·161 million compared with a target of 2,480 staff at 1 April 1988 and running costs provision of £58·3 million for 1987-88. Final dispositions have still to be made, but it is expected that most of the extra posts will be concerned directly or indirectly with the Education Reform Bill.

DEFENCE

Chevaline

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the cost of the mid-life refurbishing programme for Chevaline flight hardware; what improvements are being incorporated in the system; and whether the cost of the refurbishment programme was included in the latest published programme cost estimates for the Chevaline system.

Mr. Sainsbury: As for any equipment, refurbishment is part of the planned cycle of in-service support for Chevaline. As is the practice for such costs, they were not included in the project cost estimate last announced on 5 February 1985 at column *512*. I am not prepared to reveal further information in line with the policy of successive Governments, for reasons of security.

Trident

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the responsibility of the controller establishments, research and nuclear, in relation to the Trident programme extends to procurement of the re-entry vehicle.

Mr. Sainsbury: Yes.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the latest figure for the real cost reduction in Trident warhead procurement over the 1981 estimate as last given in the Comproller and Auditor General's report on "Control and Management of the Trident Programme" (HC 27), paragraph 3.27; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The latest estimate for Trident warhead procurement shows a real cost reduction of about 5 per cent. on the 1981 estimate and is included in the overall Trident estimated cost of £9,043 million announced by my right hon. Friend on 21 January 1988.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how missiles from the United Kingdom Trident force will be transported to and from the United States/United Kingdom missile pool in the United States of America.

Mr. Sainsbury: The United Kingdom's Trident D5 missiles will be transported to and from the United States facility at Kings bay, Georgia by the United Kingdom's Vanguard class SSBNs.

Departmental Insurance

Sir Anthony Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give full details of the insurance cover effected by his Department for property and persons, including the risks covered.

Mr. Freeman: It is the general rule that the Government do not insure against the risk of any loss which, if it arose, would fall directly or indirectly on the Consolidated Fund. However, it was decided in 1982 that there would be distinct financial and administrative advantages in transferring to commercial insurers my Department's work on third party motor accident and employers liability claims in the United Kingdom. These risks remain with the commercial market, together with those in respect of the participation of Ministry of Defence aircraft and parachute teams in civil organised air shows, the Department's legal liabilities to certain fare-paying air passengers, and the Department's liabilities arising from the civilian use of Ministry air fields. In consultation with our brokers and insurance consultants, we continue to review those other areas of the Department's activities and risks which might lend themselves to commercial insurance, provided that a clear benefit to the Department would result.

Departmental Staff (Merit Pay)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many of his Department's civilian staff have received merit pay awards in 1985 and 1987.

Mr. Sainsbury: The term "merit pay" is taken to refer to the three-year performance bonus experiment which was introduced throughout the Civil Service on 1 April 1985.

During the first year of the experiment, which ran from April 1985 to March 1986, 684 awards were made to MOD staff. During the second year, from April 1986 to March 1987, 698 awards were made. Details for the third year, from April 1987 to March 1988, are not yet available.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were the grades of the recipients of merit pay in 1985, 1986 and 1987.

Mr. Sainsbury: The term "merit pay" is taken to refer to the three-year performance bonus experiment which was introduced throughout the Civil Service on 1 April 1985. Staff in the grades 3 to 7 and their equivalents were eligible to receive these bonuses.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total expenditure on merit pay within his Department during each of the years 1985, 1986 and 1987.

Mr. Sainsbury: The term "merit pay" is taken to refer to the three-year performance bonus experiment which was introduced throughout the Civil Service on 1 April 1985.

During the first year of the experiment, which ran from April 1985 to March 1986, expenditure on awards within the MOD was £691,500. Expenditure in the second year, from April 1986 to March 1987 was again £691,500. Details are not yet available for the third and final year of the experiment covering the period April 1987 to March 1988.

Special Pay

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which United Kingdom establishments operate special pay additions.

Mr. Sainsbury: Special pay additions operate in the following establishments:

RAF HQ Strike Command, High Wycombe.
RAF Signals Engineering Establishment, Henlow and Wyton.
Atomic Weapons Establishments, Aldermaston and Burghfield.
Institute of Naval Medicine, Alverstoke.
HM Naval Base, Rosyth.
HM Naval Base, Devonport.
Directorate General Ship Refitting, Bath.
Directorate General Submarines, Bath.
Fleet Maintenance Repair Organisation, Portsmouth and in the Inner London area.

Merchant Ships (Armilla Patrol)

Mr. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of British or British dependency ownership of the parent company is required for a merchant ship to qualify for accompaniment by the Armilla patrol.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Ships eligible for RN protection are those registered in the United Kingdom or dependent territories, or those where there is a clear majority United Kingdom or dependent territory interest in the ownership.

Research Projects

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps will be taken to ensure that research projects previously funded directly by his Department, whose funding is now to be channelled through the research councils, will not suffer a loss of income as a result; what steps will be taken to ensure that the total sums available for research will not decline in real terms as a result of this change; what representations Her Majesty's Government have received from universities and other academic institutions about this matter and what reply has been sent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: When joint grants are made by the Ministry of Defence and the research councils for academic research of relevance to defence, research council funding arrangements apply. The grants are separate from and additional to contracts and agreements made by the Ministry for defence-related research. Defence spending on R and D in the academic sector has shown a sustained increase in recent years.

AWRE Aldermaston

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what estimates were given of the required number of staff to be employed at AWRE Aldermaston for each year since 1979; and how far they have differed from the complement in each of these years;

(2) how many electronics engineers have been recruited to work at AWRE Aldermaston in each year since 1979;

(3) how many staff at AWRE Aldermaston have been transferred from research to production duties in each year since 1979.

Mr. Sainsbury: It is not our policy to disclose details of the number or deployment of staff employed on the nuclear warhead programme.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the AS90 warhead production complex will be in operation at AWRE Aldermaston.

Mr. Sainsbury: The A90 complex will be operational in the early nineties on a time scale consistent with planned deliveries for deployment of Trident in the mid-nineties.

SSBN Submarines

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence by what date he estimates SSBNs 05, 06, 07 and 08 will have their full complement of missiles and warheads.

Mr. Sainsbury: Vanguard class submarines will be fully effective from the start of their operational service. These precise dates are classified.

Uranium

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence where secondary enrichment of uranium for weapons grade takes place.

Mr. Sainsbury: The arrangements for the final enrichment of uranium to the level required for defence purposes remain as announced by my right hon. Friend, the then Secretary of State for Defence on 23 June 1982 at columns *128-29*.

Polaris

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the phasing out of Polaris, in the light of the delays in the operational production line for warhead components.

Mr. Sainsbury: As my right hon. Friend reaffirmed to the House on 21 January at column *775*, Trident remains on programme to enter service in the mid-1990s. In the meantime, the United Kingdom Polaris force will remain fully operational and effective. The Polaris force will be progressively phased out after the entry into service of Trident.

Royal Navy Armaments Depot

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the warhead convoys which travel by road between Royal Navy armaments depot Coulport and Burghfield will cease.

Mr. Ian Stewart: It has been the practice of successive Governments not to discuss the movement of nuclear weapons.

Aircraft Noise (Report)

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will place in the Library a copy of the interim report of the NATO pilot study into "Aircraft Noise in a Modern Society".

Mr. Freeman: Copies of this report are already available in the Library.

European Fighter Project

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if, at his meeting with the Defence Minister of the Federal Republic of Germany on 20 January, he sought to discover when the West German Government intend to come to a final decision on their participation in the European fighter aircraft project.

Mr. Sainsbury: At his meeting with the Defence Minister of the Federal Republic of Germany on 20 January, my right hon. Friend discussed a number of topics, including progress towards national decisions on the development phase of the European fighter aircraft.

RAF Binbrook (Near Miss)

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if, pursuant to his answer of 25 January, *Official Report*, column *32*, he will make a statement on the near miss which took place over RAF Binbrook in Lincolnshire between and Air United Kingdom civil airliner Short 360 and a Phantom fighter bomber in April 1987.

Mr. Freeman: The joint airmiss section of the National Air Traffic Services has investigated fully the circumstances surrounding the incident to which the hon. Member refers. Its findings have been examined by the joint airmiss working group, and its conclusions have been made known to the aviation community.

Graphics (Supply)

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will ensure that when contract number CB/SL24B/0059 for the supply of graphics to the armed services is considered the needs of the end users will be fully taken into account.

Mr. Sainsbury: For all contract tasks whether for equipments or services, including graphics, the end users define the work to be performed and monitor performance by the contractor.

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy that, following the Department of Trade and Industry's initiative to help small businesses, he will ensure that when contract number CB/SL24B/0059 for the supply of graphics to the armed services is awarded, small companies will be given the opportunity of prime contractor status.

Mr. Sainsbury: The phrase "prime contractor status" can be misunderstood. Depending on circumstances, award of contract can be direct between contractor and the Department, or some of the work can be sub-contracted by a main contractor. It would be wrong to try to forecast the result because tenders are not yet evaluated and will be considered on their merits. Tenders submitted, whether by larger or smaller firms will, of course, be given equal consideration.

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy that, when contract number CB/SL24B/0059 for the supply of graphics to the armed services is awarded, consideration will be given to splitting this contract up between a number of prime contractors so that it is possible to measure the relative performance of the winners during the contract period.

Mr. Sainsbury: Because tenders cover requirements in seven regions of England and Wales it is probable that there shall be a number of contracts issued as a result of the evaluation of tenders.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Security

77. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will seek a variation of the injunction granted on 2 January against Times Newspapers Ltd. in relation to Anthony Cavendish so as to permit publications of a fair and accurate account of proceedings in Parliament.

The Attorney-General: At the Government's suggestion, such an amendment was made to the injunction of 15 January.

Deputy Judges

78. **Mr. Adley:** To ask the Attorney-General if the Lord Chancellor proposes to make any changes to the system of appointing deputy judges; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General: Under the present system, the Lord Chancellor appoints, after due consultation, those whom he judges to have the calibre, experience and standing necessary for this judical work. He has no plans to change that system.

Court Proceedings (Sketches)

Mr. McCusker: To ask the Attorney-General what is his policy towards the prosecution of those who publicise sketches of court proceedings in contravention of section 41 of the Criminal Justice Act 1925; and if he has any proposals to allow them in circumstances most likely to ensure their accuracy.

The Attorney-General: Sketches of court proceeding made with a view to publication are prohibited by section 41 of the Criminal Justice Act 1925 only if made in court. Where such an offence is alleged, the Crown Prosecution Service will prosecute if there is sufficient evidence and if it would be in the public interest to do so. The criteria it will apply are those made public by the Director of Public Prosecutions in his code for Crown prosecutors.

Uncertificated Solicitors

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Attorney-General what steps he will take to prevent uncertificated solicitors from acting improperly.

The Attorney-General: The rules of professional conduct and, in certain circumstances, the criminal law seek to prevent improper behaviour on the part of solicitors with or without practising certificates.

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Attorney-General if he will seek a meeting with Mr. Stringer of the Solicitors Complaints Bureau to discuss complaints against the bureau; and whether he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: No.

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Attorney-General if he will set up an inquiry into the manner in which the Solicitors Complaints Bureau conducts investigations, with respect to its standards of impartiality.

The Attorney-General: No.

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Attorney-General how many uncertificated solicitors are practising in *(a)* the west midlands and *(b)* England and Wales.

The Attorney-General: No such statistics are kept. A practising certificate under the Solicitors Act 1974 is not required for all work that a solicitor may do, and information on the matters raised in the question would be difficult to obtain.

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Attorney-General if he will take steps to establish a method of complaints against uncertificated solicitors which is more open to scrutiny than that of the Solicitors Complaints Bureau.

The Attorney-General: No.

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Attorney-General what action will he take against solicitors who acted uncertificated between November 1986 and 28 January 1987 in north Staffordshire.

The Attorney-General: If the hon. Member would supply details, her allegations will be investigated.

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Attorney-General what steps he will take to prevent the payment of legal aid moneys to uncertificated solicitors; and whether he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: When the legal aid administration of the Law Society receives information that a solicitor has undertaken legal aid work whilst uncertificated, no payment is made for the work concerned. Action is taken to recoup any moneys already paid in respect of the appropriate period.

Legal Aid

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Attorney-General what was the amount of legal aid moneys recovered in 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986 and 1987 and paid in respect of a solicitor who at the relevant time did not hold a current practising certificate; and whether he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The information requested is not available, but the practice of the legal aid head office is to recover all legal aid moneys paid in respect of a solicitor who at the relevant time did not hold a current practising certificate.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Attorney-General if he will take steps to arrange for those who satisfy the income eligibility requirements to apply for legal aid to be able to apply for legal aid to be represented at an inquest where such representation is considered important to pursuing claims of negligence against public bodies; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: No. In present circumstances extension of legal aid to inquests cannot be justified.

Solicitors

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Attorney-General what steps he takes to prevent the destruction of any evidence relating to solicitors practising uncertificated.

The Attorney-General: I am not aware of any such impropriety.

Royal Ulster Constabulary (Allegations)

Mr. Madden: To ask the Attorney-General what direction in respect of prosecution the Director of Public Prosecutions (Northern Ireland) has issued in respect of an officer in the Royal Ulster Constabulary and other persons in Belfast against whom allegations were made by Mr. Chan Hok-Chun and Mr. Hui Yat-Chi; and if he will make a statement .

The Attorney-General: An investigation has been carried out by the Royal Ulster Constabulary with regard to complaints made by Mr. Hok-Chun and Mr. Hui Yat-Chi.

The results of these investigations were reported to the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland who, having considered all the facts and circumstances reported to him, issued a direction of no prosecution. This direction was issued on 6 January 1988.

British Rail Property (Offences)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Attorney-General whether his guidelines regarding offences on British Rail property made any reference to trespass by fox hunts.

The Attorney-General: I have interpreted the hon. Member's question as referring to the Attorney-General's guidelines on the criteria for prosecution. The guidelines have been reproduced in the code for Crown prosecutors, which is issued pursuant to section 10 of the Prosecution of Offences Act 1985, a copy of which is to be found in the Library of this House. The code makes no reference to fox hunts.

SCOTLAND

Neighbourhood Heating

Mr. McTaggart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will fund an expansion in the number of neighbourhood heating schemes, along the lines of the Heathwise in Glasgow; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: As my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State for Energy announced on 9 April 1987, at columns *223-25*, total Government support for community insulation projects in the United Kingdom in 1988-89 will be worth an estimated £55 million to £60 million. This represents an increase of up to 30 per cent. on 1987-88. The proportion of these resources coming to Scotland will not be known until the current consideration of bids for funding in 1988-89 is completed.

Industrial Projects

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of industrial projects which are to receive public support in the current year in Angus, Scotland.

Mr. Lang: Information on individual projects which are to receive public support in the Angus local authority district in the current year cannot be disclosed for reasons of confidentiality. However, in the current financial year, payments to firms in the Angus district under the original and revised regional development grant schemes have to date totalled some £500,000. There have been no payments of regional selective assistance (RSA). Approvals under the revised regional development grant scheme in the period April 1987 to January 1988 have amounted to £400,000, associated with project costs of £800,000 and the creation of 130 jobs. Details of the offers of RSA cannot be disclosed for reasons of confidentiality.

Staff

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will indicate how many of his Department's administrative staff have transferred to other Government Departments, by grade, for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Rifkind: The information is set out in the following table:

	1978	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
Grade 3 Under Secretary	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Grade 5 Assistant Secretary	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Grade 6 Senior Principal	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Grade 7 Principal	—	1	—	—	1	—	—	—	2	—
Senior Executive Officer	1	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
Higher Executive Officer	2	3	1	2	3	1	—	3	2	2
Executive Officer	3	4	9	2	3	5	3	3	2	6
Clerical/Administrative Officer	16	13	18	6	10	12	8	2	3	8
Clerical/Administrative Assistant	27	26	29	22	14	13	7	19	9	8
TOTALS	49	48	58	32	31	31	19	27	18	25

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table indicating the number of administrative staff in his Department who have left before retirement for an occupation outside the Civil Service for each year over the last decade.

Mr. Rifkind: My Department does not maintain statistics on the reasons which staff may give for resigning, nor on the occupations which they subsequently take up.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will indicate the educational background of administrative class civil servants entering his Department for each of the last 10 years by *(a)* state, assisted or independent school and *(b)* university.

Mr. Rifkind: My Department does not maintain central statistics on the schools attended by staff, and the collation of information from individual records would be disproportionately costly.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will indicate, by grade and the department within his Department they joined, the backgrounds of administrative grade civil servants who have entered his Department from other Government Departments for each year over the last decade.

Mr. Rifkind: This information is available only at disproportionate cost.

"Scottish Homes"

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the number of responses to the Scottish Development Department's consultative document "Scottish Homes".

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Clydesdale (Mr. Hood) on 10 December 1987 at column *192*.

School Management

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the number of responses to the Scottish Education Department's consultative document, "School Management and the Role of Parents".

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Government received some 8,000 responses to the consultation paper on school management.

Drink-Driving Offences

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many prosecutions in Scotland for drink and driving offences causing *(a)* death, *(b)* injuries and *(c)* damages, for each year since 1979, have resulted in (i) acquittals, (ii) guilty verdicts, (iii) imprisonment, (iv) fines and (v) compensation to the victim.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The available information is given in the table. Details on whether injury or damage resulted from a drunk-driving offence are not collected centrally.

Drunk-driving offences, Scotland

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Acquittals	337	480	392	386	386	442	364	335
Charges proved	12,479	13,712	12,438	11,613	12,904	13,557	13,551	13,082
Imprisonment	167	188	147	203	244	252	293	279
Fine	11,866	13,025	11,832	10,773	12,129	12,759	12,725	12,330
Compensation order[1] (includes those given in addition to a more serious penalty)	—	—	0	3	6	5	3	7

[1] Compensation orders were introduced on 1 April 1981.

Bridge of Earn Hospital

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the estimated underspend on the Bridge of Earn hospital development in 1987-88.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There is no hospital development at Bridge of Earn hospital.

Health Spending

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his latest figure for the expected level of spending on *(a)* the hospital service and *(b)* the National Health Service as a whole in 1987-88.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The latest estimate of outturn for the year 1987-88 are gross expenditure of £1,697 million on hospital and community health services and £2,334 million on the National Health Service as a whole.

Strathclyde (Education Expenditure)

Mr. Allen Adams: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the education element of the allocation to Strathclyde regional council for 1987-88; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: As regards revenue expenditure, rate support grant is paid in support of an authority's income generally. It is not attributed to particular services. For capital expenditure the allocation to the council for educational purposes is £20,378,000. This figure may be enhanced by capital receipts raised by the region or by virement from its other capital programmes.

Rating Reform

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if the community charge rebate scheme will be based on the full personal community charge levied in each local authority area or based on a national average community charge.

Mr. Lang: Under the proposed community charge rebate scheme, rebates will be calculated on the basis of the actual personal community charge payable in each local authority.

Salmon Netting Stations (River Tweed)

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people have been employed at salmon netting stations on the River Tweed in each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement on the intention of the Atlantic Salmon Conservation Trust to close netting stations on the Tweed.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The number of persons reported to the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland as employed at the nets by proprietors and occupiers of salmon net fishings on the River Tweed varies according to the time of the fishing season. The maximum numbers, including those employed on a seasonal basis, are:

	Number
1982	107
1983	103
1984	116
1985	99
1986	96

The Government have noted with interest the proposals of the Atlantic Salmon Conservation Trust (Scotland) in relation to the River Tweed. This is, however, a matter for the trust and the owners of the netting stations. Government approval to any closure of netting stations is not required.

Blood Donors

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any proposals to counteract the fall in blood donations in Scotland, and especially the west of Scotland region, between 1986 and 1987.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Yes. I have asked the Scottish national blood transfusion service to mount a national campaign to encourage people to give blood, and this will be launched later this month. In addition, regional efforts are being increased throughout Scotland. New donor sessions are being introduced; there are increased efforts to improve communications with potential donors; and donors may now be invited to give blood more frequently than hitherto.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Pirate Radio

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he has any plans to increase the resources of the radio investigation service to take effective action against pirate radio stations.

Mr. Butcher: We have recently reviewed the resource need of the radio investigation service. We are currently strengthening manning levels in the London area and are investing some £400,000 in new equipment which should assist in the tracing of unlicensed radio operators. At the same time we are implementing new strategies to deal with the enormous tasks facing the service.

The radio investigation service will act vigorously to clear the frequencies of unlicensed users. Particularly in view of the Home Secretary's announcement of 20 January on broadcast radio policy, I very much hope that unlicensed broadcasters will voluntarily stop broadcasting since they, with other interested parties, may soon have an opportunity to make applications to establish legal stations. At present they are squatting on frequencies assigned for legal stations and, because of the poor equipment they use, they are causing constant serious problems to the radio communications of users in other frequency bands including those who depend on radio for safety of life, such as Heathrow airport, fire brigades, the police, London Transport, British Gas, British Rail and the Ministry of Defence.

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations he has received concerning the alleged financing by record companies of pirate radio stations.

Mr. Maude: One representation has been received from the Association of Independent Radio Contractors Limited and one from Capital Radio plc.

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many prosecutions were brought against those (i) operating, (ii) controlling and (iii) financing pirate radio stations in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Maude: In 1987, 77 prosecutions were brought as a result of investigations by the Department's radio investigation service into the operations of unlicensed broadcasting stations. As a result, 75 offenders were convicted. I am sorry that the breakdown of statistics into the categories requested is not available.

Butane Gas

Mr. Janner: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he will introduce legislation to forbid the sale of butane gas cylinders to young people below the age of 16 years.

Mr. Maude: I would refer the hon. Member to the answers given to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on 8 April last, at columns *270-71*.

Equal Opportunities

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he plans to upgrade his Department's equal opportunity officer post and bring it into line with Civil Service guidance, regarding grades 5/6 for the larger Departments.

Mr. Butcher: I see no need to upgrade the equal opportunity officer post. I am fully satisfied that the grade 7 incumbent has the full support of the grade 5 head of branch and the grade 3 head of personnel and has direct access to, and the confidence of, the principal establishment officer as suggested in the central guidance.

Exports and Imports

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) what are the latest figures for the annual value of exports, excluding oil, on *(a)* a per capita basis, and *(b)* as a percentage of gross national product; and what information he has as to comparable figures for other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries;

(2) what are the latest figures for the annual value of exports, including oil, on *(a)* a per capita basis, and *(b)* as a percentage of gross national product; and what information he has as to comparable figures for other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries;

(3) what are the latest figures for the annual value of imports, excluding oil, on *(a)* a per capita basis, and *(b)* as a percentage of gross national product; and what information he has as to comparable figures for other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries;

(4) what are the latest figures for the annual value of imports, including oil, on *(a)* a per capita basis, and *(b)* as a percentage of gross national product; and what information he has as to comparable figures for other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries.

Mr. Alan Clark: The available information is in the following table:

United Kingdom and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries trade

	Exports		*Imports*		*Exports*		*Imports*	
	Total	*Total excluding oil*	*Total*	*Total excluding oil*	*Total*	*Total excluding oil*	*Total*	*Total excluding oil*
	Per capita US $				*As percentage of GDP*			
1987								
United Kingdom[1]	2,322	2,078	2,746	2,616	..	..	..	..
1986								
United Kingdom	1,879	1,667	2,210	2,097	19·5	17·3	22·9	21·8

	Exports		Imports		Exports		Imports	
	Total	Total excluding oil	Total	Total excluding oil	Total	Total excluding oil	Total	Total excluding oil
	Per capita US $				As percentage of GDP			
Canada	3,282	3,137	3,109	2,991	23·4	22·3	22·2	21·3
USA	847	832	1,578	1,427	4·9	4·8	9·2	8·3
Japan	1,722	1,718	983	782	10·7	10·7	6·1	4·9
Australia	1,345	1,281	1,579	1,506	12·9	12·3	15·2	14·5
New Zealand	1,738	1,728	1,870	1,708	22·0	21·9	23·7	21·6
Austria	2,976	2,959	3,548	3,379	23·9	23·7	28·5	27·1
Belgium/Luxembourg	6,718	6,419	6,657	6,177	51·1	48·8	50·6	47·0
Denmark	4,030	3,931	4,449	4,159	25·1	24·5	27·7	25·9
Finland	3,319	3,241	3,116	2,764	23·1	22·6	21·7	19·3
France	2,150	2,114	2,309	2,106	16·7	16·5	18·0	16·4
Germany	3,969	3,940	3,102	2,848	27·1	26·9	21·2	19·4
Greece	567	530	1,135	950	14·2	13·3	28·4	23·8
Ireland	3,550	3,530	3,257	3,048	51·2	50·9	47·0	44·0
Italy	1,709	1,663	1,744	1,534	16·3	15·8	16·6	14·6
Netherland	5,525	4,973	5,182	4,656	46·4	41·7	43·5	39·1
Norway	4,373	3,359	4,869	4,663	26·6	20·4	29·6	28·4
Portugal	704	681	924	799	24·8	23·9	32·5	28·1
Spain	707	663	919	756	11·9	11·2	15·5	12·8
Sweden	4,435	4,325	3,883	3,507	28·2	27·5	24·7	22·3
Switzerland	5,720	5,711	6,268	5,935	28·0	28·0	30·7	29·1
Turkey	146	143	216	178	13·0	12·6	19·2	15·8

[1] Figures based on 1986 population.
.. Not available.
Export valued fob; imports cif.
Sources: OECD Except UK 1987: OTS.

Balance of Trade

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what are the latest figures for the balance of trade between the United Kingdom and the United States of America; and what information he has as to the balance of trade between the United States of America and Canada, Sweden, Japan, West Germany and Brazil.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is in the following table.

United Kingdom crude balance of trade with the United States of America

	£ billion	US $ billion
1987	2·0	3·3

United States of America crude balance of trade with

US $ billion

	Brazil	Canada	Japan	Germany	Sweden
1987 January to September	−2·7	−10·6	−41·8	−11·3	[1]−2·2

[1] Estimate.
Source:
United Kingdom Overseas Trade Statistics.
United States: OECD; United States Department of Commerce.

Illegal Broadcasting

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps he will take to prevent the spread of illegal broadcasting; and if he will take steps to curb pirate stations in the London area.

Mr. Maude: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend for Erith and Crayford (Mr. Evennett) today.

Driverplan Insurance Policy

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations he has received concerning the Driverplan insurance policy offered by the St. Christopher's Motorists' Security Association Ltd.; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport and I have received a number of representations about the undesirability of schemes like the Driverplan insurance policy which indemnify policyholders who are prevented from driving. We shall be looking again at such schemes in the light of the report of the review of road traffic law which is expected shortly.

Property Services Agency and Crown Suppliers

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what studies and reports have been and are being undertaken by his Department into the operation of the Property Services Agency and the Crown Suppliers from 1979 up to the latest date available.

Mr. Butcher *[holding answer 29 January 1988]:* None. My Department does not undertake studies or reports into the operations of other Government Departments.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

International Debt

79. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the World Bank concerning the alleviation of the international debt crisis.

Mr. Chris Patten: I maintain regular contact with the World Bank. International debt is often high on the agenda.

Sudan

85. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals he has for aid to the Sudan.

Mr. Chris Patten: In December 1987 we pledged £10 million as quick-disbursing balance of payments support for spending this year. During my recent visit to Sudan I announced a new £15 million grant for rehabilitation projects for spending up to 1991. This will be used principally for projects in the agricultural and transport sectors. In addition, we continue to provide assistance to the power, education and fisheries sectors.

Kampuchea

86. **Miss Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has received any representations concerning the restoration of development aid to Kampuchea.

Mr. Chris Patten: I have received a number of representations. It remains the Government's view, however, that it would be wrong in principle to give develoment aid to the illegitimate and unrepresentative regime in Phnom Penh.

Mozambique

87. **Sir Russell Johnston:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will increase the British contribution to health care and agricultural development projects in Mozambique.

Mr. Chris Patten: Over half the £15 million of programme aid which we pledged last year is being spent on agriculture, and £400,000 on medical supplies. We have also provided seeds and agricultural tools and paid for the transport of medical supplies under our emergency relief programme. The Commonwealth Development Corporation is considering investments in agricultural projects. I am ready to consider requests for further help in these fields.

Sri Lanka

88. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with the Sri Lankan Government as to assistance for that country following the recent disturbances there.

Mr. Chris Patten: At a special meeting of the Sri Lankan Aid Group in Paris on 4 December, Britain pledged additional aid of up to £20 million in support of reconstruction efforts. An aid mission visited Sri Lanka in January for discussions on the use of these funds.

Southern Africa Development Co-ordination Conference

89. **Mr. McCrindle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the Southern Africa development co-ordination conference.

Mr. Chris Patten: I attended the annual consultative meeting of the Southern African development co-ordination conference in Arusha on 28 and 29 January. During the conference I made a new pledge of £10 million. This brings to £45 million the total we have pledged for assistance through this organisation.

Ethiopia

90. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he is satisfied with the level of international co-operation designed to avoid famine in Ethiopia.

Mr. Chris Patten: Donors have responded promptly and generously with famine relief for the people of Ethiopia. About three quarters of the food aid needed in 1988 has already been pledged and is being delivered to the Ethiopian ports. If there is a major catastrophe it will not be because donors have failed to play their part but because, tragically, the civil war has prevented food from being delivered to those in need.

Women

91. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further action his Department has taken to ensure that the needs of women are given due consideration in development projects sponsored by Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Chris Patten: All major projects are assessed for social impact and within this context particular attention is give to the impact on women.

Overseas Development Administration (Underspend)

92. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his estimate of the underspend by the Overseas Development Administration for the current year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: The recent public expenditure White Paper shows that we expect to spend the planned aid programme in full, including the additional £13 million to which I referred on 27 January, at column *427*, in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs).

UNICEF (Global Immunisation Programme)

93. **Mr. Chapman:** To ask the Minister for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made in UNICEF's global immunisation programme; and if he will make a statement on the United Kingdom's contribution to it.

Mr. Chris Patten: Some $211 million has so far been committed to immunisation projects. UNICEF estimates that 50 per cent. of the children of the developing world

have already been reached and 1·3 million lives saved each year. On present trends, over 70 per cent. of the developing world's children will be vaccinated by 1990.

Her Majesty's Government have contributed £5·31 million bilaterally to the immunisation programme and we are also contributing through the European Community.

Aid Budget

94. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has received concerning the size of Her Majesty's Government's aid budget; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: I have received representations from a number of sources. The Government White Paper on public expenditure published last month shows that the overseas aid programme is planned to grow by some 3 per cent. in real terms over the next three years.

Overseas Development Natural Resources Institute

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what measures he will be taking to publicise the work of the Overseas Development Natural Resources Institute with a view to securing substantial outside funding for its work.

Mr. Chris Patten: As the ODA's own scientific unit, the ODNRI's resources form part of the ODA's total running costs. Ninety per cent. of the institute's work is commissioned by the ODA itself. The remainder is carried out on full repayment terms under contract to outside clients, typically the multilateral aid agencies. The institute is well known to potential external clients by virtue of its reputation as a world centre of excellence. The results of its work are normally published. Its activities are always featured in the ODA's annual review and a separate annual report covering the institute's work is published each year. Copies of the latest edition of these two publications are in the Library of the House.

PRIME MINISTER

National Health Service

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Prime Minister what consideration she has given to the communication on the National Health Service presented to her on 27 January on behalf of the Manchester *Evening News*; if there is any action she is taking; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I have noted the contents of the newspaper. I also refer the right hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) on 28 January, at column *313*.

Mr. Nigel Wicks

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister why she has appointed Mr. Nigel Wicks as her personal representative at economic summits; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I have appointed Mr. Wicks as my personal representative for economic summits in succession to Sir Robert Armstrong, who retired on 31 December 1987.

Mr. Wicks is well equipped by his Treasury background and by his current position as my principal private secretary for this role.

Crown Prerogative

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Prime Minister if the alteration in the terms of service of civil servants working at Government communications headquarters since 1983 has been made in exercise of the power under prerogative of the Crown.

The Prime Minister: Alterations to the terms of service of civil servants working at GCHQ have been made under the authority of the Civil Service Order in Council 1982, which is an instrument made under the royal prerogative.

THE ARTS

Works of Art in Lieu of Tax

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Minister for the Arts (1) whether he will make a statement regarding the acceptance in lieu of tax of eight drawings by Henry Moore from the estate of Lord Clark; whether these drawings will be vested in the trustees of the British museum, in accordance with the wishes of Lord Clark; and what amount of tax has been satisfied by this acceptance;

(2) whether he has anything to add to his written answer to the hon. Member for Warley, East on 21 July 1987, *Official Report*, columns *114-5*, regarding the acceptance in lieu of tax of Constable's painting Stratford Mill, in view of the fact that this painting is not listed in his written answer to the hon. Member for Warley, East on 18 January, *Official Report*, columns *477-8*, among those works of art accepted during the half-year ended 31 December 1987, whether allocated or awaiting allocation; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: I am pleased to announce the formal acceptances in lieu of tax of the items to which the hon. Member for Warley, East refers: Constable's "Stratford Mill" and nine drawings by Henry Moore. These acceptances were finalised on 8 January and 21 January 1988 respectively. The acceptance of Constable's "Stratford Mill" satisfied tax of £5·5 million, and the painting was allocated to the trustees of the National Gallery in accordance with the wishes of the owners. The acceptance of the Henry Moore drawings satisfied tax of £153,456, and the offer was conditional upon their allocation to the trustees of the British Museum. Ownership of the items will be transferred to the respective institutions shortly.

National Museums

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Minister for the Arts what factors he takes into account when allocating central Government funds to the national museums.

Mr. Luce: I refer the hon. Member to the written answer I gave the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) on 23 November 1987 at column *60*.

Museums (Admission Charges)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he has since 1979 given any advice to any or all of the national museums about charging for admission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: Whether or not the national museums and galleries charge for admission is up to them to decide in the light of their plans and priorities.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Mortgage Interest Tax Relief

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list all the changes in mortgage interest tax relief since 1979.

Mr. Norman Lamont: There have been few changes in mortgage interest relief over this period. In 1983 the MIRAS scheme, provided for basic tax relief to be given by deduction at source, started up. This was essentially an administrative change not affecting the basic relief conditions. Also in 1983 the main residence loan relief limit was increased from £25,000 to its current level of £30,000, and relief for people living in job-related accommodation was extended to the self-employed, also with effect from April 1983. In addition, there have been various minor amendments to the operation of the MIRAS arrangements.

If the hon. Gentleman has something else in mind, perhaps he would write to me.

Food (VAT)

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which food products are currently subject to the standard rate of value added tax.

Mr. Lilley: Food products which are currently subject to the standard rate of VAT are specified in group 1 of schedule 5 to the VAT Act 1983.

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his policy towards value added tax on foodstuffs.

Mr. Lilley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) on 7 July 1987 at column *192*.

Atlantic Salmon Conservation Trust

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the Atlantic Salmon Conservation Trust was recognised as a charitable body by the Inland Revenue office in Scotland; under which criteria for charitable status the trust was so recognised; and what is the value of tax relief granted in respect of payments to the trust for the last two years.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I regret that I cannot comment on the tax affairs of any particular body.

Accountancy Firms (Tax Planning)

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide an estimate of the tax lost to the Revenue in 1987 as a direct consequence of tax planning by accountancy firms.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[pursuant to his reply, 28 January 1988, c. 365]:* If by "tax planning" the hon. Members means the legitimate use of relieving provisions in tax law, there is, by definition, no tax loss.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment pursuant to his answer of 19 January, *Official Report*, at column *603*, if he will provide his best estimate of the number of unemployed claimants in the London boroughs of Southwark, Tower Hamlets and Newham in July 1981.

Mr. Lee: The information requested is not available. Figures of unemployed claimants at local level are available only from August 1982. Figures for London boroughs are compiled using the ward-based system and are available only from June 1983.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what were the numbers of registered unemployed in the United Kingdom in March, June, September and December for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Lee: The following information is in the Library. The table shows the number of unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom (seasonally adjusted and excluding school leavers) for each of the months requested for the last 10 years. The data given are consistent over the time period requested.

Unemployed claimants, seasonally adjusted
United Kingdom

thousands

	March	*June*	*September*	*December*
1977	1,207·6	1,250·6	1,292·6	1,282·7
1978	1,247·5	1,235·1	1,217·4	1,166·6
1979	1,183·8	1,131·8	1,110·4	1,121·7
1980	1,210·2	1,359·1	1,605·8	1,898·4
1981	2,107·0	2,275·4	2,397·7	2,479·1
1982	2,532·3	2,605·8	2,685·0	2,771·5
1983	2,824·7	2,884·2	2,893·8	2,919·5
1984	2,966·9	2,978·6	3.037·7	3.069·9
1985	3,096·0	3,109·3	3,121·2	3,143·0
1986	3,206·8	3,212·5	3,183·2	3,119·4
1987	3,039·7	2,925·2	2,773·3	2,614·0

Vehicles (Accidents)

Mr. Fry: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people at work have been *(a)* killed and *(b)* injured off the highway by vehicles reversing; figures for each of the last five years for which they are available.

Mr. Nicholls: The table gives the available information for deaths of employees at work struck by reversing vehicles. The deaths are those reported under the reporting regulations for accidents at work (see note [1]). Accidents reportable under the Road Traffic Act 1972 are excluded.

Information for non-fatal injuries could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Reported deaths of employees, resulting from vehicles reversing[1]
(not on the highway)
Great Britain

	Number
1982	16
1983	8
1984	13
1985	6
1986 January to March	4
1986-87[2]	7

[1] Including only accidents in which injury resulted from person being struck by the vehicle and reported to HM Factory, Agriculture, Explosives and Mines & Quarries Inspectorate, under the Notification of Accidents and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1980 (for 1982 to March 1986) and under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (1986-87).
[2] Provisional data for year commencing 1 April.

Mr. Fry: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* fatalities and *(b)* injuries have been caused to people at work whilst off the highway by motor vehicles in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Nicholls: The table gives the available information for employees at work struck by vehicles. The injuries are those reported under the relevant accident reporting regulations (see notes 1, 3 and 4). They exclude any accidents reportable under the Road Traffic Act 1972.

Reported occupational injuries to employees, resulting from vehicles etc[1] (not on the highway) Great Britain

	1982	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986 Jan-March*	*1986-87[2]*
(a) deaths caused by:						
1. industrial & site vehicles and field machines	13	13	15	18	7	11
2. transport for public roads	27	20	29	18	3	24
(b) Reported major injuries[3] caused by:						
1. industrial & site vehicles and field machines	134	142	160	170	39	260
2. transport for public roads	80	94	67	90	16	171
Reported "over 3 day injuries"[4] caused by:						
1. industrial & site vehicles and field machines	2,489	—	—	—	—	1,235
2. transport for public roads	1,197	—	—	—	—	575

[1] including only accidents reported to Her Majesty's Factory, Agriculture, Explosives, Mines & Quarries Inspectorate in which injury resulted from person being struck by the vehicle.
[2] provisional data for year commencing 1 April.
[3] for 1982 to March 1986, as defined in the Notification of Accidents and Dangerous Occurrencies Regulations (NADOR) 1980; for 1986-87 the definition is wider as given in the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations, (RIDDOR) 1985.
[4] for 1982 those leading to claims for industrial injury benefit notified to HSE by DHSS. This source was effectively abolished in 1983. From 1 April 1986 injuries reported directly to HSE under RIDDOR, not comparable with data from earlier period. These data for "over 3 day injuries" exclude reports to the Mines and Quarries Inspectorate.

Investments

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much money has been spent in each of the last 10 years by his Department on attracting investment from *(a)* inside the United Kingdom and *(b)* overseas for (i) Scotland, (ii) Wales, (iii) Northern Ireland and (iv) each of the English regions, by region.

Mr. Cope: It is not a principal function of my Department to encourage regional investment. There are, however, two areas of expenditure which do create investment and the regional analysis is as follows:

Region	*Assistance to tourist projects in England[1]*		*City action team project fund*	
	1985-86 £000s	*1986-87 £000s*	*1986-87 £000s*	*1987-88 £000s*
North-East	621	644	1,000	1,000
North-West	1,479	1,916	—	2,000
Yorkshire	865	1,744	—	—
West Midlands	457	1,224	—	1,000
East Midlands	[2]2,241	784	—	—
South East	1,317	1,493	—	1,000
South West	2,464	3,519	—	—
East Anglia	815	785	—	—
Southern	1,290	1,945	—	—

[1] Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland have equivalent schemes for assistance to tourist projects.
[2] £1·5 million of this sum was to attract investment from overseas.

All investment is from inside the United Kingdom except where specifically indicated. The Department assumed responsibility for tourism matters in September 1985. We ceased to have responsibility for city action teams from 1 October 1987.

Rural Areas

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what progress is being made by his Department in reducing unemployment in rural areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: Information on unemployment in rural areas is not readily available. However, an independent unemployment analysis carried out for the Development Commission for Rural England suggests that rural areas are sharing in the general drop in unemployment. The analysis estimated that the average unemployment rate in the Development Commission's rural development areas as a whole fell from 10·4 per cent. in the year to April 1987. During the same period, the unemployment rate nationally fell from 11·5 per cent. to 10·9 per cent. and since then has fallen further to 9·4 per cent.

My Department is playing its part with other interested Departments in fostering these improvements by helping rural economies to diversify and generate new jobs through support for local enterprise agencies, encouragement of rural enterprise, our enterprise, employment and training measures.

Food (Retail Price Index)

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which food categories are included in the household food budget for the purposes of measuring the retail price index.

Mr. Lee: All categories of food are included in the household budget for the purposes of compiling the retail prices index.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

West Bank and Gaza

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further representations he has made to the Israeli Government on the security situation in the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The Israeli Government are well aware of our continuing concern at the unrest in the occupied territories and their response to it.

Mr. Terry Waite

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has received any recent information on the whereabouts of Mr. Terry Waite; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We continue to receive many rumours about Terry Waite's whereabouts. Wherever practicable they are analysed and followed up, but to date none of them has yielded any firm or reliable information.

Beirut Hostages

Mr. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contacts have been made with the International Committee of the Red Cross regarding the locations, safety and fate of British hostages being held in Beirut.

Mr. Eggar: The International Committee of the Red Cross cannot be involved in negotiations with captors but would act as a channel if necessary as part of arrangements agreed by others. No claim has been made by those holding the British hostages. A formal ICRC role is not therefore feasible, although Her Majesty's embassy in Beirut has informal contact with the local ICRC representative.

Mr. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if any discussions have taken place with other Governments whose nationals are held hostage in Beirut, Lebanon, on establishing a common strategy for dealing with the kidnappers.

Mr. Eggar: We have worked hard with our partners and allies to formulate a common policy in dealing with terrorism. All our European partners gave a firm undertaking at the European Council in December 1986 not to make concessions under duress to terrorists or their sponsors. At the Venice economic summit in June 1987, Heads of State and Government confirmed their commitment to the same principle.

Hong Kong (Human Rights)

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the application after 30 June 1997 of each of those international human rights conventions and other agreements that *(a)* do and *(b)* do not currently apply in Hong Kong.

Mr. Eggar: The Joint Declaration on the queston of Hong Kong provides that

"The provisions of the international covenant on civil and political rights and the international covenant on economic, social and cultural rights as applied to Hong Kong shall remain in force".

It is our understanding that the Chinese Government will make provision in the Basic Law for the future Hong Kong special administrative region, which they are currently drafting, to give effect to this undertaking in the joint declaration.

Should further relevant conventions be extended to Hong Kong before 1997, we, together with the Chinese Government, would need to consider their continued application to Hong Kong after 30 June 1997.

Hong Kong (ILO Conventions)

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the application after 30 June 1997 of each of those International Labour Organisation conventions that *(a)* do and *(b)* do not currently apply in Hong Kong.

Mr. Eggar: It has been agreed in the Sino-British joint liaison group that relevant international labour conventions which currently apply to Hong Kong shall continue to apply to the Hong Kong SAR. Should further international labour conventions need to be applied to Hong Kong before then, we, together with the Chinese Government, would need to discuss the matter.

Plutonium

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Newport, West, on plutonium, *Official Report*, 20 January, column *721*, he expects to conclude consideration of the representations he has received from 20/20 Television.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend is proposing to offer 20/20 Television a meeting with appropriate officials.

Crown Prerogative

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what directions he has given to officials in United Kingdom dependent territories on the exercise of the right of Crown prerogative in the course of their duties.

Mr. Eggar: The constitutional arrangements for each territory vary. It is not possible to give a general account of the position in relation to the exercise of the royal prerogative in the various dependent territories.

Council of Ministers

Mr. Holt: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on forthcoming business in the European Community Council of Ministers.

Mrs. Chalker: The usual forecast was deposited in the House earlier today. At present nine meetings of the Council of Ministers are planned for February.

The Internal Market Council meets on 2 February to discuss a number of measures relevant to the completion of the single European market.

On 2 February, European Community and European Free Trade Association Ministers will meet to discuss mutual co-operation in tackling trade barriers as the European Community makes progress on completion of the single market.

The Economic and Finance Council will meet on 9 February to discuss the Commission's proposals on the liberalisation of capital movements.

The Agriculture Council is expected to meet on 8-9 February to discuss hormones (article 7 derogation); beef balance sheets for 1988; an amendment to the rules for granting olive oil production aid and the setting of the percentage of aid which may be retained by producer organisations to cover expenses.

The European Council, which will be held in Brussels on 11-12 February, will concentrate on the Community's financial situation, including the reform of the common agricultural policy.

The Foreign Affairs Council meets on 22-23 February to discuss preparations for the forthcoming meeting with Foreign Ministers of the Central American and Contadora group countries; and the commitment made at Punta del Este concerning the rollback of existing restrictions that are inconsistent with the GATT.

The Budget Council will meet on 23-24 February to continue discussions on the establishment of a draft budget for 1988.

The Fisheries Council meets on 29 February to consider discussions between the European Community and Morocco on a fisheries agreement; European Community tariff quotas; amendments to the marketing regime; and technical conservation.

The fourth in a series of meetings between European Community, Central American and Contadora group Foreign Ministers will be held from 29 February to 1 March. Discussions will cover the whole range of the Community's relations with Central America and, in particular, progress on the peace process.

Hong Kong (Animal Welfare)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has about the level of export of black rhino horn from Hong Kong in each of the past five years.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 January 1988]:* In the past five years only one export licence for rhino horn has been issued; this was in early 1984, for the export to Taiwan of 51 kg of black rhino horn which came from stock held since before the convention on international trade in endangered species came into effect. A total ban on export of all rhino products, including horn, has been in force since 1 April 1986.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs why Her Majesty's Government permit the sale of black rhino horn in Hong Kong.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 January 1988]:* Only black rhino horn which comes from stock held since before the convention on international trade in endangered species (CITES) came into effect is permitted for sale in Hong Kong. Following the adoption by the Hong Kong Government of a CITES resolution in July 1987, the Hong Kong Government are to impose a total ban on the internal sale of rhino horn in July this year.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has about the importation into Hong Kong of black rhino horn in each of the past five years.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 January 1988]:* Hong Kong has banned the import of all rhino products, including horn, since 1979.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on the importation of rare and endangered species into Hong Kong for gastronomic purposes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 January 1988]:* The Hong Kong Government take their responsibilities under the convention on international trade in endangered species very seriously. The import, export, or possession of endangered species, whether alive, dead, parts or derivatives, are prohibited except when authorised by licence. Licences for rare and endangered species that could conceivably be used for gastronomic purposes are issued only to bona fide conservationist organisations to facilitate the exchange of specimens for breeding purposes. No licences have been issued to permit the consumption of such specimens and none will be.

To prevent the illegal importation of rare and endangered species, the Hong Kong Government conduct checks at points of entry and follow up these checks with inspections in markets and restaurants throughout the territory. The Hong Kong Government are at present conducting a review of these measures to see whether they can be made more effective.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many officials in Hong Kong are employed to inspect local restaurants to ensure that endangered species of animals are not served as food.

Mr. Eggar *[pursuant to his reply, 18 January 1988, c. 498]:* The Agricultural and Fisheries Department of the Hong Kong Government employ five full-time inspectors whose duties include making inspections and spot checks at markets and restaurants in Hong Kong to ensure that endangered species are not served as food.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, pursuant to the reply of 13 January, *Official Report*, column *285*, he will give details of the 14 seizures made in 1987 by the authorities in Hong Kong following inspections at local restaurants.

Mr. Eggar *[pursuant to his reply, 18 January 1988, c. 498]:* Following inspection of local restaurants to check

for contravention of the Animals and Plants (Protection of Endangered Species) Ordinance, Cap. 187, the 14 seizures made in 1987 comprised five pangolins, 18 birds of prey, 16 giant salamanders and 12 bear paws.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, pursuant to the reply of 13 January, *Official Report*, column *285*, he will give details of the 136 seizures made in 1987 by the authorities in Hong Kong of illegally imported animals and plants.

Mr. Eggar *[pursuant to his reply, 18 January 1988, c. 498]:* The 136 seizures made in 1987 by Hong Kong officials of illegally imported endangered species comprised 16 pangolins, 117 birds of prey, 24 giant salamanders, 140 kilogrammes of pangolin meat and 2·5 kilogrammes of giant salamander meat.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, pursuant to the reply of 13 January, *Official Report*, column *285*, he will explain why only 80 restaurants were visited in Hong Kong during 1987.

Mr. Eggar *[pursuant to his reply, 18 January 1988, c. 498]:* The Hong Kong Government give priority first to the prevention of the illegal importation of endangered species, their parts and products; second, to the control of their commercial shipment under licence where licensing policy allows trade in scheduled specimens; and, third, to carrying out regular random checks of restaurants and markets in order to detect the sale of any such specimens which may have evaded import controls. Eighty such checks were made during 1987. Reports of the illegal trade in scheduled specimens and of the prohibited use of endangered species for food are investigated as they occur. The Hong Kong Government are considering proposals to strengthen their inspection capacity.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

No. 1 Bridge Street

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Lord President of the Council what are the long-term plans for the use of No. 1 Bridge street.

Mr. Wakeham: The building forms part of what is known as the Bridge street, phase II site. The Property Services Agency, with the agreement of the New Building Sub-Committee, has commissioned a detailed design study for the staged development of the whole site. I understand that the results will be made available shortly.

Meanwhile, when the police recreation area on the ground floor of No. 1 Bridge street is moved to No. 1 Cannon row in 1989, the Parliamentary Works Office will undertake some limited work to enable ITN staff, at present working in Portakabins in Black Rod's Garden, to move into the vacant accommodation.

ENERGY

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what agreements exist for civil nuclear waste to be *(a)* taken into the United Kingdom from other countries and *(b)* taken to other countries from the United Kingdom; and how much waste has been moved under either of these two categories.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No radioactive waste separate from irradiated fuel is imported into the United Kingdom. Irradiated fuel is imported for reprocessing at British Nuclear Fuels (BNFL) plant at Sellafield under contracts between BNFL and its customers.

Since 1965, some 2,050 tonnes of uranium in the form of irradiated magnox fuel and 1,900 tonnes of uranium in the form of irradiated oxide fuel have been imported. The relatively small volume of radioactive waste derived has been stored at Sellafield prior to further treatment.

Since 1976, BNFL's contracts for the reprocessing of overseas spent fuel have contained options for the return of wastes. The Government intend that these options should be exercised and that the wastes should be returned. No wastes have yet been returned to overseas customers pending the completion of waste treatment facilities at Sellafield.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what plans exist for returning *(a)* the nuclear wastes, *(b)* depleted uranium, and *(c)* plutonium arising from the reprocessing of the 140 tonnes of spent nuclear fuel owned by O.K.G. Aktiebolag of Sweden, currently stored at Sellafield;

(2) if he will make a statement on current policy for the management of *(a)* low, *(b)* intermediate and *(c)* high level wastes arising from contracts signed pre-1976 with O.K.G. Aktiebolag.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The arrangements for the disposal of all wastes arising from such contracts are set out in the reply given by my hon. Friend the Member for Eddisbury (Mr. Goodlad) to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) on 2 May 1986, at columns 502-3. Any plutonium to be returned would be subject to the conditions specified in the answer given by my hon. Friend the Member for Eddisbury (Mr. Goodlad) to the then hon. Member for Walthamstow, Mr. Deakins, on 16 April 1985, at column *123*. Similar arrangements would apply to any depleted uranium arising.

"Brass Tacks" (Transcript)

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will seek to obtain and place in the Library a copy of the full transcript of the interview he gave to the BBC Television "Brass Tacks" production team for the series broadcast on BBC 2 in October 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Parkinson: No. I understand that the Library obtains transcripts from the broadcasters on behalf of hon. Members.

Latina Magnox Reactor

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has on the future of the Latina Magnox reactor exported to Italy and on what opportunities exist for the United Kingdom's decommissioning expertise to be made available to Italy as it closes down its older nuclear reactors.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I understand that this reactor has been closed. I hope that United Kingdom concerns would be given the opportunity to tender for any future decommissioning contracts.

Irradiated Spent Nuclear Fuel

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State of Energy what is the cost per tonne of irradiated spent nuclear fuel to be reprocessed for the Central Electricity Generating Board and South of Scotland Electricity Board in the thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield; and how these costs compare with those agreed with foreign utilities for imported thermal oxide nuclear fuel.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The terms under which business is conducted between BNFL and its customers are a commercial matter between the parties involved. I understand that the terms agreed with the Central Electricity Generating Board and the South of Scotland Electricity Board are no less advantageous than those agreed with overseas customers.

British Nuclear Fuels (Staff Retraining)

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the progress of the staff retraining programme for British Nuclear Fuels plc, Sellafield required in the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate report, "British Nuclear Fuels Limited, Sellafield, Post Audit progress", December 1987.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The HSE's post-audit report on BNFL Sellafield recognises that improvements have been made by the company in fulfilling the recommendations on training in the original audit report. Both reports are in the Library of the House.

Nuclear Power Plants (Ministerial Visits)

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the number of *(a)* nuclear power plants, *(b)* nuclear fuel cycle facilities, *(c)* fossil fuel plants, *(d)* fossil fuel processing facilities and *(e)* renewable energy production and conversion sites he or his predecessor has visited in the United Kingdom since 1979 in each case giving the date and location of the visit.

Mr. Parkinson: The information requested covers a period of three Parliaments and four Secretaries of State; it can be produced only at disproportionate costs.

Electricity Board Reactors (Reprocessed Fuel)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give, as a proportion of spent Magnox fuel deriving from United Kingdom electricity board reactors reprocessed in the period 15 December 1986 to 15 December 1987, the amounts reprocessed in each year from 1980 to 1985.

Mr. Michael Spicer: For the tonnages of civil spent fuel reprocessed, I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Member for Eddisbury (Mr. Goodlad) to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) on 11 December 1985 at columns *638* and *639*. 705 tonnes uranium (te u) were reprocessed in 1985-86.

For the spent Magnox fuel derived from United Kingdom electricity board reactors, I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) on 16 December 1987, at column *516*.

Oil-related Fabrication Work

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he will assess the availability and potential during the calendar year 1988 of oil-related fabrication work in the United Kingdom; if he will express that total capacity of availability as a percentage of the total capacity of the United Kingdom fabrication sector; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if, following his recent meeting with a delegation from local authorities within the Highlands, he will assess the availability and potential for oil-related fabrication work in the area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: During the course of 1988 we expect that new contracts for oil-related fabrication work of around 100,000 tonnes will be awarded. This work will come from projects already approved and from others currently under consideration. I am very much aware of the difficulties which the United Kingdom fabrication industry faces and of the continuing overcapacity within it. Virtually all fabrication work for United Kingdom continental shelf development is won by United Kingdom-based companies and United Kingdom yards, including those in the Scottish Highlands. Securing new work will depend on being competitive and maintaining good labour relations.

Polonium 210 (Windscale Fire)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when the first official mention was made of the release of polonium 210 in the 1957 Windscale fire, giving details of the source, date and place of publication.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Two reports which referred to polonium were produced by Atomic Energy Authority employees in 1958. The references are as follows:

Stewart N. G. and Crooks R. A., Long-Range Travel of the Radioactive Cloud from the Accident at Windscale. Nature vol. 182 no. 4636 pp627-628.

Dunstar H. J., Howells H. and Templeton W. L., District Surveys following the Windscale Accident, October 1957.

Proc 2nd UN Conference on Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy vol. 18 pp296-308 (1958).

Nuclear Installations

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if, pursuant to his answer of 22 January on the Radiation Effects Research Foundation report, he will place the National Radiological Protection Board GS-9 document in the Library; what is the membership of the working group advising the Health and Safety Commission; if the remit of this working group includes a re-evaluation of the cost factors in nuclear power investment and the need for any modifications to existing nuclear installations; when the working group plans to report to the Health and Safety Commission; and if the working group's advice will be made available to any planning inquiry into new nuclear power installations.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I am informed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment that the

Health and Safety Commission's Working Group on Ionising Radiations (WGIR) has the following terms of reference:

"To consider all matters concerning the Ionising Radiations Regulations 1985 and related radiation protection matters that are referred to it by the HSE or the Commission and to advise the Commission."

Members of the working group have been nominated by the CBI, the TUC, local authority interests, the National Radiological Protection Board, Government Departments and professional bodies. Among the issues to be addressed initially by WGIR is what action to recommend the commission to take on the advice on dose limitation provided by national and international bodies. It is expected to have reported to the commission on this by the end of 1988. Wider distribution of any report will be a matter for the commission.

I am arranging for a copy of the National Radiological Protection Board's GS-9 document to be placed in the Library of the House.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Sheep

Ms. Walley: To ask the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps have been and are being taken to ensure that potentially contaminated sheep taken to Staffordshire from restricted areas of Cumbria are being monitored.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Sheep may only be sold out of the restricted area of Cumbria after live monitoring. Those found to be above 1,000 bq/kg must be indentified by clipping on the head and neck and marking with a distinctive long lasting paint of a specified colour. It is an offence to slaughter sheep until all sheep of that specified colour have been released from control or the individual animal has been subsequently live monitored and found to be below the 1,000 bq/kg level. In this case it is identified with a distinctive Ministry ear tag as being no longer under slaughter restriction.

All slaughterhouse, livestock market and showground operators in Staffordshire have been informed in writing of the details of these controls and any changes to them, correspondence being copied to the local authority.

Food and Drink Surpluses

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the total current volume in sterling of surplus food and drink in the EEC.

Mr. Donald Thompson: A note setting out the volume of EC intervention stocks of agricultural commodities is deposited in the Library of the House and updated monthly. The estimated book value of the EC stocks set out in the most recently deposited note is £5·5 billion.

Milk Marketing Board (Chairman)

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the chairman of the Milk Marketing Board; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My right hon. Friend the Minister and I last met the chairman of the Milk Marketing Board on 16 December when we discussed a number of issues of current concern to the dairy industry.

Beef (Hormones)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what regulations exist for the prevention of the use of hormones in European and British beef; and whether any action is being taken to ensure that beef imported from the United States of America and Canada is also hormone free.

Mr. Donald Thompson: A ban on the administration of hormones to livestock for fattening purposes imposed by EC directives 81/602 and 85/649 was implemented in all member states by 31 December 1987. Imports from third countries such as the USA and Canada, where hormone growth promoters continue to be used, are, however, authorised until 31 December 1988.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Shooting Range, Bruslee

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what investigations were undertaken by the Northern Ireland Department of Agriculture into the potential effects on the livelihood of local farmers of the establishment of a military shooting range at Bruslee, Newtownabbey, Co. Antrim.

Mr. Viggers: None. I understand that it would have been for the local council, from which the land was leased, to take account of local issues relating to the project.

Rents

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what increase in rents is proposed by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive; what reason has been given for this increase; what is its relation to the current rate of inflation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: The Housing Executive's proposals for rental income in 1988-89 will be finalised as part of its annual budget which I expect to receive for approval at the end of February. However, the housing expenditure figures for 1988-89 which I announced in November last assumed that Housing Executive rents would rise by 9·2 per cent. from April 1988, subject to confirmation of a similar increase in England and Wales. This would maintain the recent policy of applying to Housing Executive rents the same increase, in percentage terms, as in England and Wales and would represent a rise of about 5 per cent. above the rate of inflation.

Building Control

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will take steps to require applicants who seek planning permission to obtain certification that plans meet building control regulations before proceeding.

Mr. Needham: No. Not all classes of building work require planning permission and for those which do it would introduce unreasonable and unnecessary delay without adding significantly to the effectiveness of building regulations.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information he has as to the numbers of new properties completed and occupied before plans have been

amended to meet building control regulations; and if he will take steps to ensure that district council building control officers are able to obtain amendments to incomplete plans submitted in a reasonable time after request.

Mr. Needham: None. Information in the form requested is not readily available and could be obtained and compiled only at disproportionate cost. Neither the Building Regulations (Northern Ireland) Order 1979 nor the regulations made under it require applicants to submit amended drawings within a prescribed period. I have at present no intention of introducing legislation prescribing such a period.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many and what percentage of plans submitted to district councils in Northern Ireland have required amendment before approval could be granted under building control regulations in each of the last three years.

Mr. Needham: Information in the form requested is not readily available and could be obtained and compiled only at disproportionate cost.

Ballyeasborough Primary School

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what has been the enrolment at Ballyeasborough primary school in each of the past 10 years; why it is proposed to close the school; which school in the district has the facilities to accommodate the children of Ballyeasborough; and if he will make a statement on the future provision of primary education for children from Ballyeasborough district in the Ards peninsula.

Dr. Mawhinney: Enrolments at 31 December were as follows:

	Number
1978	58
1979	61
1980	65
1981	67
1982	59
1983	49
1984	48
1985	51
1986	51
1987	58

In May 1985, the Department of Education approved the formal development proposal to close Ballyeasborough primary school when Victoria primary school, Ballyhalbert, is rebuilt with appropriate extended permanent accommodation. In making this proposal the South Eastern education and library board had regard to the substandard accommodation at both schools, and to the future projected enrolments at both schools which fell short of the recommended viability level for a rural primary school.

The new accommodation for Ballyhalbert primary school will cater for 91 to 123 pupils. It is expected that some of the Ballyeasborough pupils will transfer to Portavogie primary school.

Funds have been made available for the new accommodation to be provided at Ballyhalbert, and building work is due to commence his month.

RUC (Allegations Against Officers)

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if Royal Ulster Constabulary officers, the subject of allegations made by Mr. Chan Hok-Chun and Mr. Hui Yat-Chi, continue to be suspended from duty; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: The question of suspension of a police officer is a matter for the Chief Constable of the RUC. But I understand one officer continues to be suspended from duty.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what disciplinary action is to be taken against Royal Ulster Constabulary officers subject to inquiries into allegations made by Mr. Chan Hok-Chun and Mr. Hui Yat-Chi; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: I understand that the RUC's investigation is not completed and that no decision has so far been taken.

Maghaberry Prison

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd), *Official Report*, column *201*, from where he anticipates that the prisoners accounting for the anticipated rise in the number of inmates at Maghaberry from 38 to 100 by mid-February will be drawn.

Mr. Stanley: The number of inmates at Maghaberry (male) prison has now risen to 93. These prisoners have been drawn from Maze, Magilligan and Belfast prisons.

Belfast City Council (High Sheriff)

Sir John Biggs-Davison: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what grounds Belfast city council have given for declining to nominate a high sheriff for 1987 and 1988, respectively.

Mr. Tom King *[holding answer 28 January 1988]*: No grounds were given.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Community Care

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services, when he now expects to receive and publish Sir Roy Griffiths' review on the future development of community care.

Mr. Newton: I understand that Sir Roy hopes to complete his review shortly. Issues arising from it, including publication, will then be considered.

Maternity Allowance

Mr. McTaggart: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the Glasgow, Central constituency claimed maternity allowance for the last year for which figures are available; and how many women are expected to qualify for maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987, assuming that the number of births remains constant.

Mr. Scott: Information is not available in the form requested. But in the 12 months ending 12 January 1988, the latest year for which figures are available, the following

number of claims to maternity allowance were made at the Department's offices which now cover the constituency although the boundaries are not conterminous:

	Number
Bridgeton	161
Laurieston	579
City	145
Rutherglen	302

The number of social fund maternity payments made by local offices in the constituency for the period from 6 April 1987 to 12 January 1988 was as follows:

	Number
Bridgeton	243
Laurieston	321
City	205
Rutherglen	450

No separate forecasts were made of the number of women in the constituency likely to qualify for a social fund maternity payment.

National Health Service Expenditure

Mr. Forth: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the details of budgeted expenditures on the National Health Service for the West Midlands regional health authority, Bromsgrove and Redditch district authority, and the Worcester district health authority, for 1987-88, 1987-88 (outturn) and 1988-89.

Mrs. Currie: In 1987-88 the West Midlands regional health authority received an initial revenue cash limit of £1,114·4 million. Subsequent additions were made as follows:

	£ million
Following the Government's acceptance of the review body recommendations	26·6
From the waiting list fund	2·9
For breast cancer screening	0·2
Following my right hon. Friend, the Minister for Health's announcement of additional funding for 1987-88 on 16 December	6·7

Outturn figures for 1987-88 will not be available until later this year. The region's initial revenue cash limit for 1988-89 is £1,213·8 million. Allocations to the Bromsgrove and Redditch and Worcester district health authorities are a matter for the West Midlands regional health authority.

Hospitals (Building and Maintenance Costs)

Mr. Redwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services which hospitals built in the last 10 years have needed more than £1 million of remedial or maintenance expenditure in any one year; and how much has been spent on them.

Mrs. Currie: Information held centrally on hospital building schemes in England shows only one instance of expenditure in one year of over £1 million on the remedy of defects: building and engineering costs of reinstatement of the cardiac wing of Great Ormond street hospital are currently estimated at £17 million. Litigation continues in respect of claims for the recovery of these costs.

Annual maintenance expenditure of over £1 million is incurred on most hospitals over about 500 beds but the inquiries necessary for a breakdown between remedial and routine work could not be made without disproportionate cost. If my hon. Friend has any particular hospital in mind I would be glad to inquire for him.

National Health Service Staff

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the total numbers in whole-time equivalent of (*a*) directly-employed National Health Service staff and (*b*) hospital nursing and midwifery staff in England for 1986.

Mr. Newton: The available information is given in the table.

National Health Service staff in post in England at 30 September 1986

	Whole-time equivalents[1]
Total Directly Employed Staff[2]	801,600
Hospital Nursing and Midwifery Staff[3]	354,700

Source: DHSS Annual Censuses of NHS Medical and Non-Medical Manpower.

[1] Figures are independently rounded to nearest one hundred (100) whole-time equivalents.

[2] Excludes locum medical and dental and agency nursing and midwifery staff.

[3] Includes agency nursing and midwifery staff.

Sir Peter Hordern: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many were employed in the National Health Service as doctors, nurses, administrators, cleaners and other staff in 1961, 1971, 1981 and at the latest convenient date.

Mr. Newton: Doctors, nurses, administrators, cleaners and other staff have been interpreted as

Medical and Dental
Nursing and Midwifery
Administrative and Clerical
Ancillary
Others

Such information as is available is shown in the table. Figures for 1961 are not held centrally.

NHS staff in post in England

At 30 September	*Whole time equivalents*[1]		
	1971[7]	*1981*	*1986*
Medical and Dental[2]	29,500	41,000	43,200
Nursing and Midwifery[3]	285,400	391,800	402,700
Administrative and Clerical	70,400	108,800	111,400
Ancillary[4,5]	168,000	172,200	124,300
Others[5,6]	76,300	110,600	120,000
Total directly employed staff	629,500	824,400	801,600

Source: DHSS Annual Censuses of NHS Medical and Non-Medical Manpower

[1] Figures are independently rounded to nearest one hundred (100) whole time equivalents.

[2] Includes permanent paid, honorary and locum staff.

[3] Includes agency staff. Figures not adjusted to take account of the reduction in nurses contractual hours (from 40 to 37½ per week) during 1980-81.

[4] Includes staff in cleaning/domestic, catering, portering and other ancillary areas of work.

[5] On 1 April 1984 operating department assistants transferred from ancillary to professional and technical staff group. Figures not adjusted to take account of this change.

[6] Includes professional and technical, works, maintenance and ambulance staff.

[7] Due to the effects of the 1974 reorganisation some staffing figures for 1971 may not be on a consistent basis with those for 1981 and 1986.

Nurses (Pay)

Mr. Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will set out for the various grades of nurses in the National Health Service the current salary scales inclusive of London weighting; what is the procedure for pay review; and what is the current progress with this.

Mr. Newton: The pay of nursing staff, midwives and health visitors is determined on the recommendations of the independent review body appointed by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in 1983. The review body is currently taking oral and written evidence from the Health Departments and staff side and is expected to report in the spring.

Current salary scales for nurses, including the London weighting allowances, are set out in the table.

Grade	*Salary scale including London Weighting*[1] *£ per annum*
Student nurse	5,470; 5,665; 6,100.
Nursing Auxiliary	5,495; 5,705; 5,915; 6,125; 6,345; 6,565; 6,785.
Enrolled Nurse	7,180; 7,430; 7,680; 7,930; 8,180; 8,530; 8,680.
Staff Nurse	8,230; 8,490; 8,750; 9,010; 9,270; 9,530.
Sister II	9,930; 10,430; 10,930; 11,430; 11,930; 12430; 12,930.
Senior Nurse 7	11,780; 12,320; 12,860; 13,400; 13,940; 14,480.

[1] In addition nurses receive extra payments for working unsocial hours and overtime.

Abortions

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many of those who have had abortions since 1967 have subsequently had psychiatric treatment.

Mr. Newton: I regret this information is not available.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many National Health Service abortions took place in 1985, 1986 and 1987.

Mr. Newton: The statistics of notifications of abortions carried out under the Abortion Act 1967 identify the category of premises where the operation took place. The table shows the number of abortions carried out in National Health Service premises, and for residents of England and Wales only the number of 'agency' abortions on National Health Service patients.

Number of notifications of abortions carried out under the Abortion Act 1967 performed (a) in National Health Service premises, residents and non-residents and (b) in non-National Health Service premises on National Health Service patients under 'agency' arrangements, residents only. England and Wales 1985 to 1987

Year	*(a) National Health Service premises*	*(b) non-National Health Service 'Agency'*
1985	65,254	5,919
1986	67,529	6,819
1987[1]	33,695	3,819

[1] January to June inclusive (provisional).

'Agency' gives the number of operations on National Health Service patients undertaken through arrangements between certain National Health Service authorities and the private sector. For National Health Service premises, an unknown number of operations are carried out on non-National Health Service patients.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the names of the 12 clinics which performed the most abortions in 1986 on foreign women with pregnancies of more than 17 weeks gestation, and the percentage of total abortions of more than 17 weeks gestation, and the percentage of total abortions of more than 17 weeks gestation on foreign women that the abortions performed by each clinic represent.

Mr. Newton: For reasons of maintaining confidentiality, statistics relating to individual premises are not released.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many doctors and nurses were engaged on National Health Service abortions in 1985, 1986 and 1987.

Mr. Newton: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will expand on his statement during the report stage of the Social Security Bill, *Official Report*, 13 January, column 384, in relation to the protection of severely disabled people after the April social security changes by pursuing a solution that will depend on the voluntary sector.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) on 19 January 1988 at column *685*.

Ministerial Visit (Cornwall)

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to visit Cornwall to see local hospitals.

Mrs. Currie: Not at present. Ministers do, however, frequently visit health authorities, and the last such visit to Cornwall was in August 1986.

Transitional Protection

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will provide a breakdown of the extra £220 million to be spent in income support in 1988-89 after transitional protection, referred to in the *Official Report* of 19 November 1987, column 1250, into claimant groups *(a)* including and *(b)* excluding compensation for the 20 per cent. contribution to rates.

Mr. Scott: The breakdown of the extra £220 million is as follows:

	Extra spending (£ million)
Pensioners age 80+	+20
Pensioners age 60-79	+30
Sick or disabled	+50
Lone parents	+80
Couples with children	+50
Others	−10
Total	+220

The £220 million includes compensation for the 20 per cent. contribution to rates. This figure cannot therefore be broken down excluding that compensation.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many disabled pensioners currently receiving supplementary benefit who will not qualify for

the higher pensioner premium will receive transitional protection under the structural reform of social security benefits.

Mr. Scott: The information is not available in the form requested. All claimants aged 80 or more will receive the higher pension premium, as will an estimated 130,000 claimants aged between 60 and 79 years. A total of 380,000 pensioners aged less than 80 who will not qualify for the higher pensioner premium will receive transitional protection, but this protection will not always arise from needs associated with disablement; other factors are involved. We will look again at the detail of the premiums for disabled people when the results of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys' survey are known.

Negligence

Sir Anthony Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many cases of negligence or breach of statutory duty have been brought against *(a)* his Department and *(b)* health authorities in the last three years; whether such claims were covered by insurance; how much money was paid on settlement; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what requirements are placed by his Department on regional and district health authorities to insure against negligence or breach of statutory duty.

Mrs. Currie: Neither the Department nor health authorities insure against claims relating to negligence or breach of statutory duty but carry their own risks.

The total compensation payments by health authorities for the last three years, including compensation for injuries to persons, damages to property and damages for unfair dismissal were as follows.

	£	Cases
1984-85	5,538,597	3,397
1985-86	8,454,202	3,702
1986-87	11,469,925	4,244

Settlements by the Department in respect of claims for personal injury to members of staff and the public in their dealings with social security local offices were

	£	Cases
1984-85	28,000	14
1985-86	48,000	26
1986-87	23,000	19

(Excludes small claims settled locally).

Figures are not routinely collected on cases where no payment is made.

Income-related Benefits

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish a table showing income support expenditure in 1988-89 broken down into claimant groups as in table 8b in the "Estimated Impact of the Reformed Structure of Income-related Benefits" which will receive *(a)* more and *(b)* less than if supplementary benefit had continued with a normal uprating (i) including and (ii) excluding the compensation for 20 per cent. contribution to rates.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is as follows:

	(a) Income support more than supplementary benefit	*(b) Income support less than supplementary benefit*	*Total*
(i) Including rates compensation (£ million)			
Pensioners			
Singles	510	200	710
Couples	340	130	470
Non-pensioners with children			
Lone parents	1,250	380	1,630
Couples	1,720	160	1,880
Non-pensioners without children			
Single age 25+	1,040	270	1,310
Single age <25	650	360	1,010
Couples	80	330	410
Total	5,590	1,830	7,420
(ii) Excluding rates compensation (£ million)			
Pensioners			
Singles	310	300	610
Couples	260	190	450
Non-pensioners with children			
Lone parents	1,020	580	1,600
Couples	1,550	290	1,840
Non-pensioners without children			
Single age 25+	610	650	1,260
Single age < 25	30	950	980
Couples	40	360	400
Total	3,820	3,320	7,140

These figures take no account of transitional protection or estimated expenditure on boarders who are generally to be unaffected.

Transplant Organs (Register)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has had from Sir Roy Calne, FRS on the need for a register of transplant organs; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Edwina Currie: We have received no representations from Sir Roy Calne, but we are in continuing discussion with the British Transplantation Society about the establishment of a register of transplant operations.

Bradford Health Authority

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will undertake an immediate inquiry into the impact on patient services in Bradford of cuts in expenditure by Bradford health authority of £2,100,000 by 1989-90;

(2) what is the latest estimate of Bradford health authority's revenue and capital expenditure for 1987-88; how much non-recurring allocation has been received by Bradford health authority; and whether he expects the authority to be in deficit at the end of the current financial year;

(3) what requests he has made of Bradford health authority to reduce expenditure in 1988-89 and 1989-90; what deficit on revenue expenditure will accrue in 1988-89 and 1989-90 if no reduction in expenditure is agreed; what

reduction in revenue expenditure is required in 1988-89 and 1989-90 to avoid deficits arising in each year; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: Allocation of funds, revenue and capital, to Bradford health authority, and any associated monitoring of expenditure, is the responsibility of the Yorkshire regional health authority. The hon. Member may therefore wish to contact the regional health authority chairman for the information he is seeking.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the effect on anticipated deficits of Bradford health authority of each per cent. pay awards which are not met by central Government; how many staff are now employed by the authority; how many staff were employed by the authority in each of the last five years: and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: The table sets out the number of staff directly employed by Bradford health authority for the years 1982 to 1986, the latest year for which data are centrally available. It is not possible to calculate accurately centrally the cost of each percentage increase of pay awards for individual district health authorities.

The hon. Member may wish to write to the chairman of Bradford health authority for the information he is seeking.

NHS Directly Employed Staff[1] in Post in Bradford District Health Authority

At 30 September	*Whole equivalents[2]*
1982	5,610
1983	5,570
1984	5,390
1985	5,170
1986	5,090

Source: DHSS annual censuses of NHS medical and non-medical manpower.

[1] Includes permanent paid, honorary and locum staff. Excludes senior registrars and consultants whose contracts are held by the regional health authority. Includes agency nursing and midwifery staff.

[2] Figures are independently rounded to nearest ten (10) whole time equivalents.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the names of the members of Bradford health authority; when each was appointed and how long each has served; which members receive an annual salary; and what is the annual salary and annual service in days served in each case.

Mrs. Currie: The members of Bradford health authority are appointed by the Yorkshire regional health authority and Bradford city council. Details are not held centrally but may be obtained from the chairman of the regional health authority. Health authority members do not receive a salary but are entitled to claim travel and subsistence allowances and, in certain circumstances, to some compensation for loss of earnings.

Health Services

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what consideration he gives to any proposal by a district health authority to reduce treatment to those living in a neighbouring district health authority.

Mrs. Currie: The NHS is a national service and general practitioners are free to refer their patients to the consultant they consider most able to benefit their patient. The decision as to whether to accept a referral is a matter for the clinical judgment of the individual consultant. In some instances the consultant may conclude that the patient does not have need for the special services provided by the hospital where he is based and would be more appropriately treated elsewhere. These are not matters where it would be appropriate for us to intervene.

Coronary Disease

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list in the *Official Report* the number of sufferers of coronary disease whose final diagnosis resulted from initial detection during the course of a National Health Service sight test in each of the past 10 years.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that this information is not available.

Disabled Pensioners

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many disabled pensioners claiming for the first time after April who would previously have received a heating addition and domestic requirements addition worth at least £10 will receive less under income support than they would have done under supplementary benefit.

Mr. Scott: I regret that the information is not available.

Heating Additions

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether supplementary benefits claimants who are tenants of homes built with no fines concrete are entitled to a heating addition.

Mr. Scott: Weekly supplementary benefit heating additions are not awarded specifically to claimants who live in homes built with no fines concrete. Heating additions are, however, available to householder claimants if their home is difficult to heat adequately because, for instance, rooms are damp or draughty.

General Practitioners (Charges)

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to introduce charges for patients visiting their general practitioners.

Mr. Newton: No.

Private Patients

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give for 1985, 1986 and 1987 *(a)* the number of paybeds, *(b)* the number of discharges and deaths of private patients, *(c)* the average number of paybeds occupied by private patients daily *(d)* the percentage occupancy for each district health authority and special health authority.

Mrs. Currie: I shall let the hon. Member have such information as can be obtained without incurring disproportionate cost as soon as possible.

Nurses

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his answer of 13 January, *Official Report*, column *327*, how much money in real terms expressed at constant prices has been spent by health regions on nursing training in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 27 January 1988 at column *264*.

Invalidity Benefit

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services to what factors he ascribes the increase in the average number of persons receiving invalidity benefit from 700,000 in 1982-83 to 995,000 in 1987-88 and the projected rise to 1,120,000 in 1990-91, shown in table 15.6 of Cm 288-II.

Mr. Scott: Invalidity benefit case loads are likely to reflect a number of demographic, medical and economic influences. To understand more fully the importance of these various factors in explaining the numbers of invalidity pensioners, the Department has commissioned research by economists at Newcastle-upon-Tyne university and polytechnic. It is hoped that this project will in due course give a clearer indication of the reasons for the recent increases in invalidity benefit case loads.

Single Payments

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he received the commissioner's decision referred to in his answer of 16 November 1987, *Official Report*, column *445;* and whether, in the light of this decision, he will amend regulations 10 and 10A of the single payments regulations to ensure that single payments for furniture are made where the claimant has become the tenant or owner of an unfurnished home on the date of claim.

Mr. Scott: The commissioner's decision referred to is still awaited.

Benefits

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will ensure that severely disabled people who have a combined order book for attendance allowance and another long-term benefit receive as much compensation for the error in the retail prices index as those receiving the same benefits who have two order books; and how many people are in each of these categories.

Mr. Scott: Attendance allowance is paid at two rates, of which only the higher rate was affected by the error in the RPI. Because of the difficulty of distinguishing at the post office counter between recipients of the two rates, all AA recipients will be eligible for an ex-gratia payment. Where lower rate AA, received by nearly three fifths of AA recipients, is paid in combination with another long-term benefit, the £8 special payment is likely to compensate fully for any loss suffered. Where higher rate AA is paid with another long-term benefit, the degree of undercompensation will vary with the type of second benefit and the length of time for which the recipient is entitled to both benefits during the period April 1987 to April 1989. In these circumstances it would not be appropriate to make a second special payment to all recipients of attendance allowance, simply because a small minority may for special reasons receive benefit on two separate order books, both attracting an £8 payment. It is not known how many attendance allowance order books are held separately by claimants also receiving another long-term benefit, but the numbers are likely to be small.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what categories of claimants will have lost more as a result of the error in the retail prices index than the amount of compensation they are to receive; what will be the average net loss per loser and the total net loss for each of these categories; and how much money is to be distributed to charities to make good these losses.

Mr. Scott: It is not possible to say with accuracy which claimants will have lost more than the amount of the special payments that they will receive because the flat-rate special payments exercise does not take account of whether claimants have been or would be entitled to benefit for the whole of the two years affected by the error in the retail prices index. Generally speaking, the types of claimants who are likely to be undercompensated are those who receive the higher rate of attendance allowance combined with retirement pension, invalidity benefit, or widow's benefit. In each case the maximum net loss per loser will be about £5. The total net loss for these retirement pensioners will be about £640,000; for the invalidity pensioners about £250,000; and for the widows about £5,000. These net losses will comprise about £900,000 of the sum to be distributed among charities.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how much planned expenditure from the social fund for 1989-90 and 1990-91 is for maternity and funeral payments, cold weather payments, community care grants and the excess of leave over repayments, respectively.

Mr. Scott: These figures are planning figures and subject to review in the light of experience of running the social fund.

£ million

	1989-90	*1990-91*
Maternity and funeral payments	35·2	36·3
Exceptionally cold weather payments	4·5	4·5
Community care grants	60	60
Net cost of loans	39	39

Social Workers

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people are currently receiving training in the certificate of qualification in social work; and to what extent this meets the demand for trained social workers.

Mr. Newton: I have been advised by the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work that the total number of students on training courses leading to the award of the certificate of qualification in social work, in the United Kingdom, was 6,140 in 1986—the latest year for which figures are available. In the same year there were also 3,812 students on schemes leading to the award of the certificate in social service, which is now accepted by the council as a social work qualification.

The council estimates that an annual intake of 5,000 students is necessary to maintain the current level of qualified social workers. The combined intake of students to CQSW courses and CSS schemes in 1986 was 4,785.

Employment Statistics

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people have been registered as long-term off work due to sickness in the United Kingdom in March, June, September and December for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Scott: Information is not available in the form requested. The numbers of people who were sick for at least 28 weeks and were in receipt of invalidity benefit at the end of the statistical periods of the last 10 available years is shown in the table.

Date	*Number*
Great Britain	
4 June 1977	506,550
3 June 1978	559,250
2 June 1979	611,000
31 May 1980	615,000
30 May 1981	632,975
29 May 1982	683,507
2 April 1983	736,914
31 March 1984	797,400
30 March 1985	849,300
5 April 1986	899,400
Northern Ireland	
31 May 1977	26,065
31 May 1978	26,190
31 May 1979	29,330
31 May 1980	30,415
31 May 1981	27,415
31 May 1982	30,530
5 April 1983	33,935
5 April 1984	35,160
5 April 1985	36,425
5 April 1986	38,110

Windscale Fire

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if, in the light of the recent release of papers, he will review previous ministerial statements to the effect that there is no evidence that anyone in the United Kingdom has died as a result of polonium and other radiactive isotopes released into the atmosphere during the Windscale fire of 1957.

Mrs. Currie: All relevant information relating to the health consequences of the Windscale fire was available to Government at the time of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's statement on 18 April 1983, at column *12*.

NHS (Charges)

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if it is intended that the present review of the National Health Service will consider charges for National Health Service patients receiving treatment in hospitals.

Mr. Moore: The review will be wide ranging and fundamental, and concerned with the development of the Health Service to meet the country's needs over many years to come. We do not intend to begin the review by ruling out any proposals for reform. Each will be considered on its merits and, as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said in her reply to the hon. Member on 28 January, at column *313*, the Government will consider carefully any submissions put to them.

So far as hospital charges are concerned, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister reiterated on 28 January, at columns *477-78*, that the Government will not introduce board and lodging charges for National Health Service patients during the lifetime of this Parliament.

War Widows

Mr. Cormack: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will use some of the funds made available to correct the error in the retail prices index, as announced to the House on 18 December 1987, to provide extra provision for the more elderly war widows who do not receive Ministry of Defence pensions or other forms of compensation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will use some of its funds made available to correct the error in the retail prices index, as announced to the House on 18 December 1987, to provide extra provision for the more elderly war widows who do not receive Ministry of Defence pensions or other forms of compensation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: Payments will be made to war widows to compensate them for the error in the retail prices index. The money available to correct this error could not provide for improvements in war widows pensions provisions.

Health Checks

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what provision he is proposing to make with hospitals for pathology and X-ray tests, in the light of the proposal in the White Paper, "Promoting Better Health", that patients newly registering with the National Health Service have a health check.

Mr. Newton: It will be for the family doctor to decide whether pathology and X-ray tests are needed, but it is unlikely there will be many such instances. We do not therefore envisage the need for special provision in hospitals for this purpose.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the number of patients awaiting *(a)* urgent and *(b)* non-urgent treatment in (i) Leeds Eastern health authority and (ii) Leeds Western health authority on the latest available figures; and if he will give the figures for the previous six and 12 months, respectively.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Member have such information as can be obtained without incurring disproportionate cost as soon as possible.

War Pensioners

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will take steps to ensure that war pensioners have rights of appeal to independent tribunals, comparable with those of social security claimants.

Mr. Scott: Most pensioners already have a right of appeal to an independent Pensions Appeals Tribunal

against decisions about their entitlement to war pension and their level of assessment. If they are dissatisfied with a decision about which there is no statutory right of appeal, they may ask at any time for it to be reviewed by the Secretary of State and can ask their local war pensions committee to make representations on their behalf. War pensions committees are statutorily empowered to hear and consider such complaints and to make representations to the Secretary of State. I am satisfied that these long-standing arrangements operate satisfactorily to safeguard the interests of war pensioners.

Neonatal Units (Staffing)

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list for each year since 1976, for each neonatal unit in England *(a)* the number of sister posts, *(b)* the number of staff nurses or staff midwives, *(c)* the number of support nursing staff including nursing nurses and nursing auxiliaries and *(d)* the number of medical staff with specific commitment to neonates.

Mr. Newton: Information to this level of detail is not collected centrally for medical staff and is available for nursing and midwifery staff in each district health authority only from September 1981 but this could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Information by regional health authority for 1981 and 1986 is given in the table.

National Health Service nursing and midwifery staff by grade: Special Care Baby Units[1] [2]by regional health authority as at 30 September
Whole-time equivalents[3]

Region	Sisters 1981	Sisters 1986	Staff nurses and midwives 1981	Staff nurses and midwives 1986	Other nursing staff[4] 1981	Other nursing staff[4] 1986
Northern	35	52	31	53	42	55
Yorkshire	28	72	28	79	28	69
Trent	69	90	60	117	131	144
East Anglian	25	30	48	55	46	40
North West Thames	40	65	31	59	69	73
North East Thames	22	41	23	48	29	31
South East Thames	17	56	25	72	20	85
South West Thames	22	31	18	35	29	28
Wessex	20	43	29	74	34	53
Oxford	21	43	31	75	28	43
South Western	40	47	65	92	50	50
West Midlands	27	108	19	96	81	186
Mersey	50	40	14	33	65	49
North Western	56	109	16	76	63	108
London post-graduate special health authorities	—	10	—	17	—	11
England	471	834	439	981	714	1,023

Source: DHSS Annual census of National Health Service non-medical manpower.
[1] Excludes Agency staff.
[2] Occupation codes identifying the Special Care Baby Unit area of work were introduced in 1981 therefore some of the apparent increases in staff in this area of work during this period may be partially due to improvements in coding.
[3] Figures are independently rounded to the nearest whole-time equivalent.
[4] Includes Enrolled nurses, Auxiliaries and other unqualified nursing staff.
[5] Includes Senior Nurses/Midwives.

Sheffield Health Authority

Mr. Patnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the increases in medical, nursing and dental staff, whole-time equivalents for Sheffield health authority for the period 1979 to the latest year available; and what are the equivalent figures for England as a whole.

Mrs. Currie: Such information as is available is shown in the table.

Because of the effects of the 1982 National Health Service reorganisation figures for Sheffield district health authority for the years prior to 1982 are not available on a consistent basis with those for 1982 and later years.

Senior registrars' contracts are held by the regional health authority. The district health authority where these staff work cannot be identified centrally. There will therefore be more doctors and dentists actually working in Sheffield district health authority than are accounted for in the table.

National Health Service medical and dental and nursing and midwifery staff in post in Sheffield district health authority and England—at 30 September

Medical and dental staff	Whole-time equivalents[3] 1979	Whole-time equivalents[3] 1982	Whole-time equivalents[3] 1986	Change 1979 to 1986[2] Whole-time equivalents	Change 1979 to 1986[2] Percentage	Change 1982 to 1986[2] Whole-time equivalents	Change 1982 to 1986[2] Percentage
Sheffield district health authority[5]	n/a	630	680	n/a	n/a	60	+8·7
England[4]	38,990	41,460	43,250	4,260	+10·9	1,790	+4·3

[1] Figures are independently rounded to nearest ten (10) whole-time equivalents.
[2] Changes and percentages calculated on unrounded whole-time equivalents.
[3] Includes permanent paid, honorary and locum staff but excludes senior registrars whose contracts are held by the regional health authority.
[4] Includes all permanent paid, honorary and locum staff.
Source: DHSS annual census of NHS medical manpower.

Nursing and midwifery staff

	Whole-time Equivalents[1]			*Change 1979 to 1986*[2]		*Change 1982 to 1986*[2]	
	1979	*1982*	*1986*	*Wte*	*Per cent.*	*Wte*	*Per cent.*
Sheffield DHA[3]	n/a	6,090	6,330	n/a	n/a	240	+3·9
England [3,4]	358,450	397,080	402,690	44,240	+12·3	5,610	+1·4

Source: DHSS Annual Census of NHS Non-Medical Manpower.
[1] Figures are independently rounded to nearest ten (10) whole time equivalents.
[2] Changes and percentages calculated on un-rounded whole-time equivalents.
[3] Includes agency staff.
[4] Figures not adjusted to take account of the reduction in nurses contractual hours (from 40 to 37·5 per week) during 1980-81.

Blood Donors

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is his estimate of the proportion and number of adults in England and Wales that would be suitable for blood donation;

(2) what proportion and number of suitable adults give blood in England and Wales;

(3) what proportion and number of suitable adults are needed to give blood to make England and Wales self-sufficient in blood and blood-derived products;

(4) whether he will consider reducing the period between permitted donations of blood to four months from six, to ease the shortage of blood and blood-derived products, and to make England and Wales self-sufficient; and if he will make a statement;

Mr. Newton: We are already self-sufficient in whole blood. The new £60 million blood products laboratory at Elstree is now on stream and we expect England and Wales to become self-sufficient in blood products next year. Regional health authorities have been set targets to ensure that the necessary amount of plasma is collected for fractionation in the new laboratory.

Plasma may either be collected from donors directly by plasmapheresis at intervals of a few weeks, or may be extracted from blood donations generally given twice a year. Guidance on the frequency of donation is kept under review.

It is not possible simply to relate the number of plasma donations required to the number of donors. A total of about 2·2 million blood and plasma donations were given in 1986. The theoretical eligible donor population is estimated at 27 million but medical restrictions would reduce this total.

Homeless Persons

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations his Department has received from organisations and individuals concerning the consequences for the general health service of resettling homeless persons outside their own borough; and what response has been made to those representations.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 3 December 1987]:* We have been unable to trace any representations about resettling homeless persons outside their own borough but the Association of Metropolitan Authorities has written about homelessness in London. The association has asked for a meeting and I have arranged to see them, together with appropriate health authority representatives.

Severe Weather Payments

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list, for Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland, how many pensioner households he estimates to be eligible for exceptionally severe weather payments.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 14 December 1987]:* The number of pensioner householders aged 65 or over in the United Kingdom who are eligible for exceptionally cold weather payments is as follows:

	Number
Scotland	88,000
England	779,000
Wales	56,000
Northern Ireland	33,000

Source: 1986 Annual Statistical Enquiry (Great Britain).
1986 Annual Statistical Enquiry (Northern Ireland).
Note: These figures exclude claimants with capital in excess of £500.

Pensioners (Savings)

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list for Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland, how many pensioners on supplementary pensions he estimates to have savings of £500 or more.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 14 December 1987]:* The number of claimants in the United Kingdom in receipt of supplementary pension (that is men aged 65 or over and women aged 60 or over) who have savings in excess of £500 is as follows:

	Number
Scotland	38,000
England	530,000
Wales	26,000
Northern Ireland	10,000

Source: 1986 Annual Statistical Enquiry (Great Britain).
1986 Annual Statistical Enquiry (Northern Ireland)

Paediatric Intensive Care Nurses

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what conveniently available figures he has for the shortage of paediatric intensive care nurses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 18 January 1988]:* Nationally, the total number of nursing and midwifery staff, including qualified and unqualified staff, in special care baby units and paediatric intensive care has increased by some 157 per cent. between September 1981 and September 1986; from 1,260 to 3,220 in whole-time equivalent terms. Work is in hand to establish a post-basic paediatric intensive care nursing course in Birmingham. It is expected to commence later this year and will be the first of its kind outside London.

The new grading structure for nurses to be introduced later this year will offer better pay and career prospects in clinical nursing for those who take on heavier responsibilities or who specialise in areas such as paediatric intensive care. It is expected that this will help to improve recruitment and retention.

Recruitment and post-basic nurse training are the responsibility of health authorities. Information on shortages is not collected centrally on a routine basis. However, the results of a recent survey by the regional health authorities, undertaken for the nurses' pay review body, are expected shortly.

TRANSPORT

Trunk Roads

12. **Mr. Neale:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport by how much capital spending on trunk roads has increased since 1978-79.

Mr. Channon: Actual capital expenditure in 1978-79 was £327 million. Planned capital expenditure for 1987-88 is £893 million. This represents an increase in real terms of 34 per cent. at 1985-86 prices.

Vehicle Mileage (Motorways)

13. **Mr. Waller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the percentage change in vehicle mileage on motorways in England since 1982.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The figure for Great Britain is about 70 per cent.

Roll-on/Roll-off Ferries

15. **Mr. Bernie Grant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he is satisfied with the progress on international arrangements to improve the safety of roll-on/roll-off ferries.

Mr. Channon: Yes. Following wide-ranging consultations, the United Kingdom has submitted, to the International Maritime Organisation, two sets of proposed amendments to the Safety of Life at Sea 74-78 convention. The first set will be considered for adoption in April.

16. **Mr. Clelland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the consultants employed by his Department to consider the safety of roll-on/roll-off ferries.

Mr. Channon: In the past three years my Department has obtained the services of what is now British Maritime Technology Ltd.; *Lloyd's Register of Shipping;* Newcastle university; and one consortium, comprising *Lloyd's Register of Shipping*, Ocean Fleets Ltd. and the General Council of British Shipping.

24. **Mr. Patchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to receive interim reports on the structural safety of roll-on/roll-off ferries.

Mr. Channon: The report of the court of formal investigation into the capsize of the Herald of Free Enterprise included in its longer-term recommendations a proposal that there should be urgent investigations to find methods of improving the survivability of ro-ro ferries if the hull was breached. We intend to complete the first phase of this work by the end of this year.

BR (Fares Policy)

17. **Dr. Moonie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if, when he next meets the chairman of British Rail, he will raise with him the fares policy of British Rail.

Mr. David Mitchell: No. The level and structure of rail fares are matters for British Rail to decide within the general objectives we have set it.

London Regional Transport

18. **Mr. Meale:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he next expects to meet the chairman of London Regional Transport.

Mr. Channon: This Thursday, 4 February.

Vehicle Mileage

19. **Mr. Gale:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the percentage change in vehicle mileage on roads in England since 1982.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: 22 per cent.

South Dorset (M5)

20. **Mr. David Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent representations he has received in favour of improving road links between south Dorset and the M5.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We have three schemes on the trunk road sections of the route. Two of these, A303 Ilminster bypass and A5 Dorchester bypass, are due to be completed in the summer and autumn respectively. The third scheme, A303 Ilchester-South Petherton, should start construction in the second half of this year. Dorset and Somerset county councils also have their own programmes of major road improvements and aim to bring the rest of this route up to a satisfactory standard.

Heavy Lorries

21. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his policy towards the introduction of heavier lorries.

66. **Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his policy towards the introduction of heavier lorries.

71. **Mr. Ronnie Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the maximum weight of heavy goods vehicles.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There are no plans to change the maximum permitted weight of 38 tonnes.

LRT (Ticketing Systems)

22. **Ms. Harman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has met the chairman of London Regional Transport to discuss the safety implications of planned London Regional Transport investment in automatic ticketing systems.

Mr. David Mitchell: No. London Underground Limited is responsible for the design of this system and its safe operation. I have no reason to believe that the system, for which financial approval was given in 1985, is unsafe. If the hon. Lady has a particular cause of concern perhaps she will write to me.

28. **Ms. Richardson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proportion of planned London Regional Transport capital investment is devoted to the installation of automatic ticketing systems.

Mr. David Mitchell: 12 per cent. in the financial year 1988-89.

West German Minister of Transport

23. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met his West German counterpart; and what was the content of their discussions.

Mr. Channon: I visited Dr. Warnke in Bonn on 25 November, when we discussed prospects for the December Transport Council and transport issues likely to arise during the German presidency of the European Community. We also met at the Transport Council itself.

Fenchurch Street Station

25. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many letters he has received from the general public about British Rail's services to Fenchurch street station; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: We have received about 20 such letters since my right hon. Friend took up his present appointment. The management of the railway is a matter for British Rail. It is working hard to improve the quality of services to Fenchurch street.

London Underground (Ticketing Systems)

26. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received concerning plans by London Underground Ltd. to install automatic ticketing systems.

Mr. David Mitchell: The design and safety of this system is the responsibility of the London Underground, but I am informed that the new ticket gates will provide more passenger openings than the traditional barrier line, and in the event of emergency can quickly be set to a fully open position either locally or from the central command station at Baker street. In addition they are designed to be fail-safe in the event of a sudden loss of power or air supply, allowing passengers to push through easily and rapidly. Reports of wire mesh cages are entirely false.

59. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the safety implications of the installation of automatic ticketing systems on the London underground.

Mr. David Mitchell: I have been made aware of the features being provided as part of the new underground ticketing system to ensure its effective and safe operation in the event of an emergency.

Drink-Driving

27. **Mr. Boyes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what were the comparable effects of *(a)* the 1987 Christmas drink and driving campaign and *(b)* the 1986 campaign.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: 1987 saw increased media coverage, especially in Scotland, of drinking and driving as news and current affairs. The 1987 campaign reintroduced TV advertising. Preliminary police figures suggest the campaign on the whole had a considerable impact on injuries. Full figures will be published later this year.

31. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what lessons were learnt from the 1987 Christmas anti-drink driving campaign; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The most important lesson from the Christmas campaign is the value of the contributions made by the private sector, and by editorial coverage and discussion in the media. We particularly welcome and hope to build on the support of the brewing industry.

What stands out is the fact that advising people to steer clear of alcohol if they are driving and making non-alcoholic drinks attractive and available are more effective measures than arguing about whether testing should be targeted or random.

Road Schemes

29. **Mr. Wood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many major road schemes were completed in 1987.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: In 1987, a total of 28 major road schemes in the national roads programme were completed. The list is as follows:

M5/M42 Junction (southern turn)
M63 Stretford-Eccles improvement stage 3
A1 Baldersby GSJ
A1 Clifton-Stannington bridge improvement
A2 Barham crossroads GSJ
A6 Chapel-en-le-Frith bypass
A10 Buntingford bypass
A11 Wymondham-Cringleford
A12 Martlesham bypass
A19 Ricall and Barlby bypass
A20 Sidcup bypass
A30 Exeter-Okehampton stage 3
A38 Belvedere Cross-Haldon hill GSJ
A38 Hilliards Cross GSJ
A39 Bideford bypass
A43 Brackley bypass
A43 Towcester bypass
A47 Peterborough Longthorpe GSJ
A47 Peterborough Westwood GSJ
A47 Postwick-Blofield dualling
A47 Wardley hill improvement
A52 Barthomley link-M6
A69 Eighton Lodge junction improvement
A303 Furze Hedge improvement
A422 Stratford northern bypass
A406 South Woodford-Barking relief road
A435 Evesham bypass
A596-A595 Thursby bypass

These schemes have added 72 miles to the network at a total works cost of about £275 million.

Civil Aviation (Competition Policy)

30. **Ms. Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a further statement on his policy on competition in civil aviation.

Mr. Channon: The Government remain committed to the policy set out in the 1984 White Paper on airlines competition of encouraging a sound competitive multi-airline industry, promoting competition in all markets, and ensuring adequate safeguards against anti-competitive behaviour.

Dial-A-Ride

32. **Mr. Fraser:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the average number of trips per person per week for London Dial-A-Ride members.

Mr. David Mitchell: Less than one per week.

41. **Mr. Allen McKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his policy on the number of trips per week that those eligible for Dial-A-Ride services should be able to receive.

52. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his policy towards encouraging increases in the volume of services provided by Dial-A-Ride services.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Dial-A-Ride services outside London are funded generally from the local authorities' revenue support for passenger transport. The Transport Act 1985 imposes a specific duty on local authorities to have regard to the transport needs of people with disabilities. The execution of this duty is entirely a matter for the local authorities.

Minibus Services

33. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what evidence there is of a change in the level of minibus services as a result of deregulation.

Mr. David Mitchell: Deregulation has strongly encouraged the introduction of minibuses, which served about 40 places at the end of 1985 and more than 250 by the end of 1987.

Lancashire (Grant)

34. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received on Lancashire's transport supplementary grant for 1988-89.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I have received nine letters, eight from hon. Members and one direct from Lancashire county council. I am replying to them individually.

London (East End)

35. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals his Department has for improving vehicle access through the east end of London to Essex and East Anglia.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There is an extensive package of proposals for improvements through east London to Essex and East Anglia. The A406 South Woodford to Barking relief road opened before Christmas. Subject to the completion of statutory procedures, a link road between the M11 at Redbridge and the A102(M) at Hackney Wick is planned for start of works in 1990. Improvements to the A13 and A127 are also planned.

A number of studies are also looking into traffic problems in east London. Stage II of the East London assessment study is now under way, with consultants developing a range of options to relieve the transport-related problems of that area. Consultants have been looking into possible improvements to the A13 between Limehouse and Dagenham and the future needs of the A127. A study of the A12 within Essex was also started recently.

Ports Policy

36. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has undertaken a review of ports policy recently.

Mr. David Mitchell: We keep our ports policy under continual review.

St. Pancras-Sheffield Line

37. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, in view of the disquiet in the communities along the St. Pancras to Sheffield Midland railway line, he will discuss with British Rail the future of that line.

Mr. David Mitchell: I know of no valid reason why people who use the midland main line should feel any disquiet about its future. The line has an excellent high speed train service which will be improved from next May by extra trains, including one between Sheffield and London, and British Rail has just completed a £25 million programme to modernise its signalling. The future of the line is secure.

Manchester International Airport

38. **Mr. Burt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what level of development has been approved for Manchester international airport in each of the last eight years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) on 11 January 1988 at columns *132-33*.

Disabled People (Transport)

39. **Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has to increase the provision of transport for the disabled.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Fearn) on November 30 at columns *599-602*.

Cycle Lighting

40. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to introduce a campaign stressing the importance to cyclists of having front and rear lighting on their bicycles during the hours of darkness; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We work for increasing cycling safety. Unlit cycles in the dark are a danger to cyclists and other road users.

The Department continues to distribute free material to local authority road safety officers encouraging cyclists to use adequate lights and clothing so that they can be easily seen. This follows up the regulations requiring new bicycles since October 1985 to carry amber pedal reflectors.

BA (British Caledonian)

42. **Mr. Boateng:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has met the chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority to discuss the implications of British Airways' purchase of British Caledonian.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My right hon. Friend frequently meets the chairman of the authority to discuss issues of mutual interest.

Channel Tunnel

43. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the

implications for the level of Channel tunnel rail services of the currently planned provision of on-train customs facilities for Channel tunnel train services.

Mr. David Mitchell: Section 12 of the Channel Tunnel Act 1987 requires on-train controls to be provided on services for destinations beyond London, subject to the railway operators asking for them and providing facilities acceptable to the appropriate Ministers. Discussions are in progress between BR and the Departments concerned.

62. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much he has agreed to allow British Rail to invest in the Channel tunnel.

Mr. David Mitchell: As reflected in the latest public expenditure White Paper, we have approved, in principle, a package of investments proposed by the British Railways Board not exceeding £550 million in total to enable Channel Tunnel rail services to commence in 1993. The board is now preparing detailed appraisals of individual elements in the package before final approval can be given.

British Rail Engineering Ltd.

44. **Ms. Short:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has held with the chairman of British Rail about the future size of the work force in British Rail Engineering Ltd.

54. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has held with the chairman of British Rail about the future size of the work force in British Rail Engineering Ltd.

56. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has held with the chairman of British Rail about the future size of the work force in British Rail Engingeering Ltd.

Mr. David Mitchell: I refer the hon. Members to my reply earlier today to the hon. Members for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) and for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson).

Civil Aviation Policy

45. **Mr. McCrindle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to meet the chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority to discuss civil aviation policy.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My right hon. Friend frequently meets the chairman of the Authority to discuss issues of mutual interest.

49. **Mr. Cummings:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he intends to amend his policy on civil aviation, in the light of the purchase of British Caledonian by British Airways.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. Friend gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo).

57. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he proposes to meet the chairman of British Airways, following its purchase of British Caledonian, to discuss the implications for civil avaition policy.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My right hon. Friend has no plans to meet the chairman of British Airways at the moment.

Rural Bypasses

46. **Dr. Michael Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many rural bypasses have been authorised over the last three years; what is their total mileage; and what proportion are proposed as dual carriageway.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Since 1 January 1985, orders have been made for 40 bypasses on national roads, with a total length of nearly 170 miles. Of these 15 (37·5 per cent.) are dual carriageway schemes, with a further five (12·5 per cent.) of mixed dual and single carriageway standard.

London Lorry Traffic

47. **Mr. Chapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what studies his Department has made of changes in routes and frequency of lorry traffic in London, following the completion of the M25 orbital motorway; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Classified traffic counts were taken on all major roads in the vicinity of the M25 motorway in 1987, including those in outer London boroughs. The counts are currently being processed and results will be published in "Transport Statistics Great Britain 1977-1987" in September 1988. Traffic counts of medium and heavy goods vehicles crossing cordons on the London boundary, around inner London and around central London fell by 9 per cent. 6 per cent. and 8 per cent. respectively between 1980 and 1986.

Road Casualty Figures

48. **Sir Fergus Montgomery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the relative road casualty figures in *(a)* France, *(b)* West Germany and *(c)* the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Although data on non-fatal injuries are collected in France and West Germany, differences in definitions and the collection mechanisms used mean that valid comparison in casualties is restricted to fatalities.

The population, fatalities in road accidents as well as fatalities per 100,000 motor vehicles and per 100,000 population in France, West Germany and the United Kingdom in 1975 and 1980 to 1986 are shown in the tables.

Population (Thousands)

	1975	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
France	n/a	53,880	53,960	54,220	54,730	54,950	55,000	55,000
West Germany	n/a	61,560	61,670	61,640	61,420	61,180	61,049	61,140
United Kingdom	56,226	56,330	56,352	56,306	56,347	56,460	56,618	56,763

Fatalities in France, West Germany and the United Kingdom: 1975, 1980 to 1986

	1975	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
France	14,166	13,499	13,287	13,191	12,728	12,562	11,387	11,947
West Germany	14,870	13,041	11,674	11,608	11,732	10,199	8,400	8,948
United Kingdom	6,679	6,239	6,069	6,150	5,618	5,788	5,342	5,633

Fatalities per 100,000 motor vehicles: in France, West Germany and the United Kingdom: 1975, 1980 to 1986

	1975	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
France	79·5	62·0	59·1	56·9	53·4	52·1	46·7	48·2
West Germany	76·9	52·3	45·8	44·8	44·4	37·6	30·2	30·9
United Kingdom	41·0	34·0	33·7	33·3	29·6	29·5	26·6	27·2

Fatalities per 100,000 population: in France, West Germany and the United Kingdom: 1975, 1980 to 1986

	1975	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
France	n/a	25·1	24·6	24·3	23·3	22·9	20·7	21·7
West Germany	n/a	21·2	18·9	18·8	19·1	16·7	13·8	14·6
United Kingdom	11·9	11·1	10·8	10·9	10·0	10·3	9·4	9·9

Bypasses

50. **Mr. Couchman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many bypasses have been built since 1979.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A total of 79 bypasses and relief roads have been built since 1979. They represent 40 per cent. of new national road mileage.

Dartford-Thurrock Crossing

51. **Mr. Fallon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to the implications for the decision to build the Dartford-Thurrock crossing of capacity in the British steel industry.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The 38,000 tonnes of steel which will be required for construction of this proposed new bridge represents a significant potential order for the British steel production and fabrication industry. It would create some 2,500 man years of work most of which would be in the north-east of England and Scotland.

East London River Crossing

53. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his Department's estimate of the changes in the volume and patterns of traffic using the A2 if the east London river crossing is constructed.

Mr. Channon: The Department's estimate, given at the public inquiry into the East London river crossing, was that traffic volume on the A2 would increase by between 15 and 25 per cent. in the area of its junction with ELRC and by about 5 per cent. in the Dartford area.

Driving Standards

55. **Mr. Nicholas Baker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will bring forward proposals to improve standards of driving.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We are considering ways of achieving higher standards through the tuition given by approved driving instructors to learner drivers. The driving test remains a rigorous test of competence to drive and includes assessment of a candidate's driving behaviour. All drivers should aim to improve their driving ability throughout their driving careers. We are looking at ways of encouraging people to do so. We will offer appropriate advice.

London City Airport

58. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has met the chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority to discuss the London City airport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My right hon. Friend has had no recent meeting with the chairman to discuss London City airport. The chairman did call on him in December to tell him of the possible suspension of flights between London City airport and Paris pending the outcome of an inquiry. That inquiry concluded in January that flights could safely be resumed, and I am pleased to say they are now running normally.

Network SouthEast

60. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if, when he next meets the chairman of British Rail, he will raise with him the quality of service provided by British Rail's Network SouthEast.

Mr. David Mitchell: We regularly monitor the quality of service on Network SouthEast services and we discuss it with the chairman as necessary. So far NSE's performance during 1987-88 suggests that quality is generally improving compared with 1986-87. For example, overall reliability and punctuality have been significantly better during much of the year. NSE is also planning major investments to improve quality. For example, it plans to invest about £400 million in new trains over the next five years.

Motorway Safety

61. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about current measures designed to improve safety on motorways.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) on 9 November 1987 at column *81*.

In addition, we are now reviewing further measures which could be taken to make motorways safer. My right hon. Friend expects to reach decisions by the spring.

Uncontrolled Air Space

63. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many United Kingdom airports operate international commercial flights in uncontrolled air space.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Civil aviation safety regulation is wholly the responsibility of the Civil Aviation Authority. I understand from the authority that, of the 35 United Kingdom aerodromes designated as customs and excise airports for international flights, 23 are not located within controlled air space (as defined in article 96 of the Air Navigation Order 1985). International flights may also operate from other aerodromes by special arrangement. Flights taking off or landing at aerodromes located within controlled air space may, nevertheless, pass through uncontrolled air space at some stage in their flight.

Manchester Airport

64. **Mr. Sackville:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about the future development of Manchester airport.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We have recently received a number of representations from hon. Members and others about the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on Manchester airport and its possible implications for the airport's development. The report was commissioned by the Civil Aviation Authority in pursuit of its statutory duty to set a condition governing the maximum charges which may be levied by the airport and is a matter entirely for the authority. We have also received representations about the development of air services between Manchester airport and the United States of America. The United States Government undertook to study proposals tabled by the United Kingdom Government last month. They have agreed to respond as quickly as possible.

Motorway Development

65. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has any plans to speed up the process of motorway development.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The basic motorway network is already largely in place. Its completion is a top priority within our trunk road construction programme; work on the M20 and M40 is proceeding well. The need for further development of the motorway network is monitored. New schemes are added to the programme when justified.

The White Paper "Policy for Roads in England 1987" added schemes for widening stretches of the M2, M3, M4, M6, M40, M62 and for junction improvements on the M4.

Pre-construction procedures are also kept under continuous review with the aim of minimising the time taken and improving efficiency.

Speed Limit Signs

67. **Mr. Higgins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he proposes to begin the experiment, substituting 70 mph speed limit signs for existing signs comprising a black diagonal on a white background; and if he will ensure the experiment is carried out on a major motorway, such as the M25.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The experiment is already under way at a site on the M1. Traffic speeds are now being measured before the erection of 70 mph limit signs. The signs will come into use in the autumn this year. Speeds will then be studied for a further year to see the effect of the change.

Bus Services

68. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give the number of bus services in operation in England and Wales operating at the latest available date; and what was the comparative figure in 1985.

Mr. David Mitchell: Information is not collected on this basis. Local bus mileage in England and Wales increased by 14 per cent. between November 1985 and November 1987.

Paddington-Heathrow (Rail Services)

69. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received regarding direct electrification of rail services from Paddington to Heathrow airport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: We have received a large number of representations following the report on surface access to Heathrow by our consultants, Howard Humphreys and Partners, published in June 1987. These include representations on the possibility of an electrified link between Paddington and Heathrow. All the responses are now being considered and we will be making an announcement in due course.

New Roads (Design Life)

70. **Mr. Irvine:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the current design life of new roads.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: New roads are designed to carry the traffic expected to use them over 40 years, with appropriate maintenance. Capacity provision is related to an economic evaluation covering the first 30 years of use.

London Bus Services

72. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the adequacy of bus services to the public in the Greater London area.

Mr. David Mitchell: It is for London Regional Transport to assess what levels of bus services are adequate in accordance with its statutory duty to secure the provision of public transport services having regard to transport needs in London. LRT plans to improve the overall level of service operated in the coming year.

Nuclear Material (Transport)

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if, in the light of the planned increase in transport of these materials over the next decade, his Department has undertaken any study of the emergency arrangements for *(a)* ports, *(b)* cargo airports, *(c)* railways and *(d)* roads currently designated for the receipt, export and transport of nuclear materials.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The transport of radioactive materials must comply with regulations based on

international standards which do not depend for their effectiveness on the designation of particular routes or modes of transport.

The increase in traffic over the next decade is not expected to raise new issues of principle.

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what arrangements presently exist at ports registered to receive the import of spent nuclear fuel, or other nuclear materials, physically to check that the contents of the imported containers tally with the accompanying inventory and materials carriage documentation.

Mr. David Mitchell: Ports do not have to be registered to handle radioactive materials. For safety reasons it is not possible to open containers of radioactive materials in a port area. The containers are subject to checking on loading and again on arrival at their destination.

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will arrange for copies of the PATRAM 86 conference report on the packaging and transport of radioactive materials, published by the International Atomic Energy Agency in 1987, to be placed in the Library.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Yes.

Plutonium

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the United States Senate decision on the proposed arrangements *(a)* to airfreight plutonium to Japan and *(b)* to re-transfer United Kingdom plutonium to Japan en route from Sellafield, stopping off on United States' territory.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I understand that Congress has incorporated into United States law a clause requiring the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, in certifying the safety of containers used to transport plutonium by air across United States air space, to include a drop test of a full-scale container from the maximum cruising altitude and the crash of a cargo aircraft fully loaded with such containers, unless the commission is satisfied that the stresses on the containers produced by other tests exceed those which would occur during a worst case accident. Meanwhile the International Atomic Energy Agency is reviewing the international regulations to see whether any changes are required in this area.

M67-A57 Junction

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to announce new measures to slow down traffic leaving the M67 in Denton and coming onto the A57 Manchester road and the new roundabout for the M66 motorway.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Traffic leaving the M67 will remain coned down to a single lane until the M66 roundabout opens. This, and construction work on the A57 over the next few months, will help to keep speeds down.

I will write to the hon. Gentleman.

National Bus Company

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish the guidelines for the sale of the National Bus Company's subsidiaries, particularly with respect to any policy regarding the immediate sale or disposal of assets by the purchaser.

Mr. David Mitchell: A copy of the National Bus Company's disposal programme is in the Library of the House.

In general, NBC does not seek to prevent the sale or disposal of particular assets by purchasers of subsidiaries; rationalisation or replacement of assets will often be part of the companies' plans for the successful continuation of bus services.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the undertaking given by Her Majesty's Government during the passage of the Transport Act 1985 relating to the sale of assets by private buyers of National Bus Companies.

Mr. David Mitchell: I am not aware of any such undertakings.

Crosville Motor Services

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will refuse to sanction the sale of Crosville Motor Services to Carlton PSV Ltd. without guarantees that Crewe bus station will remain in continuous use as a bus station;

(2) what undertakings have been received from Carlton PSV Ltd. on the maintenance of suitable bus stations and garages if it is allowed to complete its purchase of Crosville Motors.

Mr. David Mitchell: In accordance with its statutory duties the National Bus Company seeks to sell its local bus operating subsidiaries only to parties who will continue to operate bus services. Responsibility for the negotiation of individual sales rests with NBC. We have not yet received NBC's proposals for the sale of Crosville Motor Services, and therefore I cannot speculate on its recommendation or any eventual decision.

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will make a statement on the proposed sale of Crosville Motor Services to Carlton PSV Ltd.;

(2) if he will make it his policy not to approve any recommendation from the National Bus Company for the sale of Crosville Motor Services to Carlton PSV Ltd.

Mr. David Mitchell: We have not yet received from the National Bus Company any proposals for the sale of its Crosville Motor Services subsidiary. I cannot anticipate or prejudge NBC's recommendation.

Foreign Lorry Drivers

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many foreign lorry drivers, in the past year, have been involved in road accidents; how many were warned for dangerous driving; and how many were prosecuted.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The nationality of drivers involved in injury accidents is not recorded. The nationality of drivers warned and prosecuted for motoring offences is not available.

The number of foreign-registered heavy goods vehicles involved in injury road accidents in Great Britain between 1984 and 1986 is as follows:

Foreign registered heavy goods vehicles involved in injury road accidents: Great Britain: 1984 to 1986

	Fatal	Serious	Slight	Total
1984	18	51	180	249
1985	18	76	196	290
1986	20	70	189	279

Driving Licences

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will estimate the cost of replacing existing driving licences with EEC standard licences.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The present practice of issuing Community model licences when old-style licences have to be renewed or replaced avoids additional cost. Replacing the remaining 17 million old-style driving licences over a three-year period is estimated to cost £55 million.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many people currently hold a full driver's licence in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: At the end of 1987 there were approximately 27 million full driving licence holders in Great Britain, (Northern Ireland has separate driver licensing arrangements).

Foreign-Registered Vehicles

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many foreign registered vehicles entered Britain for each of the last five years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: This information is not available.

M11 (Harlow)

Sir John Biggs-Davison: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what road surfaces are being used in the repair of the M11 near Harlow; and to what extent the need to reduce noise levels influenced the choice of surface.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The repairs involve cutting out sections of the existing concrete carriageways and the replacement of like for like. This gives no scope for a choice of material other than concrete.

Vehicles (Reversing Accidents)

Mr. Fry: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many *(a)* fatalities and *(b)* injuries have been caused by reversing heavy goods vehicles in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Statistics on the causes of accidents are not collected. The number of casualties in road accidents where a heavy goods vehicle was reversing is shown in the table.

Casualties: in accidents where a heavy goods vehicle was reversing: by road user type and severity: Great Britain: 1982 to 1986.

	1982			
	Fatal	Serious	Slight	All
Pedestrian	11	22	69	102
Pedal cyclist	1	2	8	11
Moped user	0	3	3	6
Motor scooter user	0	0	0	0
Motor cycle user	2	7	32	41
TWMV combination user	0	0	0	0
Invalid tricycle occupant	0	0	0	0
Other 5 wheeler occupant	0	0	1	1
Taxi occupant	0	0	0	0
Car occupant	5	30	86	121
Mini bus/Motor caravan occupant	0	0	0	0
PSV 1 occupant[1]	1	0	18	19
LGV 2 occupant[2]	0	2	4	6
HGV 3 occupant[3]	1	4	6	11
Other motor vehicle occupant	0	2	2	4
Other non-motor vehicle occupant	0	0	0	0
All	21	72	229	322

[1] Public service vehicle
[2] Light goods vehicle
[3] Heavy goods vehicle

	1983			
	Fatal	Serious	Slight	All
Pedestrian	8	28	56	92
Pedal cyclist	0	2	5	7
Moped user	0	3	6	9
Motor scooter user	0	0	0	0
Motor cycle user	1	16	16	33
TWMV combination user	0	0	0	0
Invalid tricycle occupant	0	0	0	0
Other 5 wheeler occupant	0	0	1	1
Taxi occupant	0	0	4	4
Car occupant	3	14	89	106
Mini bus/Motor caravan occupant	0	0	0	0
PSV 1 occupant[1]	0	1	8	9
LGV 2 occupant[2]	0	1	10	11
HGV 3 occupant [3]	0	2	7	9
Other motor vehicle occupant	0	0	0	0
Other non-motor vehicle occupant	0	0	0	0
All	12	67	202	281

[1] Public service vehicle
[2] Light goods vehicle
[3] Heavy goods vehicle

	1984			
	Fatal	Serious	Slight	All
Pedestrian	10	28	73	111
Pedal cyclist	2	0	2	4
Moped user	0	1	6	7
Motor scooter user	0	1	1	2
Motor cycle user	0	6	19	25
TWMV combination user	0	1	0	1
Invalid tricycle occupant	0	0	0	0
Other 5 wheeler occupant	0	0	0	0
Taxi occupant	0	1	1	2
Car occupant	6	21	110	137
Mini bus/Motor caravan occupant	0	1	0	1
PSV 1 occupant[1]	0	0	2	2
LGV 2 occupant[2]	0	2	7	9
HGV 3 occupant[3]	0	1	9	10

	1984			
	Fatal	Serious	Slight	All
Other motor vehicle occupant	0	0	5	5
Other non-motor vehicle occupant	0	0	0	0
All	18	63	235	316

[1] Public service vehicle
[2] Light goods vehicle
[3] Heavy goods vehicle

	1985			
	Fatal	Serious	Slight	All
Pedestrian	6	25	59	90
Pedal cyclist	1	4	8	13
Moped user	1	4	7	12
Motor scooter user	0	0	2	2
Motor cycle user	0	6	12	18
TWMV combination user	0	0	0	0
Invalid tricycle occupant	0	0	1	1
Other 5 wheeler occupant	0	0	0	0
Taxi occupant	0	0	0	0
Car occupant	3	8	74	85
Mini bus/Motor caravan occupant	0	0	0	0
PSV 1 occupant[1]	0	0	5	5
LGV 2 occupant[2]	0	0	5	5
HGV 3 occupant[3]	0	2	9	11
Other motor vehicle occupant	0	0	2	2
Other non-motor vehicle occupant	0	0	0	0
All	11	49	184	244

[1] Public service vehicle
[2] Light goods vehicle
[3] Heavy goods vehicle

	1986			
	Fatal	Serious	Slight	All
Pedestrian	5	33	62	100
Pedal cyclist	0	1	7	8
Moped user	0	1	5	6
Motor scooter user	0	0	1	1
Motor cycle user	1	5	13	19
TWMV combination user	0	0	0	0
Invalid tricycle occupant	0	0	0	0
Other 5 wheeler occupant	0	0	0	0
Taxi occupant	0	0	2	2
Car occupant	0	20	88	108
Mini bus/Motor caravan occupant	0	0	0	0
PSV 1 occupant[1]	0	0	5	5
LGV 2 occupant[2]	0	1	6	7
HGV 3 occupant[3]	2	2	14	18
Other motor vehicle occupant	0	2	2	4
Other non-motor vehicle occupant	0	0	0	0
All	8	65	205	278

[1] Public service vehicle
[2] Light goods vehicle
[3] Heavy goods vehicle

Mr. Fry: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many *(a)* fatalities and *(b)* injuries have been caused by reversing light vans in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Statistics on the causes of accidents are not collected. The number of casualties in road accidents where a light goods vehicle was reversing is shown in the table.

Casualties: in accidents where a light goods vehicle was reversing: by road user type and severity: Great Britain: 1982 to 1986

	1982			
	Fatal	Serious	Slight	All
Pedestrian	9	67	221	297
Pedal cyclist	0	2	27	29
Moped user	0	3	8	11
Motor scooter user	0	0	0	0
Motor cycle user	1	8	25	34
TWMV combination user	0	0	0	0
Invalid tricycle occupant	0	0	1	1
Other 5 wheeler occupant	0	0	1	1
Taxi occupant	0	0	1	1
Car occupant	0	3	44	47
Mini bus/Motor caravan occupant	0	0	1	1
PSV 1 occupant[1]	0	1	4	5
LGV 2 occupant[2]	0	1	16	17
HGV 3 occupant[3]	0	0	1	1
Other motor vehicle occupant	0	0	0	0
Other non-motor vehicle occupant	0	0	0	0
All	10	85	350	445

[1] Public service vehicle
[2] Light goods vehicle
[3] Heavy goods vehicle

Casualties: in accidents where a light goods vehicle was reversing: by road user type and severity: Great Britain: 1982 to 1986.

	1983			
	Fatal	Serious	Slight	All
Pedestrian	10	68	250	328
Pedal cyclist	0	7	27	34
Moped user	0	4	6	10
Motor scooter user	0	0	4	4
Motor cycle user	0	3	16	19
TWMV combination user	0	0	0	0
Invalid tricycle occupant	0	0	1	1
Other 5 wheeler occupant	0	0	0	0
Taxi occupant	0	0	0	0
Car occupant	0	4	56	60
Mini bus/Motor caravan occupant	0	0	3	3
PSV 1 occupant[1]	0	0	4	4
LGV 2 occupant[2]	0	6	29	35
HGV 3 occupant[3]	0	1	2	3
Other motor vehicle occupant	0	0	0	0
Other non-motor vehicle occupant	0	0	1	1
All	10	93	399	502

[1] Public service vehicle
[2] Light goods vehicle
[3] Heavy goods vehicle

	1984			
	Fatal	Serious	Slight	All
Pedestrian	4	63	250	317
Pedal cyclist	0	4	35	39
Moped user	0	2	12	14
Motor scooter user	0	0	0	0
Motor cycle user	0	7	16	23
TWMV combination user	0	0	0	0
Invalid tricycle occupant	0	0	1	1
Other 5 wheeler occupant	0	0	0	0
Taxi occupant	0	0	1	1
Car occupant	1	3	45	49
Mini bus/Motor caravan occupant	0	0	0	0
PSV 1 occupant[1]	0	0	5	5
LGV 2 occupant[2]	0	5	27	32
HGV 3 occupant [3]	0	0	0	0
Other motor vehicle occupant	0	0	0	0
Other non-motor vehicle occupant	0	0	0	0
All	5	84	392	481

[1] Public service vehicle
[2] Light goods vehicle
[3] Heavy goods vehicle

	1985			
	Fatal	Serious	Slight	All
Pedestrian	4	96	269	369
Pedal cyclist	1	7	19	27
Moped user	0	1	10	11
Motor scooter user	0	1	2	3
Motor cycle user	0	7	22	29
TWMV combination user	0	0	0	0
Invalid tricycle occupant	0	0	0	0
Other 5 wheeler occupant	0	0	0	0
Taxi occupant	0	0	1	1
Car occupant	0	4	61	65
Mini bus/Motor caravan occupant	0	0	1	1
PSV 1 occupant[1]	0	0	3	3
LGV 2 occupant[2]	0	4	28	32
HGV 3 occupant[3]	0	0	1	1
Other motor vehicle occupant	0	0	0	0
Other non-motor vehicle occupant	0	0	0	0
All	5	120	417	542

[1] Public service vehicle
[2] Light goods vehicle
[3] Heavy goods vehicle

	1986			
	Fatal	Serious	Slight	All
Pedestrian	5	70	269	344
Pedal cyclist	0	3	25	28
Moped user	0	0	13	13
Motor scooter user	0	0	1	1
Motor cycle user	0	2	21	23
TWMV combination user	0	0	0	0
Invalid tricycle occupant	0	0	0	0
Other 5 wheeler occupant	0	0	0	0
Taxi occupant	0	0	0	0
Car occupant	0	4	60	64
Mini bus/Motor caravan occupant	0	0	1	1
PSV 1 occupant[1]	0	0	3	3
LGV 2 occupant[2]	1	5	18	24
HGV 3 occupant [3]	0	0	2	2
Other motor vehicle occupant	0	0	0	0
Other non-motor vehicle occupant	0	0	0	0
All	6	84	413	503

[1] Public service vehicle
[2] Light goods vehicle
[3] Heavy goods vehicle

Road Schemes (Grant)

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the schemes for which grant was paid under section 272 of the Highways Act 1980 during the last eight years, showing the amount of grant paid in each case.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information requested is as set out.

(i) Projects for which grant over £1 million approved

Route	Title	Progress	Estimated total cost [1](£ million)
Past:			
M531(M53)	Ellesmere Port Motorway Extension A5117 to Stoak Interchange	Completed October 1980	4·6
A418	Thame Bypass	Completed November 1980	3·1
A63	Kingston upon Hull South Orbital Road: Market Place—Hedon Road	Completed December 1980	11·6
A52	Gamston to Lings Bar: A52 to A614/A606 Junction	Completed September 1981	6·7
M531(M53)	Ellesmere Port Motorway Extension Stoak Interchange to A56 at Hoole	Completed July 1982	13·2
A282	Dartford Tunnel Approach Roads (North)	Completed November 1982	2·3
M602	M602 Spur to Salford Docks	Completed December 1982	20·6
A249	Improvement between Chestnut Street and Bobbing	Completed December 1982	2·9
M23/A264	Copthorne Link	Completed August 1984	2·0
A420	Shrivenham Bypass	Completed October 1984	3·2
A282	Dartford Tunnel Approach Roads (South)	Completed August 1986	13·9
A282	Dartford Tunnel Toll Plaza	Completed November 1986	7·2

Route	Title	Progress	Estimated total cost [1] (£ million)
Present:			
A64	Copmanthorpe GSJ	Under Construction	1·4
A15	Brigg and Redbourne Bypass	In Preparation	5·2
A418	Leighton Linslade Bypass	In Preparation	6·2
—	Callerton Lane Link	In Preparation	1·0

[1] Costs shown for Completed Schemes are at outturn prices, for schemes under construction at current prices and for schemes in preparation at November 1985 prices.

	Financial year of approval
(ii) Projects for which grant over £0·5 million approved	
A6/A56 bridge strengthening	1986-87
(iii) Projects for which grant between £0·1 and £0·5 million approved	
A25 maintenance works	1981-82
Heavy load grid route in Greater Manchester	1982-83
A4 bridge maintenance	1984-85
A6 resurfacing	1984-85
A12/A47 tidal flow system	1987-88
A57 road improvement	1987-88
(iv) Projects for which grant less than £0·1 million approved	
A412 measure to ease traffic congestion	1980-81
Steventon railway bridge repairs	1981-82
A59(T) bridge construction	1982-83
Thornaby/Middlesbrough dock route improvement	1984-85
M65 Re-routing of high load route 20	1987-88

Highway Authorities

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list in the *Official Report* for each highway authority in England *(a)* its bid for capital allocation and transport supplementary grant for 1988-89, *(b)* the allocation announced in each case, *(c)* the allocation as a percentage of the bid in each case, *(d)* the percentage of each authority's transport supplementary grant allocation attributable to minor works, for 1987-88 and 1988-89.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The capital allocations figures were given in my reply to the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) on 11 January at columns *139-40*. The figures for transport supplementary grant are in the following table:

Transport supplementary grant

Authority	(a) Bid 1988-89 (£ million)	(b) Accepted expenditure 1988-89 (£ million)	(c) Accepted expenditure 1988-89 as percentage of bid	(d)(i) Minor works accepted expenditure as percentage of total net accepted expenditure 1987-88	(d)(ii) Minor works accepted expenditure as percentage of total net accepted expenditure 1988-89
City of London	1·170	0·366	31·3	100·0	100·0
Barking and Dagenham	5·590	5·672	101·5	12·5	14·5
Barnet	0·695	0·800	115·1	100·0	100·0
Bexley	2·985	1·298	43·5	55·1	52·9
Brent	1·135	0·872	76·8	66·2	42·7
Bromley	9·718	7·766	79·9	88·3	17·6
Camden	0·556	0·262	47·1	100·0	100·0
Croydon	1·180	0·468	39·7	100·0	100·0
Ealing	6·446	3·876	60·1	38·5	34·6
Enfield	32·363	22·510	69·6	2·6	1·9
Greenwich	6·013	1·632	27·1	3·5	23·8
Hackney	2·902	0·854	29·4	100·0	100·0
Hammersmith and Fulham	0·210	0·130	61·9	100·0	100·0
Haringey	9·161	7·324	79·9	4·3	2·6
Harrow	9·869	7·156	72·5	22·3	7·8
Havering	2·170	0·640	29·5	6·3	25·5
Hillingdon	12·867	3·914	30·4	13·3	22·8
Hounslow	2·941	1·516	51·5	92·0	34·0
Islington	0·475	0·144	30·3	100·0	100·0
Kensington and Chelsea	1·038	0·138	13·3	16·9	100·0
Kingston upon Thames	5·632	0·662	11·8	7·2	95·2
Lambeth	0·896	0·494	55·1	100·0	100·0
Lewisham	2·838	1·940	68·4	58·2	22·7
Merton	7·687	5·058	65·8	8·0	4·9
Newham	2·868	0·686	23·9	23·1	57·7
Redbridge	1·645	0·806	49·0	8·1	80·1
Richmond upon Thames	0·743	0·372	50·1	100·0	100·0
Southwark	5·227	1·994	38·1	38·7	15·1
Sutton	2·641	1·556	58·9	29·3	24·7
Tower Hamlets	0·909	0·136	15·0	100·0	100·0

Authority	(a) Bid 1988-89 (£ million)	(b) Accepted expenditure 1988-89 (£ million)	(c) Accepted expenditure 1988-89 as percentage of bid	(d)(i) Minor works accepted expenditure as percentage of total net accepted expenditure 1987-88	(d)(ii) Minor works accepted expenditure as percentage of total net accepted expenditure 1988-89
Waltham Forest	1·442	0·988	68·5	25·1	88·1
Wandsworth	4·533	1·108	24·4	14·0	41·3
Westminster	5·280	0·420	8·0	43·3	100·0
Bolton	3·929	2·686	68·4	0·0	10·8
Bury	2·774	2·020	72·8	84·5	24·8
Manchester	10·353	6·290	60·8	24·0	22·2
Oldham	3·441	2·240	65·1	100·0	24·1
Rochdale	1·268	0·570	45·0	100·0	100·0
Salford	11·411	7·692	67·4	6·0	3·9
Stockport	0·687	0·360	52·4	103·9	111·1
Tameside	1·187	0·620	52·2	81·2	56·3
Trafford	2·689	1·284	47·8	5·5	45·5
Wigan	4·971	4·630	93·1	7·1	8·6
Knowsley	0·974	0·484	49·7	89·5	91·9
Liverpool	4·180	2·470	59·1	19·9	34·2
St. Helens	1·646	1·270	77·2	100·0	26·9
Sefton	1·779	0·342	19·2	100·0	94·2
Wirral	2·785	2·460	88·3	50·3	12·1
Barnsley	1·862	0·800	43·0	29·7	54·4
Doncaster	1·457	0·942	64·7	58·4	52·5
Rotherham	0·685	0·446	65·1	83·8	100·0
Sheffield	7·935	0·760	9·6	16·4	100·5
Gateshead	4·570	3·990	87·3	62·5	9·8
Newcastle upon Tyne	8·168	4·570	56·0	7·6	10·0
North Tyneside	1·262	0·760	60·2	100·0	100·0
South Tyneside	3·065	0·720	23·5	16·2	30·6
Sunderland	6·128	3·154	51·5	25·0	19·2
Birmingham	15·788	7·806	49·4	12·8	16·7
Coventry	5·534	3·884	70·2	7·7	6·5
Dudley	5·662	1·384	24·4	19·5	36·2
Sandwell	3·917	1·834	46·8	33·7	19·1
Solihull	1·394	1·020	73·2	27·3	14·7
Walsall	5·669	3·156	55·7	18·2	7·9
Wolverhampton	8·061	6·922	85·9	5·3	5·1
Bradford	4·510	3·372	74·8	4·6	21·4
Calderdale	0·546	0·420	76·9	100·0	100·0
Kirklees	3·317	2·638	79·5	18·1	13·7
Leeds	3·928	3·046	77·5	63·3	24·4
Wakefield	2·006	0·526	26·2	100·0	98·9
Avon	12·482	8·612	69·0	30·4	10·5
Bedfordshire	7·717	6·498	84·2	1·9	5·7
Berkshire	10·041	5·376	53·5	4·8	5·6
Buckinghamshire	2·441	1·414	57·9	0·8	4·2
Cambridgeshire	10·817	4·510	41·7	7·3	2·8
Cheshire	4·764	2·728	57·3	21·0	14·7
Cleveland	10·126	6·324	62·5	13·3	6·3
Cornwall	6·606	4·540	68·7	13·5	8·8
Cumbria	3·579	2·800	78·2	80·6	17·9
Derbyshire	4·836	1·366	28·2	76·6	77·8
Devon	11·932	7·002	58·7	12·6	8·6
Dorset	17·464	8·640	49·5	1·9	5·8
Durham	7·547	3·876	51·4	8·5	19·6
East Sussex	9·131	4·242	46·5	57·1	14·1
Essex	21·519	17·460	81·1	6·8	5·0
Gloucestershire	5·229	2·154	41·2	8·0	13·9
Hampshire	10·683	8·230	77·0	7·1	7·9
Hereford & Worcester	5·501	3·952	71·8	14·8	17·7
Hertfordshire	8·310	6·190	74·5	2·8	5·5
Humberside	10·989	9·036	82·2	12·7	6·6
Isle of Wight	3·449	1·454	42·2	62·3	69·1
Kent	28·174	18·510	65·7	12·9	5·4
Lancashire	22·146	9·366	42·3	10·2	14·4
Leicestershire	15·436	9·890	64·1	3·2	5·9
Lincolnshire	3·682	2·278	61·9	25·4	53·3
Norfolk	7·350	4·300	58·5	15·1	23·7
Northamptonshire	11·180	6·470	57·9	5·1	19·3
Northumberland	2·629	1·088	41·4	3·5	34·9
North Yorkshire	5·049	3·850	76·3	5·6	22·1
Nottinghamshire	5·563	4·074	73·2	18·1	17·2
Oxfordshire	7·013	1·426	20·3	28·2	35·0
Shropshire	6·797	3·500	51·5	3·9	5·7
Somerset	9·585	6·422	67·0	7·8	4·7

Authority	(a) Bid 1988-89 (£ million)	(b) Accepted expenditure 1988-89 (£ million)	(c) Accepted expenditure 1988-89 as percentage of bid	(d)(i) Minor works accepted expenditure as percentage of total net accepted expenditure 1987-88	(d)(ii) Minor works accepted expenditure as percentage of total net accepted expenditure 1988-89
Staffordshire	9·909	5·644	57·0	14·1	17·7
Suffolk	4·572	3·506	76·7	33·5	17·5
Surrey	9·642	4·472	46·4	6·5	13·4
Warwickshire	4·918	3·492	71·0	8·6	8·6
West Sussex	7·429	5·460	73·5	7·3	8·2
Wiltshire	3·390	0·722	21·3	3·5	55·4

Note: Transport Supplementary Grant is paid at the rate of 50 per cent. of accepted expenditure.

EC (Passenger Transport Subsidy)

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the levels of central Government subsidy to public passenger transport in the European Community.

Mr. David Mitchell: I refer the hon. Member to the information on railway subsidies contained in the eighth Commission report on the transposed annual accounts of railway undertakings for 1984 (COM(87)311 final), a copy of which is in the Library. I have no comparable information about subsidies to other forms of passenger transport in the European Community.

Level Crossings

Mr. Janman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to the location of automatic half-barrier level crossings in the United Kingdom, which are situated in residential commuter areas, and which are adjacent to a commuter line railway station where no pedestrian footbridge is provided over the road.

Mr. David Mitchell: The information is not available in the form requested. I wrote to my hon. Friend on 19 January giving examples of automatic half-barrier level crossings which are on main routes and used by children.

Mr. Janman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the expected average and peak pedestrian, including children, and vehicle usage rates for the proposed automatic half-barrier level crossing to be installed on Princess Margaret road, adjacent to East Tilbury station in Thurrock.

Mr. David Mitchell: A census taken over a period of nine days in February last year showed that the peak pedestrian, child and vehicles usage at the crossing in a period of 15 minutes did not exceed 84, 46 and 176 respectively. The average usage during any period of 15 minutes between 0600 and 2400 on the same day was 16, 4 and 67.

I wrote to my hon. Friend on 19 January enclosing an extract from the Department's safety requirements for automatic half-barriers (AHB). He will be aware from this that the number of vehicles using the crossing is not a condition for suitability which has to be satisfied for the selection of AHB.

Mr. Janman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the average and peak rates of pedestrian usage and vehicle usage per hour over automatic half-barrier level crossings in the United Kingdom; and how many of the 330 in existence are within 10 per cent. of the highest usage.

Mr. David Mitchell: The information is not currently available.

Drink-Driving Accidents

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are, for each year since 1975, the figures for deaths caused by drink and driving accidents; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Deaths in road accidents where a driver or rider had a blood-alcohol count in excess of 80 mg of alcohol per 100 ml of blood are given in the table.

Fatalities in road accidents where a driver or rider had a blood-alcohol level in excess of 80 mg per 100 ml of blood: Great Britain 1979 to 1985

	Number
1979	1,550
1980	1,400
1981	1,350
1982	1,450
1983	1,050
1984	1,100
1985	1,000

There has been a welcome downward trend. Drinking and driving remains one of our most serious road safety problems.

Data are not collected on the causes of road accidents.

Road Haulage (Safety)

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what steps he will take against haulage companies registering vehicle fleets in Europe in order to avoid United Kingdom regulations on side guards and splash spray devices;

(2) what estimates are available to him of the percentage of United Kingdom haulage companies and other vehicle fleet owners registering fleets in Europe to avoid United Kingdom transport safety regulations.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We do not have information about the motives of haulage companies or other vehicle fleet owners who choose to register vehicles abroad.

Lyndhurst (Bypass)

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from residents of

Lyndhurst in support of the construction of the bypass proposed by Hampshire county council; and, if so, how many of these residents have signified their support.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We have received a petition containing 1,320 signatures and one other representation from residents of Lyndhurst in support of Hampshire county council's proposals for a bypass around Lyndhurst.

British Rail

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish figures for the proportion of total man-hours worked on British Rail track *(a)* between 7 am and 7 pm *(b)* between 7 pm and 7 am *(c)* on weekdays and *(d)* on weekends in each of the last eight years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The Department does not hold such information. The hon. Member should apply to the British Railways Board direct.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 2 February 1988

TRANSPORT

Roadworks (Basildon)

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what road work plans and improvements are due to be carried out on the A127 and A13 within the Basildon constituency over the next two years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A new local road bridge is under construction over the A127 near the Fortune of War roundabout. It will facilitate the removal of this roundabout and junction. Draft orders authorising the closure of the existing side roads should be published this spring. Other improvements including the scope for widening the A127 to dual three-lane are still under consideration.

The A13 through Basildon is not a national road. Its improvement is the responsibility of Essex county council.

Motor Insurance

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any information on plans to standardise motor insurance cover within the EEC; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Community's effort has been directed to the harmonisation of compulsory requirements that protect the interests of accident victims. We introduced regulations last December complying with directive 84/5/EEC to secure compulsory insurance liability for damage to property. We are not aware of other EC plans to standardise cover. Our view is that it is for individual drivers to decide what cover they require outside compulsory insurance and for insurers to decide what they are prepared to insure.

M3-M27 Link

Mr. Ward: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he is yet in a position to announce a date when he expects contracts to be let for the completion of the M3/M27 link.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We hope to let a contract for the southern section of the M3 extension later this year. Timing of the contract for the northern section depends on the outcome of the current public inquiry.

Railways (Modernisation)

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the progress of railway modernisation since the passage of the Transport Act 1962.

Mr. David Mitchell: Since the British Railways Board was set up in 1963 it has invested over £11·5 billion in today's prices, in renewal and replacement of the railway. It has now embarked on its biggest renewal programme since the modernisation programme in the 1950s and 1960s.

Road Safety

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the most recent evidence of the effect on accident levels on roads where speed retarders, including road humps, have been installed.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Trials conducted by the Transport and Road Research Laboratory show that speed control humps can significantly reduce injury accidents. New regulations introduced in December 1986 gave increased discretion to local highway authorities as to installation of humps. The Department does not maintain central records of their installation and use.

I am arranging for relevant leaflets issued by the Department to be placed in the Library of the House.

M25 (Service Area)

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has yet decided to proceed with the proposal for a motorway service area on M25 at Iver, Buckinghamshire.

Mr. Channon: I have decided to proceed with our proposal for a service area at Iver. On the information before me I have concluded that a service area here will be well placed to serve needs on a heavily trafficked sector of M25, and that the site proposed is appropriate for that purpose. Preparations and consultations are now being put in hand with a view to application in the late spring for planning clearance and authority to acquire the land.

Motor Cyclists

Mr. Holt: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to publish the results of research into the effect on motor cycling of the Transport Act 1981 and on the effectiveness of a one-day training course for learner motor cyclists; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Tomorrow we will be publishing two reports: TRRL research report RR106 — "The Effect on Motorcycling of the 1981 Transport Act" and TRRL contractors report CR56—"An Evaluation of the Effectiveness of a One-Day Training Programme for Learner Motorcyclists". Copies will be placed in the Library.

We shall also be announcing the Government's plans for improving motor cycling safety, in the light of these reports and of the consultation exercise in 1986. The proposals should make a significant reduction in the appalling accident rate of motor cylists, particularly amongst the young and inexperienced riders. Our proposals are:

(a) Replace the present part 1 off-road test of machine handling skills with a compulsory one-day training course, which includes road survival skills, for all new riders of motor cycles and mopeds. Successful completion of the course will be a prerequisite to the issue of provisional motor cycle and moped licences.

(b) At present the on-road (part 2) L test is conducted by a driving examiner following the candidate on foot. In future the driving examiner will accompany the candidate on another vehicle which will permit a more thorough testing in traffic conditions, making it comparable to the test for learner car drivers.

(c) Learner riders will be prohibited from carrying pillion passengers.

(d) A licence category for motor cycles in excess of 400cc will be introduced. Progress to the larger machines will be dependent on a rider having two year's riding experience on a full licence.

(e) New holders of full driving licences will no longer have automatic entitlement to ride a moped or provisional entitlement to ride a learner motor cycle.

We shall consult further on the value of reducing the validity of the provisional motorcycle licence from two years to one. If the L test were not taken within that year, a new licence could not be applied for till a year later.

A copy of the full proposals will be placed in the Library of the House.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Zinoviev Letter

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Attorney-General what information is available to the Lord Chancellor's Department on the current location of the original intercept of the Zinoviev letter of 15 September 1924; what representations he has received regarding its absence from Public Record Office files; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The Lord Chancellor's Department has no information about the location of any document containing the text of the Zinoviev letter as it originally came into the possession of the British Government. A copy of the text is available for public inspection in the Public Record Office. I am not aware of any representations either to myself or to the Lord Chancellor about the absence of the original letter from the Public Record Office.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Greenham Common (Police Numbers)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Thames Valley as to why police officers on duty outside Greenham Common during the dispersal of a cruise missile convoy on the night of 14-15 January did not all display their numbers, and as to why Officer No. 372 at the Swan roundabout had his number covered in a black substance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the chief constable of Thames Valley police that it is force policy that uniformed officers of constable and sergeant rank should display identification numbers at all times. Supervising officers are careful to ensure that the requirement is complied with.

Any specific complaint about the alleged failure of an officer to display an identification number should be pursued with the chief constable. I understand that police constable 372 was not on duty on the night of 14-15 January.

Prison Governors Association

Mr. Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on progress towards recognising the Prison Governors Association.

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will accord official recognition to the Prison Governors Association.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are considering the new association's request for recognition in the light of, among other things, the views of other interested parties. Comments from one body are still awaited, but they are expected very shortly, and we shall take a decision as soon as possible.

Government Data Network

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how the police will obtain access to data available via the Government data network.

Mr. Hurd: The proposed Government data network, if implemented, would afford Government Departments and other authorised agencies a secure and cost-effective facility for transmitting data to other locations within the same organisation or, where authorised, to other users of the network. There will be safeguards to prevent unauthorised access by one user to the data of other users.

I am considering whether the network would be suitable for use by the police national computer (PNC) which my Department operates on behalf of police forces. Should it be suitable, the police service would have access only to police data and PNC users would be subject to the same safeguards against unauthorised access as apply to all other users.

Leicestershire (Police Strength)

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from the chief constable of Leicestershire concerning a request for additional officers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last received an application by the Leicestershire police authority for an increase in the authorised police establishment of the Leicestershire constabulary; what was the request; and what was his response thereto.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Following a review of the force by the chief constable, the Leicestershire police authority wrote on 15 January seeking approval for an increase in the force establishment of 45 posts in 1988-89, 33 posts in 1989-90 and 13 posts in 1990-91.

The police authority has been informed that its application will be considered, in the light of advice from Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary, along with applications which have been received from other authorities for increases in establishment in 1988-89.

Community Radio

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will outline the procedures that will have to be followed by anyone seeking to apply for a licence to run a community radio station.

Mr. Renton: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to a question from the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) on 26 January at column *132*.

Immigration (Heathrow)

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many immigration officers were on duty and interviewing entrants to the United Kingdom at

terminal 4 Heathrow airport between 9 am and 10 am on Monday 11 January; and what was the estimated average waiting time for entrants prior to interview.

Mr. Renton: Fourteen immigration officers were on duty on the inward immigration control at Heathrow terminal 4 between 0900 and 1000 on 11 January. Some passengers had to wait up to 45 minutes for examination, which is exceptional for the time of year. A major contributory factor was the particularly heavy concentration of flights that morning, a number of which had been delayed by adverse weather conditions.

Crime Statistics

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many (*a*) burglaries, and (*b*) street attacks there were in 1985 and 1986; what is the estimated figure for 1987; and if he will make a statement about current proposals to deal with these crimes.

Mr. John Patten: Numbers of offences of burglary and robbery recorded by the police in 1985, 1986, and the first three quarters of 1987 were published in a "Home Office Statistical Bulletin" issue number 38/87 in December 1987, copies of which are in the Library. Figures for the whole of 1987 are not yet available.

We shall continue to encourage and support a co-ordinated approach to crime prevention at national and local level disseminating advice on how to reduce opportunities for these and other crimes to occur. We shall also continue to make provision for a strong and efficient police service.

DEFENCE

Rainfall Levels

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when rainfall figures were available between 2 and 7 May 1986.

Mr. Sainsbury: A limited amount of raw raingauge data reaches the Meteorological Office within a few hours of the rain falling, but this represents only some 3 per cent. of the total network coverage providing records. The first maps of estimated surface rainfall for the period in question, based on radar data, were available during May 1986. Maps of daily rainfall, based on partly quality controlled data from some 4,000 sites equipped with raingauges, began to be supplied by the Meteorological Office in late July 1986.

ENVIRONMENT

Job Creation (Docklands)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of jobs created in the London Docklands development corporation area since 1981 has gone to those resident in the docklands boroughs before 1981.

Mr. Trippier: No up-to-date information is available. A survey commissioned by LDDC in 1985 showed that about 30 per cent. of jobs in firms attracted to the corporation's area up to that date were taken by persons who were residents of the three docklands boroughs. A new survey was conducted in 1987 and its results will be published soon.

Smoke Detectors

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will exempt expenditure by local authorities on the installation of smoke detectors in council property from grant penalty under the rate support grant provisions.

Mr. Chope: No.

Energy Conservation

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has made for altering the building regulations in relation to the conservation of energy in domestic, commercial and industrial buildings; when he published his proposals; and when he intends to bring his proposed changes to the House.

Mr. Trippier: A consultation letter on stage 2 of the review of the building regulations was issued on 15 December 1986. This included a number of general proposals relating to the form of the legal requirements in part L (conservation of fuel and power) and to guidance which might be given on ways of meeting those requirements. More detailed proposals are now being developed in the light of comments received, and I intend to issue a further consultation document on part L later this year. I hope that the necessary amendments to this part of the regulations can be laid before Parliament by the end of the year.

Gipsies

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many local authorities in England are equipped for gipsies, under the terms of the Caravan Sites Act 1968; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Roe: All grant-aided local authority gipsy sites in England are provided with basic facilities as recommended in annex A to Department of the Environment circular 11/79 and conform with the standards laid down in the Department's gipsy sites design guide.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many local authorities in England have already complied with the sections of the Caravan Sites Act 1968 relating to gipsies and have subsequently been granted the status of designated areas under the Act, or are in the process of seeking such designation.

Mrs. Roe: A total of 22 London boroughs, 10 former county boroughs, five entire counties and 58 individual districts have been designated under the 1968 Act. These figures take account of one designation order which has been made but will not come into force until February. Eight applications for designation are at present before my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which county councils in England have yet to establish permanent caravan sites for gipsies under the terms of the Caravan Sites Act 1968.

Mrs. Roe: All county councils in England except the Isle of Wight have established at least one permanent caravan site for gipsies.

Water (Nitrate Levels)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his answer of 20 January, *Official Report*, column *742*, he will specify the areas in which derogations have been given in relation to nitrate levels in public water supplies.

Mr. Moynihan: The areas are specified in the table:

NITRATE DEROGATIONS

Water authority area and area of supply

ANGLIAN

Cambridge Water Co.

Parts of Huntingdon and South Cambridgeshire Districts

Anglian Water Authority

Dersingham and Snettisham
Docking
Heacham and Hunstanton
Moulton and Kennet
Wisbech
Habough—part of Lincolnshire
Aswarby—Saltersford—part of Lincolnshire
Scunthorpe
Binbrook—part of Lincolnshire
Bully Hill—Barnoldby—part of Lincolnshire
Bully Hill—Otby—part of Lincolnshire
Clay Hill—Drove Lane, Sleaford
Sleaford
Potterhanworth—part of Lincolnshire
Saltersford
Wancham Bridge—Saltersford
Bucklesham—part of Ipswich
Ely and Littleport
Habrough—Covenham, part of Cleethorpes
Bowthorpe, part of Norwich
Heigham—Thorpe part of Norwich
Otby
Otby—Waddingham

SEVERN-TRENT

Severn-Trent Water Authority

Parts of Leamington, Kenilworth, Warwick and Stratford DC
Parts of Rutland DC
Parts of South Derbyshire DC
Parts of Newark and Ashfield DC
Part of Stourbridge, Dudley MBC (Coalbournbrook source)
Part of Wychavon DC area
Part of Stourbridge, Dudley MBC (Millmeadow source)
Parts of Wychavon DC
Malvern Hills and Wyre Forest DC
Parts of Wrekin DC (Lilleshall source)
Parts of Worksop, Bassetlaw DC
Parts of Worksop and Mansfield Woodhouse
Part of South Shropshire DC
Part of Wrekin DC (Puleston Bridge source)
Parts of Bridgnorth and Wrekin DC (Shifnal source)
Bromley Lane area of Dudley MBC
Parts of Newark DC (Farnsfield source)
Parts of Nottingham City Council area primarily Hucknall

SOUTH STAFFS WATERWORKS COMPANY

Parts of Lichfield DC Sutton Coldfield area, North Warwickshire CC and Walsale Metropolitan area
Parts of Kingswinford, Pensnett and Brierley Hill Dudley Metropolitan area
Parts of Lichfield and Whittington, Lichfield DC

South West

St. Marys Island

THAMES

Lee Valley Water Co.

Part of Luton

YORKSHIRE

Area north east of Ripon North Yorkshire

PSA (Cost Limit)

Mr. Patnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has plans to increase the Property Services Agency's civil running cost limit during the current financial year.

Mr. Chope: Subject to the approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate, the PSA's civil running cost limit on Class XX Vote 19 will be increased by £4·976 million from £141·772 million to £146·748 million, due to an underprovision for work undertaken by the agency's directly employed industrial labour force. This is offset by a reduction in non-running cost expenditure within the cash limit, which remains unchanged.

Local Government Reform

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if the undertakings given at columns 1109-1110 in the *Official Report* of the Standing Committee on the Local Government Bill 1985 by the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary, the hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young), on rent levels, management, maintenance and access by Londoners in respect of the Greater London council's seaside and country homes, still apply.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 28 January 1988]:* The proposed terms for disposal will enable the new landlord to set reasonable levels of rent and of management and maintenance expenditure. The only long-term undertaking given concerned access by Londoners. New lettings will continue to be made exclusively to elderly Londoners by means of reserved nomination rights exercised through the London area mobility scheme.

Property Services Agency

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many cases of fraud, corruption or theft have been reported in the Property Services Agency in respect of consultant staff who have been, or are, working in district works offices; what action his Department has taken; and whether any cases of fraud, corruption or theft involving consultant staff have been reported to the police.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 29 January 1988]:* None. One case of procedural irregularity resulted in the resignation of a consultant's employee, but there was no obvious evidence of fraud, theft or corruption involved.

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to release the report by Deloitte Haskins and Sells on the operation of the Property Services Agency.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 29 January 1988]:* My right hon. Friend has no plans at present to do so.

ENERGY

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has received on the statement

of 19 January by the European Economic Community Environment Commissioner to the European Parliament on the transnuclear waste transport cover-up and bribery incident in the European Economic Community, particularly in terms of its implications for the implementation of EURATOM safety and safeguard arrangements within the United Kingdom.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I am placing a copy of the 19 January statement by Commissioner Stanley Clinton Davis in the Library of the House. On 19 January Commissioner Mosar also told the European Parliament that he had no evidence as yet of diversion of fissile material from Mol for unlawful use. The International Atomic Energy Agency has stated it was satisfied that there had been no unauthorised diversion of nuclear material in significant quantities. The deputy director general of the IAEA has also said he was confident that Euratom's standards were the highest possible.

Plutonium

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if, pursuant to his reply of 15 January, *Official Report*, column *421*, he will set out the reasons why the publication of the yearly plutonium figures could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The information is not available in this form for previous years and could be produced only at disproportionate cost.

Central Electricity Generating Board

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what are the latest financial targets for the Central Electricity Generating Board.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The latest financial target agreed for the Central Electricity Generating Board is to earn a return on average net assets on a current cost accounting basis of 3·75 per cent. in 1988-89 and 4·75 per cent. in 1989-90.

Cash Limits

Mr. Maples: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he has any changes to announce to his Department's cash limits and running cost limit for 1987-88.

Mr. Parkinson: The cash limit for class VI, vote 2, has been reduced by £1 million to £250·272 to offset expenditure in connection with the privatisation of the electricity supply industry in England and Wales. Provision for this new expenditure was voted in a Winter Supplement Estimate for class VI, vote 7.

In addition, the cash limit for class VI, vote 3, has been reduced by £0·05 million to £22·823 million. This change arises from the transfer of £0·05 million to the Department of Employment (class VII, vote 4) as a special contribution towards increased costs in 1987-88 associated with the recruitment and staffing of the Health and Safety Executive's Nuclear Installations Inspectorate. My Department's running cost limit has also been reduced by a similar amount to £26·301 million.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Educational Maintenance Awards

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what would be the cost, at 1986-87 prices, of introducing educational maintenance awards for 16 and 17-year-olds in full-time education in schools and colleges at *(a)* the same rates as supplementary benefit for young people and *(b)* the same rates as training allowances paid to 16 and 17-year-olds on YTS.

Mr. Dunn: After deducting child benefit and existing maintenance payments from LEAs, the annual cost of paying maintenance allowances to all 16 and 17-year-olds currently in full-time education in schools and colleges is estimated to be as follows:

	£ million
(a) If the allowances are paid at the same rate as supplementary benefit	300
(b) If the allowances are paid at the same rate as YTS allowances	650

Notes:

1. The figure at *(a)* is based on the 1986-87 supplementary benefit level of £18·40 for 16 and 17-year-olds living at home with their parents, less child benefit at the 1986-87 rate of £7·10 per week. If child benefit is not deducted the figure would increase by about £200 million to £500 million.
2. The figure for *(b)* is based on the 1986-87 YTS allowances of £27·30 per week for 16-year-olds and £35 per week for 17-year-olds, less child benefit at the 1986-87 rate of £7·10 per week. If child benefit is not deducted the figure would increase by about £200 million to £850 million.
3. Both figures assume no change in the estimated 1985-86 level of local authority spending on maintenance payments for 16 and 17-year-olds, which has been converted to 1986-87 prices for the present purpose.

Education Reform

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many secondary schools in Northumberland have expressed an interest to his Department in the suggestion that they will be able to opt out of local government control.

Mr. Dunn: All individual schools which have approached the Department have done so on the basis that their interest will be treated in confidence.

Nursery Education

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many nursery school places are currently available in Northumberland.

Mr. Dunn: Information on the total number of places available in nursery schools is not collected centrally. The number of pupils attending maintained nursery schools in Northumberland in January 1987 was 44 full-time and 90 part-time. In addition, 89 full-time and 1,593 part-time pupils attended nursery classes in primary schools in the authority.

Further Education Colleges (London)

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to further education colleges of the Inner London education

authority which provide a specialist service for Greater London, the trade, profession or course with which they are associated, and the number of day and evening pupils attending each one.

Mr. Jackson: In common with colleges of further education in other parts of the country, many colleges maintained by the ILEA provide courses meeting the needs of students and employers from an area rather wider than that of the local education authority. Detailed information on all such courses could be supplied only at disproportionate cost.

Education Statistics

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to the numbers of (i) primary and nursery pupils, (ii) secondary school pupils, (iii) special school pupils, (iv) persons in attendance at day colleges, and (v) persons in attendance at evening classes, which are the responsibility of the Inner London education authority, for each local authority in the Inner London education authority area.

Mr. Dunn: Information for areas within authorities is not collected centrally. ILEA publishes statistics by division within the authority.

WALES

Valleys Development Initiative

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether his proposed valleys development initiative, and the sums required for that initiative, will be additional to the levels of expenditure announced in Cm. 288—I and II.

Mr. Peter Walker: The planned levels of expenditure indicated in "The Government's Expenditure Plans for 1988-89 to 1990-91" (Cm. 288 — I and II) include provision for my proposals to introduce a programme to revitalise the south Wales valleys. The planned level of expenditure in years beyond 1988-89 is subject to review in the context of future public expenditure rounds.

Gipsies

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales which county councils have yet to establish permanent caravan sites for gipsies under the terms of the Caravan Sites Act 1968.

Mr. Grist: Only West Glamorgan county council has not yet established a permanent caravan site for gipsies, and it is in the process of providing one at Llansamlet, Swansea.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales which local authorities in Wales have already complied with the sections of the Caravan Sites Act 1968 relating to gipsies and have been granted the status of designated areas under the Act, or are in the process of seeking designation.

Mr. Grist: No area in Wales has been designated. Applications for designation have been made in respect of Aberconwy, Arfon, Dinefwr, Llanelli, Montgomery, Preseli and Ynys Môn districts.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales which local authorities in Wales are equipped for gipsies under the terms of the Caravan Sites Act 1968; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: All counties in Wales except West Glamorgan have at least one official site. All local authority gipsy sites in Wales are provided with basic facilities as recommended in annex A to Welsh Office circular 11/79 and conform with the standards laid down in the Welsh Office gipsy sites design guide.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Bophuthatswana Tuberculosis Association

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the total cost to the small projects scheme of contributions made to the Bophuthatswana Tuberculosis Association; and for what purpose the funds have been used.

Mr. Chris Patten: An allocation of £7,000 has been approved for the association, which is a non-governmental organisation, for the provision of transport and audio-visual equipment. This will enable the association's health educationist to give talks and demonstrations within Bophuthatswana on tuberculosis and other health-related subjects. £6,119 has been spent so far.

THE ARTS

Office of Arts and Libraries

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he has any changes to announce in the running cost limit of the Office of Arts and Libraries and in the cash limits of the Votes for which he has responsibility.

Mr. Luce: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimates, the cash limits for the following votes will be increased by the amounts indicated:

Vote	*Current cash limit* £	*Increase* £	*Revised cash limit* £
Class XII Vote 10	17,858,000	100,000	17,958,000
Class XIII Vote 10	176,126,000	8,169,000	184,295,000
Class XIII Vote 12	1,267,000	60,000	1,327,000

Of these increases, £7,429,000 will be charged to the Reserve, and £900,000 will be offset by a cash limit reduction on class XVII, vote 5. There will therefore be no increase in the planned total of public expenditure.

The additions sought are:

£100,000 on class XII, vote 10, to meet the costs of repairing storm damage to the roof of the British museum (natural history);

£900,000 on class XII, vote 10, to facilitate the purchase of the Sherman theatre, Cardiff, by the Welsh Arts Council;

£7,329,000 on class XIII, vote 10, for payment to Inland Revenue in respect of tax forgone on three major works of art accepted by the nation in lieu of tax;

£60,000 on class XIII, vote 12, to meet the additional costs of the Office of Arts and Libraries in respect of the British Library St. Pancras team. This increase is offset by a corresponding saving on the arts marketing scheme (vote 10). The Office of Arts and Libraries running costs limit will increase by £25,000, from £1,268,000 to £1,293,000.

CIVIL SERVICE

Equal Opportunities

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what plans he has to introduce training on equal opportunities for women into the top management course.

Mr. Luce: The top management programme includes a number of sessions on social change and on management issues. In these sessions questions of equal opportunity are often discussed. It is planned to continue to include these sessions in future programmes.

Cash Limits

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if there are any proposals to change the 1987-88 cash limit for the office of the Minister for the Civil Service.

Mr. Luce: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate, the cash limit for the Office of the Minister for the Civil Service (class XX, vote 1) will be increased by £1,060,000 from £33,603,000 to £34,663,000. The increase is required to disburse to Civil Service welfare organisations some of the savings to the Exchequer arising from the underpayment of public service pensions as a result of the miscalculation of retail prices index increases; and to clear outstanding debit balances in respect of advance payments made to the Property Services Agency (PSA) since 1983-84. The decision to make additional payments to suitable charities was announced to the House of Commons by my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General on 18 December 1987. Since the payments will be funded from the Reserve, they will not increase the planned total of public expenditure. The PSA payments were made in previous years and there is no call on the Reserve.

PRIME MINISTER

Thamesmead

Q15. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Prime Minister whether she has any plans to make an official visit to Thamesmead.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Afghanistan

Q45. **Mr. Ron Brown:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will meet Dr. Najib, President of Afghanistan, to discuss his Government's policies for the promotion of peace and reconciliation in that country; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: No.

Menwith Hill

Q49. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Prime Minister when she next intends to pay an official visit to Menwith Hill.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

European Community (Budgetary Control)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a further statement on the position she will take at the European Council meeting on additional resources for the EEC in the light of the recent proposals for budgetary control submitted to the Council by the EEC Commission.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing to add to the statement I made on Tuesday 8 December, at columns 167-8, on the outcome of the Copenhagen European Council.

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 2 February.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 2 February.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 2 February.

Mr. Yeo: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 2 February.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 2 February.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 2 February.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others, including one with Chancellor Kohl. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Building Societies Act 1986

Mr. Cash: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he has completed the review of schedule 8 to the Building Societies Act 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: The review of schedule 8 to the Building Societies Act 1986, which I announced on 2 October last, had two purposes. The first was to examine whether schedule 8 could be recast so that it proscribed particular activities within certain broadly specified powers instead of banning everything except narrowly specified powers. We believe that this can be done and I shall be bringing the necessary order before the House in due course.

The review also considered societies' request, through the Building Societies Association, for a substantial extension of their powers. The Government recognise that the gradual step-by-step extension of powers previously envisaged would not be appropriate. Societies need to know the broad scope of their powers for some years ahead in order to make sensible long-term commercial plans. Different societies will want to exercise different powers, and each individual society will probably want to diversify into only a small number of new areas. The Government therefore propose a wide-ranging extension of powers, while ensuring through supervision of business plans by the Building Societies Commission within overall limits on non-traditional assets that individual societies exploit their new powers at a prudent pace.

The mainstream business of societies is, and must remain, that of raising funds from the public for lending on house purchase. But we believe that it is right that societies should be allowed to undertake activities which either complement their mainstream business or which will enable them to compete more effectively by providing the wider range of financial services which customers expect of financial institutions. Societies will, as at present,

continue to provide services primarily to the personal sector rather than to companies. But I have decided that societies should also be allowed to:

(a) take an equity stake in both life and general insurance companies;

(b) undertake fund management including management of unit trusts generally (rather than just for the provision of pensions, as at present);

(c) take an equity stake in stockbrokers;

(d) offer a wider range of banking and housing-related services than hitherto.

There will be some limitations on these new powers. It would not be appropriate for societies to become involved as stockbrokers in market-making nor would it be desirable for societies to become fully exposed to the risks inherent in general insurance business. The draft orders which I will bring before the House in due course will set out the proposed restrictions to these powers.

Many of these new activities are supervised under either the Insurance Companies Act 1982 or the Financial Services Act 1986. These arrangements will continue and appropriate arrangements to co-ordinate supervision will also be put in place.

I also propose two other changes under the Act.

First, societies have represented that the limit on unsecured lending to individuals, currently £5,000, is too low. This limit covers personal loans for such items as furnishings as well as car loans and credit card limits. The limit will be increased to £10,000. This will give societies greater scope to compete for retail customers. The Building Societies Commission will ensure that societies continue to have adequate credit assessment and exposure monitoring systems.

The second change concerns asset limits. As societies develop into new activities already permitted under the Act, plus those opened up following this review, they will wish gradually to increase the proportion of their assets which are not residential mortgages. I propose therefore to bring forward an order shortly which will provide for a progressive increase in the limits on non-traditional assets. This will enable societies to plan for expansion into non-traditional activities at a measured pace. The order will provide for an increase in the class 2 and 3 limits to 17½ per cent. and 7½ per cent. respectively in January 1990, to 20 per cent. and 10 per cent. respectively in January 1991 and a further increase to the maximum extent possible within the primary legislation—25 per cent. and 15 per cent. respectively—in January 1993.

The orders necessary to implement these changes will take time to prepare, in consultation with the Building Societies Association. I hope to be able to lay the draft orders before the House before Easter. I recognise that some societies are anxious that they should be able to adopt their new powers in their spring AGMs. We will proceed with all the speed that we can and provide societies with as much information as possible as drafting proceeds. But early adoption may not be possible. It will be important to ensure that the complex secondary legislation is carefully and correctly drafted.

The proposals are a substantial step forward in building society development. They will give societies the freedom to develop and compete across a wide range of financial services business.

Running Costs Limit

Mr. Charles Wardle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he has any plan to change the 1987-88 running costs limit for the Government Actuary's Department.

Mr. Brooke: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate, the departmental running costs limit for the Government Actuary's Department will be increased by £26,000 from £2,021,000 to £2,047,000 to provide for new work on behalf of the Department of Trade and Industry. There is no change in the cash limit, and no claim on the Reserve. This increase will be offset by a reduction in the running costs of the Department of Trade and Industry.

Mr. Cran: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if there will be any changes to the 1987-88 running costs limit for Her Majesty's Treasury.

Mr. Brooke: Yes. Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate, the 1987-88 running costs limit for Her Majesty's Treasury will be decreased by £200,000, from £66,364,000 to £66,164,000. This decrease applies to expenditure by the central computer and telecommunications agency under class XIX, vote 13. It is mainly due to staff shortages, partly offset by higher pay costs; and to savings in equipment maintenance, stemming largely from delays in the formal acceptance of the agency's office automation system.

Cash Limits

Mr. Key: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he is proposing any further change to the Central Office of Information's cash limit for 1987-88.

Mr. Brooke: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate, the cash limit for class XIX, vote 1, will be increased by £9,468,000 from £141,032,000 to £150,500,000. The increase will be offset by reimbursements by the clients of the Central Office of Information and will not therefore add to the planning total of public expenditure. There will be a decrease of £1,164,000 in the Central Office of Information running costs, from £20,164,000 to £19,000,000, following a reduction in staff numbers.

Women (Equal Opportunities)

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many of his Department's management training courses include sessions on equal opportunities for women; and what proportion of managers at grade 6 level and above working outside headquarters have received equal training on equal opportunities for women.

Mr. Brooke: All my Department's management training courses include sessions on equal opportunities —for all groups, not just for women. None of the 12 staff at grade 6 and above working outside London has received training solely dedicated to equal opportunities for women.

Customs Officers (Heathrow)

Mr. Soley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many customs officers were on duty in the goods to be declared channel at terminal 4 Heathrow airport on

Monday 11 January between 9 am and 10 am; and what was the estimated waiting time for passengers prior to interview.

Mr. Lilley: Five customs officers were on duty in the red channel.

It is not possible to estimate the waiting time but Customs' records show that passenger traffic at that time was well in excess of the normal average throughput.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Hong Kong Civil Service

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the request from the unions concerned for the establishment of an independent committee of inquiry into pay in the Hong Kong Civil Service.

Mr. Eggar: A request has been made by the staff side of the Senior Civil Service Council that an independent committee of inquiry be set up to consider a pay level survey carried out in 1986. The Governor has declined the request as no specific proposals arising from the survey have been made by the Hong Kong Government. Any such proposals would be the subject of consultation in the Council.

Ms. Rocio Reyes

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made to the Chilean Government concerning the arrest and detention of Rocio Reyes, a former United Kingdom resident, and reports from Amnesty International of threats to Ms. Reyes.

Mr. Eggar: Senorita Reyes was released without charge on 12 September 1987 after nine days in detention. Her Majesty's embassy in Santiago has remained in touch with her. Neither the embassy nor, I understand, Amnesty International is aware of threats made against Senorita Reyes since her release.

Chilean Exiles

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has made any reassessment of the ability of Chilean exiles in the United Kingdom to return home safely in the light of the detention of Luis Tricot and Rocio Reyes and the subsequent alleged torture of Señor Tricot.

Mr. Eggar: I am aware of the practical difficulties which Chilean exiles may face on return from the United Kingdom to their own country. Her Majesty's ambassador remains in touch with returnees, and I understand that this is welcomed. But, as far as I am aware, returnees are not being singled out for harassment. The embassy has made representations on behalf of the Irish Government about Señor Tricot's case.

Aboriginal Australians

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the Government of Australia on *(a)* the alleged violations of the human rights of aboriginal Australians and *(b)* the denial of land rights for aboriginal Australians; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: No.

Cash Limits

Sir Antony Buck: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he proposes to make any changes to the Foreign and Commonwealth cash limits for 1987-88.

Mr. Eggar: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate, the cash limit for class II, vote 4 (British Council), will be increased by £1,066,000 from £55,658,000 to £56,724,000 to take account of unavoidable increased costs overseas. The increase will be charged to the Reserve.

The cash limit for class II, vote 1 (Overseas Representation), will be decreased by £5 million from £427,247,000 to £422,247,000 due to reductions in assumed costs overseas. This will include a reduction in the running costs limit of £1,500,000 from £396,783,000 to £395,283,000. The cash limit for class II, vote 3 (BBC: External Broadcasting and Monitoring), will be reduced by £4,347,000 from £116,500,000 to £112,153,000 to take account of the over-issue of the grant-in-aid in the previous financial year.

Irish Republic (Young Persons)

Mr. Kilfedder: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will seek to obtain from the Irish Republic an estimate of the number of young people between the ages of 18 and 30 years who are citizens of the Republic and who have come to live in Great Britain in the last five years; and if he will ask the Government of the Irish Republic to make a contribution towards their welfare and accommodation if they are unemployed or homeless.

Mr. Portillo: I have been asked to reply.

No. Given the freedom of movement between the two countries, neither the Irish nor the United Kingdom Government are in a position to give accurate estimates. Social assistance benefits are available to all persons in need who are lawfully present in Great Britain, without discrimination on grounds of nationality. The Republic of Ireland makes its social assistance benefits available to United Kingdom nationals on the same terms. A system of cross-accounting would not be practical or appropriate in this context.

EMPLOYMENT

Restart

15. **Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how the success rate of the restart programme is measured.

Mr. Lee: The main aim of the restart programme is to contact all long-term unemployed people and to offer them positive help back to work. The success of the programme is measured principally by reference to the number of long-term unemployed people contacted, the number interviewed, and the percentage of those interviewed who are offered positive help.

So far in 1987-88 up to the end of November, some 1·8 million people have been contacted. About 1·5 million have been interviewed and 88 per cent. of those were offered positive help.

Construction Industry (Skill Shortages)

17. **Mr. Ingram:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he will next meet the chairman of the construction industry training board to discuss skills shortages in the industry.

Mr. Nicholls: Ministers have regular meetings with all chairmen of industry training boards to discuss various issues. I last met the construction board chairman in December to discuss the board's action plan on skill shortages, and I expect to meet him again in the spring.

Job Clubs

18. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to expand the number of job clubs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The planning assumption in the White Paper "The Government's Expenditure Plans 1988-89 — 1990-91" is that the programme will expand to 1,500 job clubs by the end of 1988-89.

British Travel Centre

19. **Mr. Butterfill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people have now visited the British Travel Centre since it was officially opened.

Mr. Lee: There have been more than 1·1 million visitors to the British Travel Centre since it was officially opened by the Prime Minister on 13 June 1986.

Northern Region

20. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many jobs have been created over the past 12 months in the northern region; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: Over the 12 months to September 1987, the net increase in employment in the northern region is estimated to have been 12,000. This figure covers both employees in employment and the self-employed.

68. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the percentage increase in jobs created in the northern region since 1979.

Mr. Lee: There are no figures for job gains and job losses. Between September 1979 and September 1987, the latest date for which figures are available, the civilian employed labour force in the northern region showed a net decrease of 9 per cent. The figure is unadjusted for the effects of seasonal variations.

The civilian employed labour force is the sum of employees in employment and the self employed.

Restart (Benefit Claimants)

21. **Ms. Short:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people have been refused unemployment benefit as a result of their refusal to take up an offer made to them following a restart interview.

Mr. Lee: Any refusal of benefit subsequent to a restart interview follows not from the interview itself but from the decision of an independent adjudication officer operating under long-standing legal rules adopted by successive Governments.

Conference Centres

22. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what progress is being made by British conference centres in marketing facilities in Britain to international associations and the corporate sector.

Mr. Lee: Good progress is being made in this area through the auspices of the British Conference and Exhibition Centres Export Council, which is supported by the British tourist authority. Britain now has a 10 per cent. share of the market for international conferences and association meetings, and in 1986, conferences earned a record £109 million from overseas visitors.

Job Release Scheme

23. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement about the implementation of the winding-up of the job release scheme.

Mr. Lee: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis), *Official Report*, 4 November at column *726*. In addition my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced the closure on 3 November and notices were placed in various national newspapers on 6 November giving details of the closure and the procedures for submitting applications.

YTS Trainees

24. **Mr. Stevens:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the number of YTS trainees going into work, or further education and training.

Mr. Cope: The latest results from the Manpower Services Commission's regular follow-up survey show that, of those young people who left YTS schemes between April 1986 and July 1987 74 per cent. were in work, further education or training at the time of the surveys.

MSC Training Schemes

25. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are on Manpower Services Commission training schemes as of January; and how many have been on such schemes since their inception.

Mr. Cope: The information is not available in the form requested. At 31 December 1987, the latest date for which figures are available, there were 417,500 young people in training on YTS and 24,400 people on the new job training scheme. Figures for the numbers in training on any given date are not available for other adult training schemes. Since 1979, the earliest date for which figures are readily available about 3,413,000 starts have been recorded on MSC training schemes.

Short-Break Holidays

26. **Mr. Lester:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much revenue was earned by short-break holidays in England in 1987.

Mr. Lee: No estimate is available for the amount earnt by all short break holidays in England in 1987. However, spending on one to three night holidays taken by British residents in England in the first 10 months of 1987 is estimated to be £800 million.

Visitors

27. **Mr. Gale:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of Britain's visitors came from Europe in 1987; what information he has as to how this figure compares with other European countries; and what is being done to ensure a good spread of markets.

Mr. Lee: Figures are not yet available for the number of visitors to Britain from Europe for the whole of 1987. During the first 10 months of 1987, however, 59 per cent. of visitors to the UK were European residents. Comparative data for other European countries are not yet available.

The British tourist authority recognises the importance of encouraging visitors from a wide spectrum of markets. Through its overseas offices, and joint marketing initiatives with the trade. It seeks to promote tourism to Britain from all destinations.

28. **Sir Brandon Rhys-Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the average spending per day by United States visitors to Britain in 1987.

Mr. Lee: An estimate of the average spending per day by United States visitors to Britain is not yet available for the whole of 1987. However, during the first two quarters of 1987. January to June, the average amount spent per day by United States visitors to the UK was £56.

101. **Sir Marcus Fox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has on the number of people under 25 years who visited Britain in 1987.

Mr. Lee: Information on the number of people under 25 years who visited Britain is only produced on an annual basis and is not yet available for 1987. However, in 1986 the number of visits to the United Kingdom by people under 25 was 3·7 million.

Labour Statistics

29. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are currently employed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: In September 1987, the latest date for which figures are available, there were 24,446,000 people in the employed labour force in Great Britain. This represents an increase of 1,449,000 since March 1983. The figures are adjusted for the effects of seasonal variations. The employed labour force is the sum of employees in employment, the self-employed and Her Majesty's forces.

40. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the ratio of persons in employment to persons unemployed in each year since 1983.

Mr. Lee: The table shows the total employed labour force, and the number of unemployed claimants (excluding school leavers) in the United Kingdom for June of each year since 1983, and also the ratio of employed labour force to unemployed claimants. All figures are seasonally adjusted.

	Employed Labour Force Thousands	*Unemployed Claimants Thousands*	*Ratio*
June 1983	23,594·9	2,884·2	8·2:1
June 1984	24,049·4	2,978·6	8·1:1
June 1985	24,437·9	3,109·3	7·9:1
June 1986	24,537·3	3,212·5	7·6:1
June 1987	24,907·5	2,925·2	8·5:1

45. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will consider maintaining a record of the employment destination of all those who leave Manpower Services Commission schemes or who leave the unemployment register.

Mr. Cope: The Manpower Services Commission follows up people leaving the programmes it administers, in order to measure how effective they are in helping people. The information collected includes the destination of leavers. The way in which this information is collected varies from programme to programme and can be on a sample basis.

More than 400,000 people currently leave the unemployment register in any month. Although records of individual destinations are not maintained, information on the characteristics of the vacancies filled through jobcentres are available. Additionally there have been recent ad hoc surveys which will provide information on amongst other matters the destination of specific groups of unemployed people.

52. **Mr. Andrew MacKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the current level of unemployment.

Mr. Lee: On 10 December 1987 the number of unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom was 2,695,810.

58. **Mr. Fraser:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people in Lambeth have been unemployed for more than a year.

Mr. Lee: On 8 October 1987 the number of unemployed claimants in the London borough of Lambeth who had been unemployed for more than one year was 10,523.

63. **Mr. David Porter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the fall in unemployment in Waveney over the past 12 months; and what has been the comparable position in the United Kingdom as a whole.

Mr. Lee: On 10 December 1987, the number of unemployed claimants in the Waveney local authority area was 5,011, a fall of 1,205 since December 1986. The comparable figure for the United Kingdom as a whole was 2,695,810, a fall of 533,357.

67. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total number of people unemployed in the Chelmsford local authority area in December 1987 and December 1986.

Mr. Lee: On 10 December 1987 the number of unemployed claimants in the Chelmsford local authority area was 2,946. The corresponding figure for December 1986 was 3,788.

72. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what discussions he has had on employment trends with his counterparts in the EEC member states.

Mr. Cope: Since the adoption by the Community of the action programme on employment growth in December 1986, after an initiative by the United Kingdom with Italy and Ireland, we have sought to keep the subject of employment growth high on the agenda of business for the EC Council of Labour and Social Affairs Ministers. The Council has considered a report on the action programme, and has pursued as a priority the issue of long-term unemployment. We frequently seek to promote discussion of issues relating to employment growth with the European Commission and other member states.

75. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many men and how many women were in full-time employment in June 1979 and in December 1987 in *(a)* Wales and *(b)* the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lee: Estimates of the numbers of full-time and part-time male employees in employment for the dates and areas specified are available only from the September 1984 census of employment. Regional estimates of the numbers of self-employed people do not separately identify full-time and part-time employment. The available comparable information is given in the table.

Employees in Employment

	Males			*Females*			*Total*
	Full time	*Part time*	*All*	*Full time*	*Part time*	*All*	*employees*
Wales							
June 1979	n/a	n/a	618	250	165	415	1,033
September 1984[1]	474	29	504	220	163	383	886
September 1987[2]	n/a	n/a	486	210	179	389	875
Great Britain							
June 1979	n/a	n/a	13,183	5,585	3,870	9,455	22,638
September 1984[1]	10,928	771	11,699	5,289	3,858	9,147	20,846
September 1987[2]	10,935	881	11,816	5,467	4,209	9,676	21,492
United Kingdom							
June 1979	n/a	n/a	13,487	5,816	3,870	9,686	23,173
September 1984[1]	11,173	797	11,970	5,437	3,939	9,376	21,346
September 1987[2]	n/a	n/a	12,073	5,696	4,209	9,905	21,978

[1] Census of employment.
[2] Latest available.

89. **Mr. Knowles:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which regions are showing the greatest falls in unemployment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The unemployment rate fell in all regions over the last 12 months. With the largest falls being in the west midlands, Wales, north-west and the north. In the last 18 months since June 1986 the falls have also been largest in these regions.

102. **Mr. Andy Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the measures taken to reduce unemployment in the 18 to 25-year-age group.

Mr. Lee: Those in the 18-to-25-year-age group are already benefiting from the growth in the economy which has produced more than 1·4 million new jobs since March 1983. In addition, they can take advantage of the wide range of employment and training measures we have developed to help unemployed people back into employment. Unemployment among those aged 18 to 25 fell by 175,166 in the year to October 1987. Unemployment amongst the under 25s is now at the lowest level for over five years.

We are now moving towards meeting our guarantee to everyone in this age group who has been unemployed for between six and 12 months of the place on the job training scheme or on the enterprise allowance scheme or in a jobclub.

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the percentage increase in the number of unemployed people in the United Kingdom since May 1979.

Mr. Lee: Between 10 May 1979 and 10 December 1987, the number of unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom, excluding school leavers and adjusted for discontinuities and seasonality, increased by 126·9 per cent.

Disabled People

30. **Mr. Ashley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what further steps he intends to take to improve the employment prospects of disabled people.

Mr. Lee: I have no proposals to put forward at this time. I shall be reviewing the position in the light of the Report by the National Audit Office on employment assistance to disabled adults and the report by the National Advisory Council on Employment of Disabled People which reviewed the principles underlying employment provisions.

In the meantime my Department and the Manpower Services Commission will continue to promote vigorously employment opportunities for people with disabilities, both through existing special schemes as well as the full range of employment and training programmes.

84. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what recognition he will give to the needs of disabled people in the forthcoming White Paper on adult training.

Mr. Fowler: The forthcoming White Paper on unemployment and training will set out the Government's decisions about the new training programme for unemployed adults. The Government recognise that disabled people have particular needs and these will be fully recognised in the new programme.

YTS

31. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the working of YTS.

73. **Mr. Baldry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a further statement on the progress of the YTS.

Mr. Cope: On 31 December 1987 there were some 417,000 young people receiving high-quality training on YTS schemes. Of those young people leaving the schemes between April 1986 and July 1987, around 74 per cent. went into employment, further education or training. In addition, around 1,900 organisations have achieved full approved training organisation status demonstrating their commitment to provide high-quality programmes.

The YTS is now firmly established as a standard method of recruitment and training for many employers, and the Government hope that more and more companies will recognise the substantial benefits YTS can offer.

32. **Miss Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are on YTS schemes; and how many of them are entitled to travel expenses.

Mr. Cope: At the end of December 1987 there were some 417,500 young people in training on YTS, of whom nine out of 10 are non-employed. All non-employed YTS trainees are entitled to be reimbursed the amount by which their essential weekly training-related travel costs exceed £3. If required to live away from home for the purpose of YTS training, such trainees are also entitled to assistance with the costs of travel between home and training location.

87. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many young people are currently undertaking training on the YTS; and if he will make a statement.

95. **Mr. Day:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many young people are currently on the YTS; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: At the end of December 1987 there were some 417,500 young people in training on YTS.

This represents an impressive achievement in convincing young people of the value of training. It also represents significant progress towards our objective that all young people under 18 years of age should have the opportunity either to continue in full-time education or of entering a period of work experience combined with work-related training and education.

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what his estimate is of the number of YTS places in Wales in 1988-89, 1989-90 and 1990-91 that will arise from the proposed Manpower Services Commission corporate plan for Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I have been asked to reply.

The Manpower Services Commission's corporate plan for Wales, which gives estimated expenditure up to 1989-90, shows £68·7 million for YTS in 1988-89 and £68·9 million for 1989-90. The current estimate is that 29,354 places will be available for 1988-89. The number of places for 1989-90 will be estimated around the end of this year.

Strikes

33. **Mr. Hayward:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many working days were lost through strikes in September 1987; and what was the comparable figure in September 1978.

Mr. Nicholls: The number of working days lost through stoppages of work due to industrial disputes in September 1987 is provisionally estimated as 48,000. This compares with 878,000 working days lost in September 1978.

91. **Mr. Patnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many working days were lost by strikes in 1987; how this compares with 1978; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: The number of working days lost through stoppages of work due to industrial disputes in 1987 is not yet available. In the 12-month period to November 1987, 3,494,000 working days were provisionally estimated to have been lost. This compares with 9,405,000 working days lost in 1978.

Skill Shortages

34. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he will next meet representatives of British chambers of commerce to discuss skill shortages.

Mr. Cope: I often meet representatives of British chambers of commerce and discuss issues including the demand for and supply of skills, and will continue to do so.

55. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received on skill shortages in *(a)* the south and *(b)* the north.

Mr. Cope: I have received a number of letters and approaches from individuals and organisations, from many areas of the country, who are interested in various aspects of skills supply and demand. It is not possible to provide a breakdown on the geographical basis requested.

Job Training Scheme (Child Care)

35. **Mr. Snape:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he expects to make a decision on the expansion of job training scheme child care payments under the pilot scheme to all job training scheme managing agents.

103. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to increase the take-up of the job training scheme child care payment system.

Mr. Cope: Decisions will be taken when the present pilot scheme comes to an end later this month.

42. **Mr. Barron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will expand the payment for child care facilities for single parents on job training schemes to two-parent families where both are in employment.

Mr. Cope: No. Child care payments are being made by the MSC only to unemployed single parents who join the new job training scheme in 10 areas where this arrangement is being piloted. Parents are normally responsible for making their own child care arrangements.

Non-statutory Training Boards

36. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he is satisfied with the contribution to training made by the non-statutory training boards.

Mr. Nicholls: I believe that research currently being completed will show that the majority of non-statutory training organisations are effective in their role of improving their industry's training arrangements. The Manpower Services Commission is continuing to work to strengthen those organisations which are less effective.

Training Funds

37. **Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what level of entirely new resources will be devoted to the new programme for training unemployed people.

Mr. Cope: Government funds for the new programme will total some £1·4 billion—the current provision for the programme it will replace. In addition, it is expected that employers will contribute towards the training costs of trainees engaged in practical training on their premises. It is estimated that these contributions will total about £150 million.

Enterprise Allowance Scheme

38. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the cost of the enterprise allowance scheme in the current year; and how many individuals are participating in it.

Mr. Cope: The estimated cost of the enterprise allowance scheme is £208·1 million for the financial year 1987-88. This includes £8·8 million in running costs. Currently there are 96,000 participants on the scheme.

104. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a further statement on the payment of the enterprise allowance scheme.

Mr. Cope: The computerised payment system for the enterprise allowance scheme currently pays the allowance to 96,000 participants. Since the beginning of the scheme the system has satisfactorily paid the allowance to over 315,000 unemployed people who have started up their own business.

YTS (Bridging Allowance)

39. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to improve the bridging allowance payable to young people waiting to enter YTS schemes.

Mr. Cope: None. The proposed bridging allowance will be set initially at £15 per week, more than twice the current level of child benefit. The allowance is designed to provide short-term help for those young people who may have to wait a few weeks for a YTS place after leaving a job or a previous YTS place.

Mines (Women)

41. **Mr. Bernie Grant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many responses to "Restrictions on Employment of Young People and the Removal of Sex Discrimination in Legislation" are in favour of denouncing international labour convention 45 on underground work (women) and European Social Charter article 8(4)*(b)*.

Mr. Nicholls: No responses have been received to date concerning international labour convention 45: underground work (women) and European Social Charter article 8(4)*(b)*. The closing date for comments on the consultative document is 29 February 1988.

Training

43. **Mr. Boyes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans his Department has to increase the level of training and retraining in the working population.

Mr. Cope: The Employment Bill provides that the Manpower Services Commission will be renamed the Training Commission. Its main task will be to encourage the provision of skills that companies need for growth and individuals needs for jobs.

To this end it will continue to develop the youth training scheme, as a high-quality training scheme for all young people under 18, including those in work, in order to produce a better qualified and more adaptable work force.

Its provision for adults will give a high priority to training for the unemployed. Especially the long-term unemployed, to enable them to compete successfully for the growing number of jobs. Following my right hon. Friend's announcement of 18 November, we are now considering the commission's proposals for implementing a new programme to train up to 600,000 adults a year at a cost of some £1·4 billion and we aim to publish details in a White Paper shortly.

We also look to the Training Commission to encourage and support others, especially employers, to respond to the lead given by this Department by increasing their investment in training and retraining throughout working life, to meet the demands of rapid change and competition.

CBI (Training)

44. **Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he will next meet the chairman of the Confederation of British Industry to discuss training issues.

Mr. Cope: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State often meets the president and director-general of the Confederation of British Industry to discuss issues including training and receives advice on training from the Manpower Services Commission on which the CBI is represented.

Claimant Statistics

46. **Mr. Marlow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will estimate the numbers claiming benefit on the basis of no work being available, who are not seeking employment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: According to the results of the labour force survey, in spring 1986 there were 860,000 people in the count of unemployed claimants who were not seeking work. Details were published in an article in the January 1988 edition of *Employment Gazette*.

Inner Cities

47. **Mr. Loyden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he is taking to improve employment opportunities in the inner cities.

Mr. Cope: The Department of Employment and Manpower Services Commission provide a wide range of national programmes which aim to equip individuals with the skills and motivation to compete for available jobs and to stimulate enterprise and the growth of small businesses. The Government have guaranteed that *(a)* all unemployed 16 and 17-year-olds receive an offer of a place on YTS *(b)* all 18 to 25-year-olds unemployed between six and 12 months receive an offer of a place on the job training scheme, enterprise allowance scheme or in a jobclub; and *(c)* all those unemployed over six months receive a restart interview every six months. These guarantees provide direct help to unemployed inner city residents and serve to target resources on those areas of greatest need.

The level of commitment is reflected in the estimated expenditure by the Department and the Manpower Services Commission of over £1·1 billion in the 57 urban partnership authorities.

239. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the contribution his Department is making to the Government's inner cities initiatives.

Mr. Cope: The Department of Employment and Manpower Services Commission provide a wide range of national programmes which aim to equip individuals with the skills and motivation to compete for available jobs and to stimulate enterprise and the growth of small businesses. The Government have guaranteed that *(a)* all unemployed 16 and 17-year-olds receive an offer of a place on the youth training scheme; *(b)* all 18 to 25-year-olds unemployed between six and 12 months receive an offer of a place on the job training scheme, enterprise allowance scheme or in a jobclub; and *(c)* all those unemployed over six months receive a restart interview every six months. These guarantees provide direct help to unemployed inner city residents and serve to target resources on those areas of greatest need.

The level of commitment is reflected in the estimated expenditure by the Department and the Manpower Services Commission of over £1·1 billion in the 57 urban partnership authorities.

Young People (Training)

48. **Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many young people entered employment in 1987 with no access to training.

Mr. Cope: The information is not available in the form requested.

A postal Survey of young people aged 16 and 17 was conducted in February 1986 as part of the youth cohort study. Of these young people who were in full-time employment outside of YTS, 34 per cent. said that they were not receiving training or instructions.

65. **Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will introduce a guarantee of training for all young people entering employment for the first time.

Mr. Cope: Only employers can guarantee training for their own young employees but, through YTS the Government provide high-quality training for 16 and 17-year-old school leavers. The government intend in 1988 to guarantee a place on YTS for all young people under 18 who leave or lose a job or previous YTS place, right up to their 18th birthday. Very many employers see the benefits of YTS as a method of recruitment and training this is why YTS has become the main route into employment for the under-18 age group.

Job Vacancies

49. **Mr. Gerald Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the number of job vacancies registered at jobcentres in the south London area.

Mr. Lee: On 4 December 1987, the number of unfilled vacancies registered at jobcentres in the south London* area was 8,379.

Note:—*Beckenham and Penge, Bermondsey, Bexley Heath, Borough, Brixton, Bromley, Catford, Camberwell, Clapham Junction, Croydon, Deptford and Greenwich, Eltham, Erith, Kingston-upon-Thames, Lewisham, Mitcham, Orpington, Sidcup, Stockwell, Streatham, Sutton, Tooting-Balham, West Norwood, Wimbledon, and Woolwich.

90. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many vacancies are currently registered in jobcentres in East Anglia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The number of unfilled vacancies registered at jobcentres in the East Anglia region on the 4 December 1987 was 8,156.

92. **Mr. Greg Knight:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the number of job vacancies in the east midlands.

Mr. Lee: The number of unfilled vacancies registered at jobcentres in the east midlands region on the 4 December 1987 was 11,787.

Working Practices (Productivity)

50. **Mr. Brazier:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has as to changes in working practices which are leading to increases in productivity; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: An increasing number of firms and plants are reaching agreements to reduce demarcation and allow more flexible working by craft and other employees. Others have achieved more efficient manning levels. These developments have clearly contributed to the substantial improvement in productivity in the 1980s.

Conference and Exhibition Centres

51. **Mr. Beaumont-Dark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much has been invested in conference and exhibition centres in Britain over the past 10 years.

Mr. Lee: Figures are not available for Britain over the past 10 years. However, the English tourist board's survey of investment in projects costing over £0·5 million shows that for the year 1987 a total of £202·9 million was invested in England in conference centres and theatres.

Job Seekers (Relocation)

53. **Mr. Holt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans his Department has to assist job seekers wishing to locate in different regions of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lee: My Department operates a number of provisions to assist job seekers wishing to locate in different regions of the United Kingdom, including the travel-to-interview scheme, and the NATVACS computerised vacancy bank. These are being kept under review. From 1 January 1988 assistance under the travel-to-interview scheme has been extended to cover unemployed job seekers with interviews to attend in Northern Ireland.

Adult Training

54. **Mr. McLeish:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has received the Manpower Services Commission report on proposals for a new adult training programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: My right hon. Friend has received the Manpower Services Commission proposals and has asked the Commission to begin the necessary preparatory work for introducing the new programme from September. The detailed decisions on the new programme will be included in the White Paper to be published later this month.

Tourism

56. **Sir Peter Blaker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is being done to encourage tourism in Blackpool and the Fylde.

Mr. Lee: I understand that the Blackpool borough council currently spends some £800,000 a year on advertising, and £1·25 million on the illuminations. Amongst the many new tourism developments in the area are the 1,000-place car and coach park, the refurbishment of the Winter Gardens conference and exhibition centre, the opening of the Sandcastle centre and continuous capital investment at the pleasure beach. In addition, I understand that many existing hotels have improved and upgraded their facilities and several major new hotel developments are planned.

Since 1985, the English tourist board have made some £388,000 of section 4 assistance available to tourism projects in Blackpool and the Fylde.

60. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much tourists spent in the East Midlands Tourist Board area in 1986; and how many jobs tourism supports within the region.

Mr. Lee: The amount spent by tourists in the East Midlands tourist board area in 1986 is estimated to be around £400 million. Estimates of employment in all tourism-related industries are not available on a regional basis for 1986. However, the number of employees in employment in hotels and catering in the east midlands was 58,900 in June 1986. This figure does not include the self-employed for whom a comparable estimate is not available.

American Tourists

57. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to meet the chairman of the British Tourist Board to discuss American tourists visiting the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: I have no plans to meet the chairman of the British tourist authority to discuss this topic in particular, but I maintain a very close interest in all the United Kingdom's tourism markets, and meet the chairman of the British tourist authority frequently.

61. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the average length of stay of United States visitors to Britain in 1987.

Mr. Lee: An estimate of the average length of stay of United States visitors to Britain is not yet available for the whole of 1987. However, during the first half of the year (January to June), the average length of stay of United States visitors to the United Kingdom was nine days.

Coaches (London)

59. **Mr. Hanley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make it his policy to assist the London Tourist Board and the British Hotels, Restaurants, and Caterers Association in their implementation of a code of conduct for the handling of coaches in the capital.

Mr. Lee: I welcome the initiative of the London tourist board and the British Hotels, Restaurants and Caterers Association in preparing the code of conduct. I shall join my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport in taking every opportunity to encourage the coach industry to adopt the practices recommended in the code.

Labour Trends

62. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will make a statement on the trend in unemployment.

Mr. Lee: On 10 December 1987 the number of unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom, adjusted for seasonality and excluding school leavers was 2,614,000 a fall of 505,400 over the last 12 months.

British Tourist Authority

64. **Mr. Adley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he last met the chairman of the British Tourist Authority; and what was discussed.

Mr. Lee: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State last met the chairman of the British tourist authority on 15 July. In my capacity as Minister of tourism I frequently

meet the chairman of the British tourist authority to discuss the problems and opportunities facing the industry.

MSC (Training Initiatives)

66. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he will next meet the chairman of the Manpower Services Commission to discuss local training initiatives.

Mr. Cope: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State meets the chairman of the Manpower Services Commission frequently to discuss a wide range of training issues, including local training initiatives.

Small Firms Service

69. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the progress of the small firms service.

Mr. Cope: The small firms service through its information and counselling arms works to promote viable and profitable small businesses. In 1986-87, in England, it handled 283,537 inquiries and gave 38,210 counselling sessions. With the development of local enterprise agencies, it is increasingly developing its counselling activities with established businesses.

Copies of the annual report on the service for 1986-87 were placed in the Library in July.

Engineering Industry (Skill Shortages)

70. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he will next meet the chairman of the engineering industry training board to discuss skill shortages in the industry.

Mr. Nicholls: Ministers in the Department have regular meetings with all chairmen of industrial training boards to discuss various issues. I expect to meet the chairman of the engineering board in the spring.

MSC (Training Measures)

71. **Mr. McLoughlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he next plans to meet the chairman of the Manpower Services Commission to discuss training measures; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State meets the chairman of the Manpower Services Commission frequently to discuss a wide range of training issues.

Training (Child Care Provisions)

74. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what provisions there will be for child care payments under the new training scheme announced on 18 November 1987.

Mr. Cope: The proposals put forward by the Manpower Services Commission are being considered, and detailed arrangements for the new programme will be announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in the White Paper to be published later this month.

YTS (Allowances)

76. **Mr. James Lamond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will review the YTS scheme allowances for travelling to training centres.

Mr. Cope: These allowances will be considered in the light of the Manpower Services Commission's review of YTS funding which is now nearing completion.

Job Vacancies

77. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the latest trends in the number of vacancies reported to jobcentres; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The number of new vacancies notified to jobcentres in the United Kingdom increased by 6·2 per cent. over the past 12 months to reach 236,100 in the month ending 4 December 1987.

78. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the number of job vacancies in the north-west.

Mr. Lee: The number of unfilled vacancies registered at jobcentres in the north-west region on the 4 December 1987 was 22,010.

Hotels (Job Opportunities)

79. **Mr. Dickens:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many new jobs have been created through hotel expansion in the Manchester area over the past two years.

Mr. Lee: The past two years have seen considerable growth in hotel provision in the Manchester area. It is estimated that nearly 1,800 full-time and part-time jobs have been created in hotel developments during that period in the cities of Manchester and Salford.

New Hotels (Investment)

80. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has on the amount of investment that took place in new hotels in the United Kingdom in 1987.

Mr. Lee: Comparable information is not available for the United Kingdom as a whole. However, English tourist board estimates show that over £318 million was invested in projects with a value of £0·5 million or more in new hotels, extensions and refurbishments in 1987.

School Leavers

81. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of school leavers went directly into full-time employment *(a)* in 1979 and *(b)* in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Lee: 30 per cent. of those young people aged 16 on 1 September 1984, who had left school between September 1984 and February 1986, went directly into full-time employment, according to results of the England and Wales youth cohort survey. This information is not available for earlier years.

Small Firms

82. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what improvements in the survival rate of small firms has occurred since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: The best available data on the number of small businesses that exist at any one time are provided by VAT registrations and deregistrations. They show no change in the lifespan of registered firms since 1979, although since that time there has been a rising number of registrations and an average net increase of 500 businesses a week.

Hotel and Catering Industry (Wages)

83. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many cases of underpayment in the hotel and catering industry the wages inspectors investigated in 1987; how many were the result of complaints by staff; and how many were the result of routine spot checks.

Mr. Nicholls: Work on processing the Wages Inspectorate's statistics for 1987 is not yet complete. I shall arrange for the information requested to be published in the *Official Report* in due course.

Government Contracts (Tendering)

85. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what responses he has had to the booklet "Tendering for Government Contracts".

Mr. Cope: The response to this booklet has been most encouraging. Since the second edition became available in September 1987, almost 4,000 copies per month have been sent out to small firms centres and similar outlets for distribution to the public. Key extracts from the booklet are also held on the Prestel database.

Overseas Visitors

86. **Mr. Gerald Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of overseas visitor nights were spent out of London in 1987.

Mr. Lee: An estimate of the percentage of overseas visitor nights spent out of London is not available for the whole of 1987. However, in the first half of the year (January to June) approximately 57 per cent. of all nights spent in the United Kingdom by overseas visitors were spent outside London.

Enterprise Agencies

88. **Mrs. Ann Winterton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many inquiries were received by enterprise agencies and as a consequence how many new businesses were created in 1987.

Mr. Cope: Local enterprise agencies are independent bodies accountable to their own boards and sponsors. This Department does not have comprehensive information on the inquiries they handle or the businesses they have helped to create.

Business in the Community's most recent survey of agencies, undertaken in spring 1986, showed that the 132 agencies responding to a question on inquiries had handled some 129,000 enquiries. 118 agencies replying to a question on business start-ups claimed to have helped create more than 10,000 new businesses.

Leicester (Unemployment)

93. **Mr. Ashby:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the decline in unemployment in Leicester in 1987.

Mr. Lee: On 10 December 1987, the number of unemployed claimants in the Leicester local authority area was 15,378—a fall of 3,519 since December 1986.

Tourism (Hearing-Impaired People)

94. **Sir George Young:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is being done in the tourism industry to provide special aids for the hearing-impaired.

Mr. Lee: The Holiday Care Service in conjunction with the English tourist board has produced a booklet "Providing for Disabled Visitors", which gives guidance to the tourism industry on helping people with impaired hearing. I understand that an increasing number of hotels and places of entertainment are installing induction loop systems.

North-West Region

96. **Mr. Hargreaves:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the change in the level of employment in the north-west region since January 1987.

Mr. Lee: Between December 1986 (figures are not available for January 1987) and September 1987 the latest date for which figures are available, the civilian employed labour force in the north-west region fell by 3,000. The figure is unadjusted for the effects of seasonal variations.

The civilian employed labour force is the sum of employees in employment and the self-employed.

Basildon

97. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the latest figures for the number of people currently unemployed in the constituency of Basildon, and for the corresponding period in each of the last four years.

Mr. Lee: The table shows the number of unemployed claimants in the parliamentary constituency of Basildon in December of each year since 1984. The comparison is affected by the change in the compilation of the unemployment statistics in March 1986.

	Number
December 1984	6,913
December 1985	6,400
December 1986	6,165
December 1987	4,549

Self-Employment

98. **Mr. Harris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are currently self-employed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: In December 1987, the latest date for which figures are available, there were an estimated 2,720,000 self-employed people in Great Britain.

East Midlands

99. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the decline in unemployment in the east midlands and the rise in the number of unfilled vacancies in Nottingham.

Mr. Lee: On 10 December 1987 the number of unemployed claimants in the east midlands region, adjusted for seasonality and excluding school leavers was 162,800 a fall of 30,800 over the last 12 months. The number of unfilled vacancies registered at jobcentres in Nottingham on 4 December 1987, was 1,305 an increase of 86 since December 1986.

The jobcentres that cover Nottingham are Nottingham, Arnold, Bulwell, Ilkeston, and Netherfield.

Tourists (Surrey)

100. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many visitors stayed overnight in Surrey in 1986; how much they spent, and how many jobs they provided.

Mr. Lee: Information on the total number of visitors to Surrey is not available for 1986. However, overseas residents made about 450,000 overnight visits to Surrey in 1986 and spent about £95 million. The latest data on employment in tourism-related industries in Surrey relate to September 1984 when there were an estimated 21,600 employees in employment. This figure excludes self-employed persons for whom a comparable estimate is not available.

Community Programmes

105. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what guidance he has given to managers of community programmes about the arrangements they should make to prepare for the replacement of the programme in mid-August; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has asked the Manpower Services Commission to proceed immediately with preparatory work on the new adult training programme. Therefore the Manpower Services Commission has issued guidance to its area managers about the arrangements they should make to prepare for the replacement of the community programme from September 1988. This guidance proposes that the contracts of community programme agents and independent sponors which are due for renewal from 1 February, should be extended up to the start of the new programme. To help ensure a smooth transition the Manpower Services Commission's area managers will be talking in detail to all agents and sponsors about these arrangements and the positive role they can continue to play in moving forward into the new programme.

Tourism (Unified Business Rate)

106. **Mr. Bevan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has regarding the effect of the proposed unified business rate on the tourism industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: I have no reason to expect that the introduction of the proposed unified business rate will have any significant effect on the tourism industry as a whole in England.

Industrial Injury

107. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the number of working hours lost as a result of industrial injury in 1987.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested is not available. For information on working days lost, I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him in the *Official Report*, 24 July 1987 at column 669.

Historic Churches

108. **Mr. Curry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is being done to assist historic churches to attract tourist visitors.

Mr. Lee: The English tourist board offered assistance totalling some £185,000 from the section 4 scheme to tourism developments relating to historic churches in the 1986-87 financial year. At regional level a number of specific initiatives are planned including the 1988 Festival of Yorkshire Abbeys.

New Training Programme

109. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he intends to publish his White Paper on the new training programme.

Mr. Fowler: I plan to publish a White Paper on unemployment and training shortly. It will set out the Government's decisions on the new training programme for the adult unemployed.

Deaf Unemployed People

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many of those registered unemployed were deaf in each of the last five years.

Mr. Lee: I regret that this information is not available.

Disabled Person's Unit

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement as to the future of the Manpower Services Commission's disabled person's unit.

Mr. Lee: Neither the Manpower Services Commission nor the employment service has a disabled person's unit. However, the employment service of this Department has responsibility for the disablement resettlement service. This provides help to people with disabilities in the employment field, through jobcentre services, disablement resettlement officers and the disablement advisory service.

The Manpower Services Commission has responsibility for the employment rehabilitation service, which provides assessment and rehabilitation through employment rehabilitation centres and ASSET (assistance towards employment) centres.

Disablement Advisory Service

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has as to the use of the disablement advisory service; and if he has any plans to encourage an expansion in its use.

Mr. Lee: The disablement advisory service was introduced in 1983. Up to October 1987, well over 37,000 employers had been visited by staff of the service to promote and advise on the implementation of good policies and practices in the employment of people with disabilities and advice had been given in over 24,000 cases involving retention, career development and promotion of individual disabled employees, provision of aids to employment, and so on. The service has an important role in marketing the code of good practice on the employment of disabled people. The service has recently been supplemented by a major organisations' development unit to liaise at senior levels with very large employing organisations. Marketing of these services to employers will continue as in the past. There are no further plans for expansion.

Deaf People (Training)

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what training services his Department provides for people who have been deafened.

Mr. Lee: Training programmes are delivered through the Manpower Services Commission. The commission provides a number of dedicated services for people with disabilities including, though not exclusively for, the deaf. These include the employment rehabilitation service, residential training, and other specialist training schemes.

In addition, all mainstream training programmes supported by the Commission are open to, and designed to encourage opportunities for, deaf people who are otherwise eligible, both those born deaf and those in whom the condition is acquired. Special arrangements have been introduced in both the youth training scheme and the new job training scheme to provide support for deaf trainees through trained communicators.

The Commission has also sponsored training courses for communicators and for British sign language trainers.

Deaf People (Employment)

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has as to the number of *(a)* profoundly deaf and *(b)* hard of hearing people in (i) full-time employment and (ii) part-time employment in England and Wales for each of the last five years.

Mr. Lee: I regret this information is not available.

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has any plans to monitor the progress of deaf and hearing-impaired people in employment.

Mr. Lee: I have no plans at present to monitor any groups of people with disabilities who are in employment.

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether his Department has any plans to collect more comprehensive statistics on the employment of deaf and hearing-impaired people.

Mr. Lee: I expect to receive shortly final proposals for research into the numbers and characteristics of people with disabilities in the labour force. The precise breakdown of disabilities to be used in this research is yet to be established, but I will keep in mind the need for information about people who are deaf and hearing impaired as will also be done for people with all types of disability. My Department has no plans at present to collect regular statistics of this kind.

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has any plans to update the Manpower Services Commission's booklet "Code of Good Practice on Employment of Disabled People" to include more details on deafness and hearing impairment.

Mr. Lee: The code of good practice on the employment of disabled people will be reviewed in the light of the results of current research into employers' attitudes towards the quota scheme and the impact of the code. I will bear in mind the hon. Member's suggestion.

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* deaf and *(b)* hearing-impaired people are employed in his Department; and what percentage this represents of all employees in his Department.

M. Lee: This answer can be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many deaf people currently registered unemployed have been unemployed for more than *(a)* three months, *(b)* six months, *(c)* one year and *(d)* three years.

Mr. Lee: I regret that this information is not available.

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the numbers of deaf people who are unemployed by region.

Mr. Lee: I regret that this information is not available.

Deafness Awareness Training

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to provide deafness awareness training for all jobcentre staff; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: We intend that jobcentres will participate in the sympathetic hearing scheme, and intend that all jobcentre staff will receive appropriate training this year.

We have recently made induction hearing loops available to all jobcentres, and are monitoring their usage and effectiveness. Help is also available from specialist social workers belonging to local authority social services departments and from relevant voluntary organisations when professional interpreting assistance is required for communicating with some profoundly deaf clients.

Disablement Resettlement Officers

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what element of the initial training of disablement resettlement officers is specifically devoted to *(a)* deaf awareness and *(b)* communication skills.

Mr. Lee: One module of the initial training course for disablement resettlement officers is specifically about the

problems of hearing impairments including communication aspects. This is followed by project work, which includes establishing links with local agencies helping the deaf, and acquiring knowledge of resources available at local, regional and national level.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what criteria are used to judge whether disabled people should be advised by disablement resettlement officers or other jobcentre staff.

Mr. Lee: There are no hard and fast rules, but disablement resettlement officers (DROs) provide particular help to those people with disabilities who require specialist occupational counselling and advice, and those who have special needs arising from their disabilities.

In particular, they help *(a)* recently disabled people, *(b)* those who have an acute need for occupational advice in relation to their disability, *(c)* those who need counselling to engender either confidence or realism in relation to their employment prospects, and *(d)* those whose disability impedes the process of job search and for whom the normal jobcentre services are therefore not appropriate.

However, anyone with a disability can see a DRO on request.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many deaf people were placed in work by the disablement resettlement officer service for each of the last five years; and of these how many went into sheltered workshops.

Mr. Lee: The disablement resettlement officer service aims to help all people with disabilities, regardless of the type of disability. I therefore regret that the information requested is not available.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many disablement resettlement officers are currently employed by region.

Mr. Lee: The numbers of disablement resettlement officers currently employed, by region are as follows:

	Numbers
Northern	27
Yorkshire & Humberside	43
East Midlands & Eastern	37
London and the South East:	
Eastern Division	38
Southern Division	39
Western Division	36
South West	33
Wales	28
West Midlands	42
North West	47
Scotland	45

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the average length of service for a disablement resettlement officer for each of the last five years.

Mr. Lee: I regret the information is not available and can be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many disablement resettlement officers currently employed are qualified in communication skills with deaf people.

Mr. Lee: I regret the information is not available and can be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has any plans to increase the level of training about deafness given to disablement resettlement officers.

Mr. Lee: I have no plans at present to increase the level of training about deafness given to disablement resettlement officers.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the average size of population served by a disablement resettlement officer.

Mr. Lee: Disablement resettlement services are organised in relation to various considerations — geographical location, the size of the labour market, proximity of hospitals, public transport availability, size of caseload and so on. An "average size of population" served by a disablement resettlement officer would therefore have little real meaning, and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has any plans to improve the career prospects for disablement resettlement officers.

Mr. Lee: Disablement resettlement officers are members of the executive officer grade of the administration group of the home Civil Service. As such they are eligible for the normal avenues of promotion and career developmental opportunities appropriate to that grade.

Bargain Breaks

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is being done to promote bargain breaks and leisure learning breaks overseas.

Mr. Lee: The British tourist authority undertakes a number of marketing initiatives to promote these forms of tourism. It has conducted joint advertising campaigns with trade partners throughout northern Europe and Scandanavia to encourage a greater interest in them and to create an awareness of the wide range available throughout Great Britain.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Cereal Farmers

Sir Peter Hordern: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish a table showing the cost of support for European Community cereal farmers through the common agricultural policy; how many predominantly cereal farmers there are in the United Kingdom; and what was the average income of such farmers for the latest available year.

Mr. Donald Thompson: In 1986 expenditure on cereals under the guarantee section of the EAGGF was 3,391 million ecus (£2,197 million).

At the June 1986 agricultural census there were 19,600 specialist cereals holdings in the United Kingdom.

Figures for the total income of cereals farmers are not available. For the year 1986-87 (March to February) the average net farm income for specialist cereal farms in the United Kingdom was £9,200.

Notes:

(a) Specialist cereal farms are defined as those where more than two thirds of their gross margins are generated from cereals.

(b) Net farm income represents the return to the farmer and spouse for their manual and managerial labour and on tenant-type assets such as farm machinery invested in the farm business. It is calculated before the deduction of interest charges.

Animal Slaughter (Pre-stunning)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when the research into the pre-stunning of animals at time of slaughter will be complete.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My Department is funding research projects in this area at the Agricultural and Food Research Council's institute of food research (Bristol). It is not possible to say when this work will be completed.

Milk Production

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimate he has as to the likely final milk production figure for the United Kingdom in 1987-88.

Mr. Donald Thompson: It is too early to forecast precisely the volume of milk production in the United Kingdom for the 1987-88 year. However, our latest estimate is that wholesale deliveries will be very close to the level of the United Kingdom wholesale quota which is fixed at 14,057·3 million litres.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action is taken by the European Community to ensure that national figures for milk production are accurate, and that European Community instructions concerning milk quotas are observed.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The European Commission takes very seriously its obligation to ensure that it has accurate information about production in each member state and cross-checks material supplied by them with nationally published statistics. Each member state has been visited by the European Community's Court of Auditors or by inspectors from the European agricultural guidance and guarantee fund and some countries have been visited by both agencies. Failure on the part of a member state to meet its Community obligations can result in proceedings in the European Court of Justice and the Commission has recently won its case against Italy for failure to implement the quota regime.

Creameries

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list information available to him on the creameries closed in each year since 1984.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My hon. Friend will be aware that the management of creameries is a matter for the companies concerned and i do not therefore have comprehensive records. He will also be aware that these companies will take their decisions about deployment of capital on the basis of a range of factors including supplies, efficiency and market developments. It follows from this that some closures will have been part of programmes which include expansion at other plants or in other areas of a company's activities. The creamery closures listed need to be considered in this light.

Date	*Owned by*	*Location*
January 1985	Dairy Crest	Uttoxeter, Staffs
March 1986	Dairy Crest	Johnstown, Dyfed
May 1986	Dairy Crest	Bason Bridge, Somerset
January 1987	Dairy Crest	Ellesmere, Shropshire
January 1987	Dairy Crest	Kirby Malzeard, North Yorkshire
January 1987	Dairy Crest	Coverham, North Yorkshire
January 1987	Unigate	Wincanton, Somerset
August 1987	Dairy Crest	Haslington, Cheshire
October 1987	Dairy Crest	Wymeswold, Leicestershire

New Zealand Lamb

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the total tonnage of imports of New Zealand lamb in each year since 1970, and the percentage of the total United Kingdom lamb market that these imports represent in each year.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The information is as follows:

Year	*New Zealand mutton and lamb imports*	*Imports as percentage of Offtake*[1]
1970	295·6	54·3
1971	310·3	54·6
1972	293·8	55·8
1973	239·2	50·6
1974	203·5	46·2
1975	234·3	49·3
1976	213·5	49·2
1977	213·3	53·2
1978	213·6	53·0
1979	200·5	49·7
1980	188·7	43·6
1981	155·7	40·0
1982	217·6	51·8
1983	164·5	39·3
1984	144·1	35·9
1985	151·9	37·8
1986	119·4	32·2
1987 (Provisional)	119·8	34·1

Source: Customs and Excise (Import figures).

[1] Offtake is home-fed production plus imports minus exports, adjusted for stock change.

New Zealand Butter

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the total tonnage of imports of New Zealand butter in each year since 1970, and the percentage of the total United Kingdom butter market that these imports represent in each year.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The information requested is as follows:

Year	*Quantity (tonnes)*	*Percentage of United Kingdom butter market*
1970	157,419	33
1971	146,749	33
1972	117,732	29
1973	131,953	31
1974	119,440	24
1975	123,955	24

Year	Quantity (tonnes)	Percentage of United Kingdom butter market
1976	122,626	27
1977	129,016	31
1978	129,779	32
1979	119,878	31
1980	104,832	30
1981	99,422	30
1982	99,152	33
1983	93,760	31
1984	89,110	31
1985	77,893	27
1986	76,238	27

Source: United Kingdom figures from Department of Trade and Industry Overseas Trade Statistics

Radioactivity (Sheep)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food why no sheep which had died from natural causes were monitored for radioactivity in the restricted area of Cumbria after March 1987.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My Department's monitoring effort is directed primarily at the protection of the food chain and thus at the monitoring of live sheep leaving the Cumbria restricted area under the "mark and release" scheme. The hon. Member has been informed of arrangements for dealing with sheep which have died of natural causes in my replies of 1 December and 10 December 1987 at columns *541-2* and *259* respectively.

Nuclear Accidents

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has completed his Ministry's contingency plans to deal with the effects of a nuclear accident overseas; if he will place a copy in the Library; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My Department's contingency plans for dealing with emergency contamination of food or agriculture involving the powers provided in part I of the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 are in process of revision following the development of the national response plan announced by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 30 June 1987 at columns *65-67* and in the light of our experience of operating the plans during the post-Chernobyl period. I will place a copy of the revised plans in the Library of the House when the revision is complete and I will let the hon. Member know when I have done so.

Radioactivity Monitoring

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list all the monitoring programmes for radioactivity his Ministry has undertaken or commissioned since May 1986, the type of substances tested, if animals were tested and whether they were alive or dead, and where any results have been published.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My Department maintains routine monitoring programmes in both the aquatic and terrestrial environments and additional emergency monitoring has been ongoing in both these areas since the Chernobyl accident. A comprehensive range of food, agricultural and aquatic materials is monitored in these programmes. Animal testing is based on dead samples with the exception of the programme of live monitoring of sheep in the restricted areas. Data have been published in (i) radionuclide levels in food, animals and agricultural products, (ii) aquatic environment monitoring report numbers 15 and 18. These reports together with additional tabulated aquatic data and live monitoring results for sheep have been placed in the Library of the House.

Farm Waste Unit

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what changes he is making to the operation of the farm waste unit, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I attach great importance to the work and advice on pollution control undertaken by my Department which I am determined should be carried out as efficiently as possible. The farm waste unit has made a very valuable contribution in this area but there is now far more need for advice at local level. Responsibility for this aspect of its work is being transferred to the regional farm mechanisation advisers, and local ADAS advisers in the field who are better placed to maintain close contact with the customer. The unit's research and development functions will of course continue to be carried out centrally under two specialist posts established for this purpose.

Bacon and Pork Imports

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the estimated advantages for bacon and pork imports from EEC countries in the United Kingdom market arising from present green currency rates; whether he will make representations to have an urgent change in the green pound rates; and if he will make a statement on the present state of the United Kingdom's pig industry.

Mr. MacGregor *[holding answer 1 February 1988]:* The monetary compensatory amounts payable on imports from Denmark and Holland are currently £53·85 per tonne for pig carcases and £68·93 per tonne for bacon sides. Our commitment is to see MCAs abolished in this sector. There are widely differing views within the EC on this issue and it will not be easy to achieve. But we shall be battling for MCA changes in the agricultural price review. I welcome the decision to reintroduce aids for the private storage of pigmeat which should help to strengthen the market; that decision was taken by the management committee as a result of pressure from the United Kingdom and other member states.

Food (Radioactivity Levels)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the permissible radioactivity levels in food agreed at the recent European Economic Community Council of Ministers meeting.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 1 February 1988]:* Council Regulation (Euratom) No. 3954/87 of 22 December 1987 lays down the procedure for determining the maximum permitted levels of radioactive contamination of foodstuffs and feedingstuffs which may be placed on the market following a future nuclear emergency. The levels specified are as follows:

Maximum permitted levels for foodstuffs and feedingstuffs (Bq/kg or Bq/l)

	Baby foods[1]	*Dairy produce*[2,3]	*Other foodstuffs except minor foodstuffs*[4]	*Liquid foodstuffs*[5]	*Feedingstuffs*[6]
Isotopes of strontium, notably Sr-90	—	125	750	—	—
Isotopes of iodine notably I-131	—	500	2,000	—	—
Alpha-emitting isotopes of plutonium and transplutonium elements, notably Pu-239, Am-241	—	20	80	—	—
All other nuclides of half-life greater than 10 days, notably Cs-134, Cs-137[7]	—	1,000	1,250	—	—

[1] Baby foods are defined as those foodstuffs intended for the feeding of infants during the first four to six months of life, which meet, in themselves, the nutritional requirements of this category of person and are put up for retail sale in packages which are clearly identified and labelled 'food preparation for infants'. Values to be established.

[2] Dairy produce is defined as milk falling within headings Nos. 04.01 and 04.02 of the Common Customs Tariff, and the corresponding headings of the combined nomenclature as from 1 January 1988.

[3] The level applicable to concentrated or dried products shall be calculated on the basis of the reconstituted product as ready for consumption.

[4] Minor foodstuffs and the corresponding levels to be applied to them will be as defined in accordance with Article 7.

[5] Liquid foodstuffs as defined by Chapters 20 and 22 of the Common Customs Tariff and by the corresponding Chapter of the combined nomenclature as from 1 January 1988. Values are calculated taking into account consumption of tap-water and the same values should be applied to drinking water supplies at the discretion of competent authorities in member states. Values for liquid foodstuffs to be established.

[6] Values to be established.

[7] Carbon 14 and tritium are not included in this group.

This regulation entered into force on 3 January 1988 alongside Council Regulation (EEC) No. 3955/87 which continues the controls on imports of agricultural products from third countries introduced following the Chernobyl accident.

Pig Producers

Mr. Latham: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the current problems of pig producers and on the action he is taking to improve the situation affecting monetary compensatory amounts.

Mr. MacGregor *[holding answer 1 February 1988]:* I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave today to the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor).

Milk Production

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many dairy farmers in each county in England and Wales produce milk up to the quota; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[pursuant to his answer, 25 January 1988, c. 52]:* In the 1986-87 quota year, the number of dairy farmers in each county of England and Wales who delivered more milk than their wholesale quota are set out in the following table. The position given is before any interchange between wholesale and direct sale quota and is not therefore final. These data are held by the Milk Marketing Board on the basis of names and boundaries that applied in 1933; they do not therefore reflect existing county boundaries.

County	*Number of producers over quota in 1986-87*	*As a percentage of total producers in county*
Cumberland	716	49
Durham	185	48
Northumberland	104	54
Westmorland	367	55
Yorkshire, East Riding	141	51
Yorkshire, North Riding	670	55
Cheshire	1,084	60
Lancashire	1,070	53
Yorkshire, West Riding	1,016	57
Derbyshire	717	61
Staffordshire	980	60
Lincolnshire	172	69
Cambridgeshire and Ely	17	63
Huntingdon and Peterborough	13	62
Suffolk	122	65
Norfolk	177	62
Bedfordshire	30	58
Leicestershire and Rutland	363	63
Northamptonshire	127	66
Nottinghamshire	131	65
Warwickshire	268	65
Gloucestershire	533	59
Herefordshire	236	59
Monmouth	241	61
Worcestershire	210	60
Shropshire	819	60
Anglesey	79	33
Caernarvon	83	35
Denbigh	355	56
Flint	279	61
Merioneth	21	25
Montgomery	254	58
Brecon	35	43
Cardigan	411	49
Carmarthen	806	46
Glamorgan	158	48
Pembroke	527	48
Radnor	9	50
Berkshire	101	55
Buckinghamshire	144	58
Hampshire and Isle of Wight	259	51
Oxfordshire	131	62
Dorset	570	56
Somerset	1,297	58
Wiltshire	592	64
Devon	1,559	49
Cornwall	918	49
Essex	71	54
Hertfordshire	55	52
Kent	130	53
Greater London	8	42

County	Number of producers over quota in 1986-87	As a percentage of total producers in county
Surrey	96	58
East Sussex	184	55
West Sussex	138	57

In England and Wales, supplementary levy liability arises on the net excess of deliveries over quota for the Milk Marketing Board as a whole. This system contributes to meeting the needs of the industry by providing the flexibility for some producers to exceed their quotas, and for this over-production to be offset by the extent to which other producers fall short of their quotas. In 1986-87, when the net excess of production over quota in England and Wales was less than 1 per cent., about 54 per cent. of producers were over quota and about 45 per cent. under quota.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Radiation

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the number of farms, the number of sheep and the area of land, in acres, under restriction in Northern Ireland as a result of radioactivity from the Chernobyl accident; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers: The information requested is as follows: 123 farms, 27,355 sheep and 21,612 acres.

Pig Products

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what system of inspection is in operation to examine imports of pig products from Belgium, France, Denmark, Netherlands and Germany for *(a)* swine fever, and *(b)* antibiotic residues; and what controls are applied to imports of pig products from (i) Great Britain and (ii) the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 1 February 1988]:* Imports into Northern Ireland of pig products from Belgium, France, Denmark, Netherlands and West Germany are subject to licensing controls operated by the Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland in accordance with the rules of intra-Community trade which preclude pigmeat from areas affected with swine fever (or meat in contact with such meat) and meat containing antibiotics residues.

These controls provide for examination by the Department of the veterinary health certification required to accompany consignments and of the product itself at points of entry to Northern Ireland. All documentation is inspected to ensure that EC directive requirements are fully satisfied. Similar controls apply in the case of imports from Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland.

Imports into Northern Ireland from outside the United Kingdom of pig products. as foods intended for sale for human consumption, are also liable to examination by authorised officers of district councils under the Imported Food (Northern Ireland) Regulations 1984. Such foods must be marked with a health mark which has been recognised by the Department of Health and Social Services for Northern Ireland and must be accompanied by a health certificate in a format set out in the regulations.

FEOGA Grants

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he was first informed that there had been no successful applications for FEOGA grants for new fishing boats in the recent allocations by the EEC; what was the closing date for appeal against this decision; when Northern Irish applicants were advised of the closing dates for appeal; what information was available to him on the degree of completeness of some Northern Irish applications before he knew that they had been rejected; if he has all necessary documentation to ensure that applications were complete; and if he will make a statement on the role of his Department in assisting applicants for FEOGA grants for new fishing boats.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 1 February 1988]:* The Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland became aware that no Northern Ireland projects for new fishing boats submitted under the first round of EC regulation 4028/86 were to be approved by the Commission when the draft decisions were tabled for the opinion of the Standing Committee on Fisheries Structures at its meeting on 11 December 1987. There is no appeals procedure against these Commission decisions but in the Standing Committee the United Kingdom delegation made representations regarding the low level of aid to Northern Ireland.

In the early autumn the Department became aware from informal contacts that the Commission intended strictly to apply powers which exist in the regulation to reject as incomplete those applications not accompanied by plans and specifications for new boats. The Commission decisions resulting from the application of this rule agree with the Department's records, except for three cases where plans were submitted but the Commission has rejected the application as incomplete because of the absence of plans.

In common with the other Fisheries Departments, the Department of Agriculture make application forms and explanatory leaflets available to prospective applicants. When any additional or supplementary information is obtained from the Commission, this is made available to fishermen's representative organisations. The Department is responsible for the initial receipt of applications and onward submission to the Commission along with certification that the project forms part of the United Kingdom's multi-annual guidance programme, the extent and form of member state aid, the VAT status of the applicant and details of any existing boat belonging to the applicant. However, responsibility for the completion of applications rests with the applicant or his agent.

SCOTLAND

Lothian Region

112. **Mr. Ron Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people under the age of 25 years are currently unemployed in Lothian region.

Mr. Lang: On 8 October 1987 (the latest date for which information is available) there were 15,926 unemployed claimants under 25 years of age in Lothian region.

This information is available in the Library.

Manufacturing Employment

113. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the levels of manufacturing employment in Scotland at June 1979, June 1983, June 1987 and January 1988.

114. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the levels of manufacturing employment in Scotland at June 1979, June 1983, June 1987 and January 1988.

115. **Mr. Andrew Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the levels of manufacturing employment in Scotland at June 1979, June 1983, June 1987 and January 1988.

Mr. Lang: The table sets out the estimates for June 1979, June 1983, June 1987 and September 1987, the latest date for which this information is available. Some of the decline in the figures for manufacturing will be the result of reclassification of jobs such as industrial cleaning, catering, road haulage and other services previously done by manufacturers' own employees and now done by subcontractors outside manufacturing.

Employees in Employment in Manufacturing Industry in Scotland (Thousands, seasonally adjusted).

	Estimated Numbers
June 1979	605
June 1983	445
June 1987	399
September 1987	393

Blood

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what is his estimate of the proportion and number of adults in Scotland that would be suitable for blood donation;

(2) what proportion and number of suitable adults give blood in Scotland;

(3) what proportion and number of suitable adults are needed to give blood to make Scotland self-sufficient in blood-derived products;

(4) whether he will consider reducing the period between permitted donations of blood to four months from six, to ease the shortage of blood and blood-derived products, and to make Scotland self-sufficient; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Scotland has been self-sufficient in blood and all normally-required blood products since the end of 1983. Approximately 300,000 blood donations are collected each year, representing about one donation per 11 persons in the age group (18 to 65-year-olds) eligible to give blood.

Individuals whose health is such that it is not safe for them to give blood are excluded from so doing. Similarly, there are restrictions on giving blood to reduce the risk of transmitting diseases—for example, malaria, hepatitis or AIDS. The total number of people who as a result are not suitable for blood donation, however, is not known.

The Scottish national blood transfusion service already accepts blood donations at 12-weekly intervals although donors are sent invitations to attend to give blood at 16-weekly or six monthly intervals, depending on local collection arrangements. Apheresis donations (in which donors give a particular part of their blood and that part which is not required is returned) can be made at intervals of only a few weeks.

D and C Operations

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the rate of deaths per 10,000 women having D and C operations in Scotland in each of the last 25 years for which figures are available of *(a)* anaesthetic deaths arising directly or indirectly out of such operations, *(b)* deaths due to embolism directly or indirectly linked to such operations, and *(c)* other deaths directly due to such operations; and if he will break down this rate by whether or not the D and C operation also involved an abortion.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I regret that the information requested is not held centrally.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he had concerning the total number of D and C operations performed in Scotland in each of the last 25 years for which figures are available.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Administration of Justice

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland on 18 January, *Official Report*, column *515*, what information he has as to any of those cases which were marked for no proceedings by reason of resources not being available to deal with them within the judicial system in any fiscaldom in Scotland between 1984 and 30 November 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information relating to cases which were marked "no proceedings" is not available.

Regional Aid

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the amount of regional selective assistance to be paid out in Scotland for each year from 1988-89 to 1990-91.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 28 January 1988]*: The 1988 public expenditure White Paper contains net provision for my right hon. and learned Friend's industry, energy, trade and employment programme in 1988-89, 1989-90, 1990-91, of £266 million, £260 million and £260 million, respectively. Within these totals present expectation is that regional selective assistance (RSA) and related schemes, including the new investment grant for small businesses, will account for some £60 million, £60 million and £80 million in 1988-89, 1989-90 and 1990-91, respectively. The increase in provision between the years reflects expected additional demand for RSA which is envisaged as a result of the ending of the RDG scheme. In addition, support to firms in Scotland will be provided through the new innovation grants scheme and enhanced business development services.

SOCIAL SERVICES

National Insurance Contributions

110. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what measures are taken by his Department to enforce payment of national insurance contributions by employers so that employees are not denied entitlement to unemployment benefit.

Mr. Scott: Employees' class 1 national insurance contributions are usually collected by the Inland Revenue's PAYE arrangements, the bulk of which are paid into the national insurance fund. The Inland Revenue can recover contributions that are not paid over by employers, but this Department takes responsibility for enforcement. Enforcement is usually achieved by suing for the debt in the civil courts, but criminal proceedings can be instituted.

There are some, 2,000 national insurance inspectors, who examine employers' records to ensure compliance with the National Insurance Contributions Regulations. In the year ending April 1987 the inspectors completed some 100,000 surveys, in which employers' records were examined. Inland Revenue PAYE auditors also visit firms and examine their records. These routine visits can lead to the discovery of irregularities.

Employees' contributions which have been collected are recorded after the end of the tax year on the person's national insurance account, which is held by the Department's records branch. If insufficient contributions are recorded there for that year, the person is informed, and irregularities can then come to light. Failure on the part of employers to pay over contributions can also be discovered when a benefit claim fails.

All cases where contributions have not been recorded on the person's account are investigated urgently. Contributions will usually be treated as if they had been paid, so that entitlement to benefit is not affected. Action is then brought against the employer to recover the arrears.

Midwives

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many newly qualified midwives entered into practice in *(a)* Hartlepool area district health authority, *(b)* Sunderland district health authority and *(c)* Durham district health authority in the years 1984-85, 1985-86 and 1986-87.

Mr. Newton: Information in the form requested is not held centrally. The latest staff in post figures are shown in the table.

National Health Service midwives in post[1]
at 30 September 1986

	Whole-time equivalents[2]
Hartlepool district health authority	53
Sunderland district health authority	144
Durham district health authority	71

Source: DHSS — Annual census of National Health Service non-medical manpower.
[1] Includes agency midwives. Excludes student midwives.
[2] Figures independently rounded to nearest whole-time equivalent.

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the establishment for, and the actual number of, midwives employed in the King's and St. Thomas's health districts.

Mr. Newton: Information for individual hospitals is not held centrally. "King's and St. Thomas's health districts" have been interpreted as Camberwell and West Lambeth district health authorities.

Funded establishment figures are not collected centrally.

Staff in post figures are shown in the table.

National Health Service midwifery staff in post[1]
at 30 September 1986
Selected district health authorities

	Whole-time equivalents[2]
Camberwell district health authority	180
West Lambeth district health authority	150

Source: DHSS — Annual census of National Health Service non-medical manpower.
[1] Includes agency staff.
[2] Figures are rounded to nearest ten (10) whole-time equivalents.

Disqualification (Appeals)

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if, pursuant to the reply given on 26 November 1987, *Official Report*, columns *263-64*, he will indicate the number of cases of disqualification that were taken to an appeal tribunal, showing how many resulted in the disqualification being overruled, distinguishing as far as possible between the different heads of section 20(1) of the Social Security Act 1975; and if he will also provide information for each year since 1976 showing the number of such appeals and the outcome of the appeal.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is not readily available prior to April 1984, the date of the establishment of the independent office of the president of social security appeal tribunals, and could be extracted only at disproportionate cost. The available information is shown in the table.

Social Security Appeals Tribunals:
Appeals on section 20(1) of the Social Security Act 1975 on disqualifications for unemployment benefit:
Great Britain: 1984 to 1987

Category of disqualification[1]	1984 (April to December) Number of (a) Appeals heard and decided	(b) Decisions in the claimant's favour	1985 Number of (a) Appeals heard and decided	(b) Decisions in the claimant's favour
Section 20(1)a	4,283	1,209	6,378	2,160
Section 20(1)b	40	13	49	22
Section 20(1)c	10	1	33	9
Section 20(1)d	1	1	—	—
Section 20(1)e	56	15	86	16
TOTAL	4,390	1,239	6,546	2,207

Category of disqualification[1]	1986 Number of (a) Appeals heard and decided	(b) Decisions in the claimant's favour	1987 (January to March) Number of (a) Appeals heard and decided	(b) Decisions in the claimant's favour
Section 20(1)a	6,282	2,509	1,473	685
Section 20(1)b	43	13	15	8
Section 20(1)c	33	8	6	4
Section 20(1)d	3	2	—	—
Section 20(1)e	67	16	17	7
TOTAL	6,428	2,548	1,511	704

[1] The categories of disqualification are:
20(1)a—misconduct or leaving voluntarily.
20(1)b—refusal of employment.
20(1)c—neglect to be made available for an opportunity of suitable employment.
20(1)d—refusal to carry out an official recommendation.
20(1)e—refusal or premature termination of training.

Great Ormond Street Hospital

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what percentage of the costs of Great Ormond street children's hospital is met *(a)* by his Department, *(b)* from charities including the Wishing Well Appeal and *(c)* from other specified sources.

Mrs. Currie: Approximately £40·1 million of Exchequer capital and revenue was spent by the Hospitals for Sick Children special health authority (which is also responsible for Queen Elizabeth hospital, Hackney) at Great Ormond street last year; to which was added some £2·3 million expended on behalf of a number of charitable organisations by its special trustees.

The £30 million which the Wishing Well Appeal hopes to raise over the next seven years will go towards rebuilding and equipment at Great Ormond street. The Government intend to make a contribution of approximately £27 million to this redevelopment, over and above capital committed to maintenance of existing buildings, fees and equipment. The exact size of this contribution will not be known until detailed costing of the scheme is complete.

We warmly welcome the tradition of partnership between voluntary and statutory sources of support for which this internationally prestigious hospital is already famous.

Community Care

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what guidance is issued to health authorities regarding consultants employed by health authorities acting as partners or beneficiaries in private homes allocated to patients under the Government's community care policy.

Mr. Newton: None. This is a matter for health authorities to determine locally in the light of individual circumstances.

Dialysis Patients

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects (EPO) to be made available to dialysis patients suffering from acute anaemia.

Mr. Newton: The licensing authority has recently received an application to market a medicinal product containing rDNA erythropoietin (EPO), a product developed by a biotechnological process. Similar applications have also been received by other member states of the European Community. Under the procedure introduced by directive 87/22/EEC for the purpose of increasing the harmonisation of licensing decisions in the Community for "high technology" medicinal products, one member state has requested an opinion on EPO from the Community's Committee for Proprietary Medicinal Products. This opinion must be taken into account before a national licensing decision can be made. I am unable to comment on the likely outcome of this application or to predict when EPO will become generally available in the United Kingdom. It is currently being used on a limited scale to treat patients who are participating in clinical

trials of the substance and can be used by registered medical practitioners for individuals on a "named patient basis".

Hospital Patient Statistics

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will list the number of in-patient beds currently available in each outer London health district; and if he will identify what proportion of beds in each district is available for patients requiring intensive care;

(2) if he will list the total number of *(a)* in-patients and *(b)* out-patients treated in each of the outer London health districts in the last year for which figures are available;

(3) if he will list the average length of stay for in-patients in each of the outer London health districts.

Mrs. Currie: The tables show the available information. No information is available centrally on the number of beds used for intensive care treatment, or on the average lengths of stay of mental handicap and mental illness in-patients.

Average daily number of available beds in the National Health Service, Outer London, 1986

District Health Authority	Acute	Maternity	Geriatric	Units for Younger disabled	Mental handicap	Mental illness	Total
Barnet	740·0	110·3	509·3	30·0	30·0	904·4	2,324·0
Harrow	544·7	100·0	155·6	—	—	86·0	886·3
Hillingdon	920·5	77·0	262·6	15·0	—	54·0	1,329·1
Hounslow and Spelthorne	803·1	109·6	286·4	—	—	157·2	1,356·3
Ealing	381·9	55·0	158·2	—	—	914·1	1,509·2
Brent	433·7	57·9	302·3	16·0	92·0	981·0	1,882·9
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	1,188·8	101·1	505·1	33·8	133·6	802·4	2,764·8
Enfield	519·8	88·6	229·8	16·8	76·9	123·3	1,055·2
Haringey	715·3	69·0	211·5	—	7·0	69·1	1,071·9
Redbridge	422·9	103·0	276·0	7·3	20·0	723·6	1,552·8
Waltham Forest	713·1	88·5	383·3	15·0	218·0	988·7	2,406·6
Bexley	322·2	83·0	129·8	18·1	—	833·2	1,386·3
Greenwich	811·2	90·4	316·9	—	64·0	51·1	1,333·6
Bromley	643·1	77·3	270·1	—	73·0	823·5	1,887·0
Croydon	562·5	63·6	292·2	—	1,061·8	416·4	2,396·5
Kingston and Esher	447·1	59·4	174·6	—	—	696·5	1,377·6
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	357·2	35·3	262·5	—	167·0	37·5	859·5
Merton and Sutton	744·9	55·0	282·1	15·0	946·7	191·3	2,235·0

In-patient cases treated in the National Health Service, Outer London, 1986

District Health Authority	Acute	Maternity	Geriatric	Units for younger disabled	Mental handicap	Mental illness	Total
Barnet	26,743	4,831	2,624	51	355	1,111	35,715
Harrow	21,352	4,474	1,234	—	—	807	27,867
Hillingdon	33,915	3,899	1,328	39	—	256	39,437
Hounslow and Spelthorne	30,003	5,132	2,150	—	—	792	38,077
Ealing	13,257	2,511	791	—	—	3,085	19,644
Brent	16,224	2,863	1,889	81	113	1,176	22,346
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	38,069	5,577	1,532	97	322	1,462	47,059
Enfield	17,590	4,116	1,104	63	181	527	23,581
Haringey	17,494	3,928	1,765	—	3	501	23,691
Redbridge	13,438	4,093	1,038	28	1	1,311	19,909
Waltham Forest	28,724	4,810	3,741	51	200	1,337	38,863
Bexley	12,791	4,015	1,642	253	—	1,593	20,294
Greenwich	29,017	4,490	2,020	—	248	583	36,358
Bromley	21,278	3,770	2,367	—	213	1,327	28,955
Croydon	22,457	5,056	1,661	—	303	1,932	31,409
Kingston and Esher	19,203	3,026	1,325	—	—	1,261	24,815
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	14,002	1,775	1,793	—	75	341	17,986
Merton and Sutton	27,927	4,145	1,490	34	516	835	34,947

In-patient average length of stay in 1986 for:

District Health Authority	Acute	Maternity	Geriatric	Units for younger disabled
Barnet	8·5	4·5	65·4	194·0
Harrow	7·4	4·8	43·2	—
Hillingdon	8·3	4·3	51·8	135·6
Hounslow and Spelthorne	7·8	4·8	47·1	—
Ealing	8·7	5·0	69·1	—

District Health Authority	Acute	Maternity	Geriatric	Units for younger disabled
Brent	15·8	4·6	49·6	60·7
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	9·1	5·4	115·7	116·2
Enfield	8·6	6·2	68·5	95·6
Haringey	12·2	5·3	40·7	—
Redbridge	9·6	4·4	94·5	84·7
Waltham Forest	7·2	4·3	31·6	68·0
Bexley	7·3	5·7	25·3	15·9
Greenwich	8·1	4·7	56·1	—
Bromley	8·3	4·0	45·0	—
Croydon	7·4	3·9	56·9	—
Kingston and Esher	7·2	4·9	45·7	—
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	7·3	4·9	330·8	—
Merton and Sutton	7·7	3·7	63·6	73·6

New out-patients treated in the National Health Service, Outer London, 1986

District Health Authority	Acute	Maternity	Geriatric	Units for younger disabled	Mental handicap	Mental illness	Total
Barnet	45,754	4,895	237	—	—	1,269	52,155
Harrow	28,817	3,450	85	—	3	445	32,800
Hillingdon	49,361	3,750	13	—	9	913	54,046
Hounslow and Spelthorne	57,704	6,509	382	—	—	1,944	66,589
Ealing	23,080	2,208	266	—	—	994	26,548
Brent	37,127	2,640	12	—	15	1,015	40,809
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	61,411	5,666	48	—	—	1,132	68,257
Enfield	26,952	3,250	153	—	21	460	30,836
Haringey	37,990	3,323	235	—	17	490	42,055
Redbridge	26,889	5,403	254	—	92	1,147	33,785
Waltham Forest	43,047	4,262	314	—	8	827	48,458
Bexley	21,439	3,668	414	—	12	662	26,195
Greenwich	45,455	4,196	124	—	6	985	50,766
Bromley	35,875	4,334	237	—	—	1,320	41,766
Croydon	43,148	4,051	193	—	51	1,619	49,062
Kingston and Esher	33,863	3,175	217	—	—	799	38,054
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	21,275	2,441	428	—	16	1,159	25,319
Merton and Sutton	55,412	4,058	152	—	—	1,366	60,988

Total attendances by out-patients, National Health Service, Outer London, 1986

District Health Authority	Acute	Maternity	Geriatric	Units for younger disabled	Mental handicap	Mental illness	Total
Barnet	182,996	27,314	863	—	—	10,594	221,767
Harrow	125,290	25,252	697	—	37	4,606	155,882
Hillingdon	200,822	18,371	41	—	106	7,546	226,886
Hounslow and Spelthorne	220,383	29,210	2,001	—	—	18,320	269,914
Ealing	81,102	13,273	913	—	—	9,390	104,678
Brent	146,482	15,603	1,393	—	128	7,434	171,040
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	264,984	32,524	310	—	—	7,701	305,519
Enfield	106,932	15,939	881	—	476	3,349	127,577
Haringey	162,178	18,129	1,502	—	180	4,735	186,724
Redbridge	111,855	26,036	1,573	—	750	8,354	148,568
Waltham Forest	159,028	23,186	1,722	—	173	3,608	187,717
Bexley	84,031	23,962	1,673	—	85	12,606	122,357
Greenwich	195,964	24,294	1,007	—	67	9,434	230,766
Bromley	152,912	23,562	756	—	—	10,964	188,194
Croydon	158,526	14,894	1,243	—	346	13,832	188,841
Kingston and Esher	129,643	15,093	986	—	—	6,567	152,289
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	85,835	12,957	3,443	—	222	12,672	115,129
Merton and Sutton	224,601	22,358	1,132	—	—	11,251	259,342

Hospital Doctors

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will extend the powers of general managers to bring hospital doctors under direct management.

Mr. Newton: It is already the responsibility of health authorities to manage hospital doctors' contracts.

Sheffield Health Authority

Mr. Patnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give a breakdown for each of the years from 1979 until the latest year for which figures are available, by specialty, of the waiting lists for operations in each hospital for the area covered by Sheffield health authority; and what details he has of the waiting lists for examinations, tabulated in a similar manner.

Mr. Newton: The available information is given in the table. No information is available centrally on the reasons for patients being on the waiting list.

Number of patients on in-patient waiting list in Sheffield District Health Authority—surgical specialties—31st December—NHS hospitals.

Hospital/specialty	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Northern General Hospital								
General surgery	472	710	594	789	685	706	762	733
ENT	—	—	70	191	202	207	254	265
Trau and orth	709	829	1,562	1,828	1,668	1,388	1,303	1,176
Urology	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	10
Plastic surgery	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1,363
Thoracic surgery	188	213	144	223	194	162	212	174
Oral surgery	73	88	119	206	156	106	117	188
Gynaecology	225	248	180	267	187	205	147	202
The Royal Hallamshire Hospital								
General surgery	1,508	1,244	1,272	1,854	1,783	2,196	1,636	1,122
ENT	174	167	264	516	489	316	336	281
Trau and orth	1,788	1,701	1,051	1,533	1,553	1,609	1,423	1,072
Ophthalmology	639	551	653	909	651	534	582	633
Urology	653	712	753	874	773	596	604	607
Plastic surgery	—	—	—	—	—	—	34	45
Thoracic surgery	55	28	17	23	21	15	54	65
Oral surgery	207	209	124	246	182	144	131	123
Neurosurgery	168	133	115	175	145	134	157	166
Fulwood Hospital								
Plastic surgery	1,883	2,091	2,401	1,812	1,589	1,479	1,333	0
Oral surgery	63	38	66	79	86	56	61	0
Childrens Hospital								
ENT	187	158	203	297	183	74	93	65
Trau and orth	344	168	148	151	194	173	168	154
Urology	17	4	3	2	2	—	—	—
Plastic surgery	87	26	136	182	150	162	204	369
Thoracic surgery	20	22	10	—	—	—	—	—
Oral surgery	43	12	22	57	20	13	19	18
Paediatric surgery	46	24	14	18	46	48	46	49
The Jessop Hospital for women								
Gynaecology	686	853	697	1,215	923	997	925	911
Weston Park Hospital								
Radiotherapy	27	23	29	4	13	52	41	22
Lodge Moor Hospital								
General surgery	87	106	87	—	—	—	—	—
Urology	—	—	—	127	126	161	160	175
Paediatric surgery	10	18	12	10	25	14	3	15
King Edward VII Hospital								
Trau and orth	201	131	121	221	359	339	319	486
Nether Edge Hospital								
Gynaecology	76	65	73	253	124	91	92	97
Royal Infirmary								
ENT	43	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Nurses' Pay

Sir Peter Hordern: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish the figures for the pay of nurses, at each level, both at the basic rate and at the higher level of average overtime worked, at 1 June 1979 and at the latest available date, showing percentage increases.

Mr. Newton: I regret that information is not available in the form requested. Rates of pay for nurses at 1 June 1979 and at the current level payable from 1 April 1987 are shown in the table.

Grade	Basic pay		Estimated average earnings	
	Minimum of pay scale £ per annum	Maximum of pay scale £ per annum	Minimum of pay scale £ per annum	Maximum of pay scale £ per annum
Student Nurse:				
1 June 1979	2,452	2,667	—[1]	—[1]
1 April 1987	4,540	5,170	5,060	5,760
Percentage increase	85·2	93·9		
Nursing Auxiliary:				
1 June 1979	2,507	2,915	—[1]	—[1]
1 April 1987	4,565	5,855	5,700	7,310
Percentage increase	82·0	100·9		
Enrolled Nurse:				
1 June 1979	2,850	3,411	—[1]	—[1]
1 April 1987	6,250	7,750	7,390	9,160
Percentage increase	119·3	127·2		
Staff Nurse:				
1 June 1979	3,150	3,813	—[1]	—[1]
1 April 1987	7,300	8,600	8,510	10,030
Percentage increase	131·7	125·5		
Sister II:				
1 June 1979	3,888	4,949	—[1]	—[1]
1 April 1987	9,000	12,000	10,230	13,600
Percentage increase	131·5	142·5		

[1] Average earnings data is not available for 1979.

Hospitals (Building and Maintenance Costs)

Mr. Redwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many hospitals built in the last 10 years have cost more than 15 per cent. above the original estimate of construction cost; and what is the total amount of these overruns.

Mrs. Currie: Information held centrally on National Health Service building schemes in England, which relates to schemes started since 1980, indicates that five out of 36 schemes, each valued at over £5 million and with a total value of £315 million, started and completed since 1980, overran the contractual sum by more than 15 per cent. Subject to resolution of outstanding final accounts, the total amount of these overruns is estimated to be £12·4 million.

Meningitis

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many cases of meningitis have been reported in the Northern regional health authority and Northumberland district health authority areas in each year from 1985.

Mrs. Currie: Meningitis may be caused by a number of different organisms. The hon. Member may be particularly interested in meningococcal meningitis: the table shows notifications of cases for this and for all forms of acute meningitis.

Number of notifications of acute and meningococcal meningitis, Northern regional health authority and Northumberland district health authority, 1985-87

Area	1985		1986		1987[1]	
	A	M	A	M	A	M
Northern regional health authority	56	20	127	59	153	73
Northumberland district health authority	3	2	15	3	9	5

A Acute meningitis (all forms).
M Meningococcal meningitis.
[1] Provisional.

Social Security Reform

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many households in the Blyth valley area he estimates will lose payments they at present receive for heating bills with the implementation of the Social Security Act.

Mr. Chris Scott: I regret that no information is available concerning the number of households in the Blyth Valley area who are in receipt of supplementary benefit heating additions.

Disabled People

Mr. Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his estimate of the number of severely

disabled people currently receiving attendance allowance who will not receive severe disability premium as a result of its restriction to people living alone without carers who receive invalid care allowance.

Mr. Scott: It is estimated that of the 174,000 supplementary benefit claimants who receive attendance allowance, or whose partner or dependant does, 7,000 will receive the severe disability premium in income support. Similar information is not available for those not in receipt of income support who claim housing benefit.

Equal Opportunities

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many of his Department's management training courses include sessions on equal opportunities for women; and what proportion of managers at grade 6 level and above working outside headquarters have received training on equal opportunities for women.

Mrs. Currie: Twenty management training courses cover equal opportunities for women issues; six include specific sessions on equal opportunities. Five social security regions have held management awareness seminars on equal opportunities. All managers at grade 6 and above are informed of Departmental policy and commitment to equal opportunities for women. The majority have attended management training courses or seminars.

Residential Care

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether, where a housing association provides residential care for elderly people, those residents who loan all but £3,000 of their capital to the housing association are allowed to receive full social security benefits; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: Only supplementary benefit operates a capital cut-off under the present system. Regulations provide for any sum deposited with a housing association, as defined in section 189(1) of the Housing Act 1957 or section 208(1) of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1966, as a condition of occupying the home, to be disregarded. It is for the independent adjudication authorities to decide if this provision applies in the light of the facts of each case. From April, the same rule will apply to income support, housing benefit and family credit.

Community Alarm Schemes

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if housing benefit is paid in respect of tenants or owner-occupiers' contributions to community alarm schemes in their own home under the present housing benefit regulations; and if it will be paid under the housing benefit regulations which come into effect on 1 April.

Mr. Scott: Under the present housing benefit regulations help with service charges can be provided through housing benefit for people in rented accommodation. There is no specific reference to alarm systems in the current housing benefit regulations, but the costs of this service can be met if the tenant has no option but to pay and the local authority considers that the service is "reasonably necessary for the proper enjoyment of the dwelling".

From April, the new regulations clarify existing policy by making it clear that housing benefit is available to help with the costs of alarm systems where they are provided in accommodation which is occupied by and specifically designed or adapted or otherwise particularly suitable for elderly, sick or disabled people.

For owner-occupiers help with service charges is available through supplementary benefit — income support from April—on the same basis as the help given to tenants through housing benefit.

Population Statistics

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the 10 areas in England which have seen *(a)* the greatest population growth and *(b)* the greatest population reduction, since 1965.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested is as follows:

Thousands

Local Authority Area (ranked by change)	*Resident Population*		*Population change*
	Mid-1965	*Mid-1986*	*1965-86*
i) Greatest Growth			
Milton Keynes	55	162	107
Solihull	140	202	62
Huntingdonshire	81	142	61
Wokingham	83	141	58
Woodspring	120	178	58
Basingstoke and Deane	81	138	57
Peterborough	98	148	50
Basildon	108	157	49
The Wrekin	83	190	47
Chelmsford	105	150	45
ii) Greatest Reduction			
Liverpool	695	483	−212
Manchester	617	451	−166
Birmingham	1,145	1,004	−141
Westminster, City of	267	176	−91
Lambeth	332	245	−87
Southwark	302	216	−86
Kensington and Chelsea	216	137	−79
Islington	244	168	−76
Wandsworth	327	257	−70
Hackney	252	187	−65

Opticians

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list those opticians in the north-east area of Manchester who are not routinely handing out general optical service prescriptions, identified in the summary of the National Health Service investigator's report.

Mrs. Currie: The Family Practitioner Committee is initiating service committee proceedings against three practitioners where the auditors' report provided some evidence of their failure to hand over prescriptions. It would be prejudicial to the practitioners concerned to publish their names.

General Practitioners

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is the number of general practitioners per 1000 population for *(a)* England and Wales, *(b)* the west midlands, *(c)* north Staffordshire and *(d)* Stoke on Trent;

(2) what is the average number of patients on general practitioner lists for *(a)* England and Wales, *(b)* west midlands, *(c)* north Staffordshire and *(d)* Stoke on Trent.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested is not held centrally in respect of north Staffordshire or Stoke-on-Trent. Figures are available as at 1 October 1986, as follows:

	Number of general practitioners per 1,000 population	*Average number of patients per general practitioner*
England and Wales	0·52	2,033
West Midlands Region	0·51	2,040
Staffordshire Family Practitioner Committee (including North Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent)	0·48	2,105

D and C Operations

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the rate of deaths per 10,000 women having D and C operations in England and Wales in each of the last 25 years for which figures are available of *(a)* anaesthetic deaths arising directly or indirectly out of such operations, *(b)* deaths due to embolism directly or indirectly linked to such operations and *(c)* other deaths directly due to such operations; and if he will break down this rate by whether or not the D and C operation also involved an abortion.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that this information is not available centrally.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has concerning the total number of D and C operations performed in England and Wales in each of the last 25 years for which figures are available.

Mrs. Currie: I shall let my hon. Friend have such information as is available without incurring disproportionate costs as soon as possible.

AIDS

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether the special trust fund for HIV positive carriers to be run by the Haemophilia Society has yet been established; and when he expects the first applications for financial assistance to be invited.

Mr. Newton: Following close collaboration officials and officers of the Haemophilia Society, measures necessary to establish the special trust fund are nearing completion. The Haemophilia Society is already giving financial help on an interim basis to urgent cases to need. Applications for financial help from other haemophiliacs infected with HIV and their dependants are being accepted so that payments can be made as quickly as possible.

Health Statistics

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will list by London health authority the total available patient beds for each year since 1979;

(2) if he will list by district health authority *(a)* the establishment figure of medical laboratory scientific officers for each year since 1979, *(b)* the number in post for each year since 1979, and *(c)* the number who have left the National Health Service in the last year;

(3) if he will list by district health authority the number of people on waiting lists for urgent and non-urgent operations for December of each year since 1982.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Member have such information as is available centrally without incurring disproportionate costs as soon as possible.

Benefits (Adjustment)

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to review the system of flat rate compensation payment available to benefit claimants or as a result of the miscalculation of the retail prices index; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: We have no plans to review the system of ex gratia payments we are making as a result of the error in the calculation of the RPI. We are making these payments, although we have no legal requirement to do so, to more than 12 million beneficiaries. The exercise is designed to combine as far as possible fairness with speed of payment.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to review the position of benefit claimants in receipt of more than one benefit for which a flat rate compensation payment is available after the miscalculation of the retail prices index who have received only one payment because they have a combined order book.

Mr. Scott: We have no plans to do so. Having two benefits combined on one order book does not automatically mean that the claimant has suffered twice from the error in the retail prices index. The ex-gratia special payments fully compensate the great majority of people who have combined order books for two benefits, including the least well-off pensioners with supplementary pensions. Less than 10 per cent. of people with combined books will be undercompensated for the retail prices index error because of the method of payment.

Child Care and Family Services

Miss Widdecombe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he will be issuing a consultation paper on his proposals concerning standards for day care and residential holidays for children aged between five and 16 years referred to in the White Paper "The Law on Child Care and Family Services".

Mr. Newton: The Department, jointly with the Department of Education and Science and the Department of the Environment, has today issued a consultation paper "Day Care and Residential Holidays for Children over Five". It is being sent to local authorities including non-metropolitan district councils in England; voluntary bodies active in the child care, disabled, mental handicap, educational, sporting and recreational fields; and organisations representing medical, nursing and social work interests.

The Government have decided that a full registration system which would apply to all activities provided for children aged between five and 16 would be inappropriate and impractical. It is primarily the responsibility of parents to satisfy themselves about the adequacy of the arrangements to which they entrust their children. Whilst we recognise that children need to be protected from harm, we believe that out-of-school or holiday play schemes need

a lower level of control than residential holidays where children are away from their parents for some time. The Government are seeking views on two options: the introduction of a limited registration scheme (for which legislation would be necessary). This would be operated by local authorities and apply to residential holidays for groups of children for up to 27 days; or the establishment of voluntary codes of practice to be drawn up by private or voluntary organisations. These would cover day care and residential activities.

Similar consultation exercises are being carried out by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Geriatric Patients

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the numbers of geriatric patients in the central Nottingham health authority area for each year from 1979-1987 inclusive.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 15 January 1988]:* The information requested is given in the table.

Number of geriatric patients treated in National Health Service hospitals in the Central Nottingham Health Authority[1] for each year from 1979 to 1986 (latest available).

Year	In-patient discharges and deaths	Out-patient attendances	Regular day patients
1979	2,381	1,686	4,903
1980	2,448	2,056	5,823
1981	2,458	1,878	5,723
1982	2,687	2,042	5,240
1983	2,750	2,034	5,439
1984	2,555	2,420	5,680
1985	2,784	3,127	6,005
1986	2,701	3,680	7,065

[1] Prior to NHS re-structuring in 1982 was Mansfield and Newark HD.

Accident and Emergency Services (Greenwich)

Mrs. Rosie Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services on how many occasions and for what reasons either the Greenwich district hospital or the Brook hospital have been closed to accident and emergency admissions over the past 12 months.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 27 January 1988]:* The table lists periods of restriction to the accident and emergency departments of the Brook and Greenwich district hospitals over the past year and indicates the reasons for them.

Unplanned closures have declined markedly from their summer peak, which reflects Greenwich health authority's commitment to avoid them in future and to provide a continuous accident and emergency service from these two hospitals.

When the Brook hospital accident and emergency department has been closed, patients have been taken to the nearby department at Greenwich district general hospital. When there has been a restricted service at the Greenwich DGH department, the reverse has happened. There have been no simultaneous restrictions of service at the two departments.

Greenwich health authority is also covered by the new London emergency bed monitoring service.

Restrictions of accident and emergency service

Period of restriction				
Time	*Day*	*Date*	*Time involved*	*Reason*
Brook Hospital[1]				
	Saturday Sunday	14 February 15 February	24 hours	All staffed ITU beds occupied
	Saturday pm Monday am	28 March 30 March	36 hours (approx.)	All staffed ITU beds occupied
	Friday Saturday	12 June 13 June	24 hours	All staffed ITU beds occupied
6 pm 9 am	Friday Monday	19 June 22 June	63 hours	Breakdown of ITU ventilators
1 pm 9 am	Wednesday Friday	8 July 10 July	44 hours	All staffed beds occupied
	Tuesday Wednesday	21 July 22 July	24 hours	All staffed beds occupied
	Wednesday Thursday	29 July 30 July	24 hours	All staffed beds occupied
9.30 am 9 am	Wednesday Friday	19 August 21 August	47½ hours	All staffed beds occupied
9 am to 4.30 pm	Wednesday	9 September	7½ hours	All staffed beds occupied

Time	Day	Date	Time involved	Reason
		Period of restriction		
1 pm 7 pm	Thursday Monday	10 September 14 September	68 hours	Shortage of nursing staff
Greenwich District General Hospital[2]				
	Tuesday Wednesday	24 February 25 February	24 hours	Shortage of nursing/medical staff
	Saturday	11 July	24 hours	To enable new piped medical gas system to be installed in operating theatres
	Saturday	15 August	24 hours	
9 am to 4.30 pm	Tuesday	14 July	7 hours	Shortage of medical staff (holiday period)
6 pm to 10 pm	Monday	20 July	4 hours	Shortage of medical staff (holiday period)
4 pm 9.30 am	Thursday Friday	30 July 31 July	17½ hours	Shortage of medical staff (holiday period)

[1] Intensive treatment beds—There are 8 ITU beds at the Brook Hospital, 2 of which are at present closed because of shortage of nursing staff. Also available are six coronary care beds which, while not 'intensive' beds offer a high level of clinical care.
[2] Intensive treatement beds—There are 10 ITU beds at Greenwich District General Hospital, two of which are at present closed because of shortage of nursing staff.

Private Patients

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give, for each regional health authority, district health authority, and special health authority, and for England as a whole, the number of attendances in 1983 and 1986 by *(a)* private out-patients, *(b)* private day cases and *(c)* private regular day patients.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 18 January 1988]:* The information requested is given in the table.

Number of attendances by private patients at NHS hospitals in 1983 and 1986.

District Health Authority	Out-patients 1983	Out-patients 1986	Day cases 1983	Day cases 1986	Regular day patients 1983	Regular day patients 1986
Northern Regional Health Authority						
Hartlepool	218	232	109	155	—	—
North Tees	265	377	55	33	—	—
South Tees	846	2,238	277	307	—	—
East Cumbria	452	657	239	152	—	—
South Cumbria	348	661	108	163	—	—
West Cumbria	106	98	21	1	—	—
Darlington	67	273	76	122	—	—
Durham	405	1,177	17	163	—	—
North West Durham	238	216	61	88	—	—
South West Durham	190	434	36	44	—	—
Northumberland	385	646	54	43	—	—
Gateshead	185	93	188	55	—	—
Newcastle upon Tyne	1,412	2,956	309	235	—	—
North Tyneside	—	—	20	21	—	—
South Tyneside	23	126	106	110	—	—
Sunderland	441	166	274	241	—	—
Regional Health Authority Total	5,581	10,350	1,950	1,933	0	0
Yorkshire Regional Health Authority						
Hull	447	1,086	461	120	—	—
East Yorkshire	17	46	172	163	—	—
Grimsby	234	442	306	21	—	—
Scunthorpe	1,479	1,417	114	106	—	—
Northallerton	120	338	69	34	—	—
York	1	258	106	79	—	—
Scarborough	42	87	7	7	—	—
Harrogate	—	108	21	38	—	—
Bradford	3,037	2,075	453	148	—	—
Airedale	883	752	257	273	—	—
Calderdale	988	421	442	80	—	—

District Health Authority	Out-patients 1983	Out-patients 1986	Day cases 1983	Day cases 1986	Regular day patients 1983	Regular day patients 1986
Huddersfield	45	436	54	2	—	—
Dewsbury	22	34	159	82	—	—
Leeds Western	2,540	3,549	26	201	—	—
Leeds Eastern	105	426	19	27	—	—
Wakefield	872	543	241	65	—	—
Pontefract	—	69	249	94	—	—
Regional Health Authority Total	10,832	12,087	3,156	1,540	0	0
Trent Regional Health Authority						
North Derbyshire	66	518	336	188	—	—
Southern Derbyshire	758	1,539	301	334	—	—
Leicestershire	—	1,810	681	1,066	—	—
North Lincolnshire	3,434	5,210	105	198	—	—
South Lincolnshire	950	1,514	242	282	—	—
Bassetlaw	—	157	—	195	—	—
Central Nottinghamshire	68	127	207	43	—	—
Nottingham	326	162	667	130	—	—
Barnsley	28	332	204	120	—	—
Doncaster	296	1,730	17	31	—	—
Rotherham	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sheffield	2,136	2,626	104	125	—	1
Regional Health Authority Total	8,062	15,725	2,864	2,712	0	1
East Anglian Regional Health Authority						
Cambridge	1,568	3,968	10	14	—	—
Peterborough	607	841	138	59	—	—
West Suffolk	342	380	87	101	—	—
East Suffolk	774	2,804	5	120	—	—
Norwich	1,360	1,451	294	160	—	—
Great Yarmouth and Waveney	353	796	96	117	—	—
West Norfolk and Wisbech	80	1,765	248	410	—	—
Huntingdon	95	240	8	67	—	—
Regional Health Authority Total	5,179	12,245	886	1,048	0	0
North West Thames Regional Health Authority						
North Bedfordshire	654	1,844	75	24	—	—
South Bedfordshire	501	287	152	115	—	—
North Hertfordshire	705	572	77	49	—	—
East Hertfordshire	1,902	1,678	174	202	—	—
North West Hertfordshire	17	62	309	203	—	—
South West Hertfordshire	356	169	98	88	—	—
Barnet	5,891	4,877	144	70	—	—
Harrow	705	563	24	10	16	—
Hillingdon	606	1,162	207	157	—	—
Hounslow and Spelthorne	1,397	2,474	280	239	—	—
Ealing	84	62	28	35	—	—
Brent	513	361	2	4	—	—
Paddington and North Kensington	2,231	2,905	129	89	—	—
Riverside	10,762	8,387	515	636	—	39
Regional Health Authority Total	26,324	25,403	2,214	1,921	16	39
North East Thames Regional Health Authority						

District Health Authority	Out-patients 1983	Out-patients 1986	Day cases 1983	Day cases 1986	Regular day patients 1983	Regular day patients 1986
Basildon and Thurrock	762	648	355	317	—	1
Mid Essex	1,696	3,362	637	653	—	—
North East Essex	3,619	7,012	89	122	—	—
West Essex	5,185	4,588	197	200	—	—
Southend	1,758	1,155	317	199	—	—
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	3,344	5,103	273	255	—	—
Hampstead	5,209	4,734	160	161	—	—
Bloomsbury	4,320	5,938	288	317	—	—
Islington	181	305	36	107	—	—
City and Hackney	14	105	16	1	—	—
Newham	18	330	4	24	—	—
Tower Hamlets	6,363	5,945	—	—	—	—
Enfield	317	391	163	131	—	—
Haringey	627	435	107	120	—	—
Redbridge	3,924	3,362	78	37	—	—
Waltham Forest	542	349	40	10	35	—
Regional Health Authority Total	37,879	43,762	2,760	2,654	35	1
South East Thames Regional Health Authority						
Brighton	428	511	4	43	—	—
Eastbourne	934	1,003	130	138	—	—
Hastings	271	1,494	47	63	28	—
South East Kent	352	681	108	74	—	—
Canterbury and Thanet	1,864	2,195	105	216	—	—
Dartford and Gravesham	1,332	849	128	77	—	—
Maidstone	1,273	2,060	154	36	2	—
Medway	822	681	242	41	—	—
Tunbridge Wells	2,165	3,494	786	456	—	43
Bexley	3,452	2,729	267	187	—	—
Greenwich	2,436	1,166	167	110	—	—
Bromley	538	773	371	107	—	—
West Lambeth	269	348	198	213	—	—
Camberwell	—	—	240	313	—	—
Lewisham and North Southwark	—	2,423	60	217	—	10
Regional Health Authority Total	16,109	20,407	3,007	2,291	30	53
South West Thames Regional Health Authority						
North West Surrey	3,731	368	419	327	—	—
West Surrey/North East Hants	780	819	205	290	—	—
South West Surrey	2,452	3,944	75	185	—	—
Mid Surrey	1,688	145	526	101	—	—
East Surrey	110	329	51	16	—	—
Chichester	918	808	316	130	—	—
Mid Downs	2,402	821	253	180	—	—
Worthing	24	123	62	63	—	—
Croydon	12	152	98	110	—	—
Kingston and Esher	520	521	66	138	—	—
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	462	540	9	29	—	—
Wandsworth	1,075	950	109	159	—	—
Merton and Sutton	706	731	404	129	—	—
Regional Health Authority Total	14,880	10,251	2,593	1,857	0	0
Wessex Regional Health Authority						
East Dorset	175	233	42	27	—	—
West Dorset	354	304	11	13	—	—

District Health Authority	Out-patients 1983	Out-patients 1986	Day cases 1983	Day cases 1986	Regular day patients 1983	Regular day patients 1986
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire	1,226	1,509	580	240	—	—
Southampton and South West Hampshire	43	2,231	261	697	—	—
Winchester	—	—	115	108	—	—
Basingstoke and North Hampshire	—	—	202	92	—	—
Salisbury	143	729	40	24	—	—
Swindon	3,068	1,286	186	77	—	—
Bath	84	564	98	—	—	—
Isle of Wight	30	75	25	1	—	—
Regional Health Authority Total	5,123	6,931	1,560	1,279	0	0
Oxford Regional Health Authority						
East Berkshire	340	604	7	89	163	418
West Berkshire	—	2,032	112	697	—	—
Aylesbury Vale	961	2,475	190	168	—	—
Wycombe	1,364	1,173	6	8	—	—
Milton Keynes	129	249	—	3	—	—
Kettering	1,803	3,789	369	448	—	—
Northampton	1,040	1,379	140	145	—	—
Oxfordshire	—	3,428	47	19	—	48
Regional Health Authority Total	5,637	15,129	871	1,577	163	466
South Western Regional Health Authority						
Bristol and Weston	305	2,427	83	83	—	—
Frenchay	129	346	27	12	—	—
Southmead	—	26	—	—	—	—
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	384	669	99	46	37	—
Exeter	1	452	76	42	—	1
North Devon	454	770	63	75	—	—
Plymouth	—	—	39	—	—	—
Torbay	1,345	70	262	77	—	—
Cheltenham	286	170	131	201	—	—
Gloucester	385	429	284	115	—	—
Somerset	270	501	210	193	—	—
Regional Health Authority Total	3,559	5,860	1,274	844	37	1
West Midlands Regional Health Authority						
Bromsgrove and Redditch	814	393	17	18	—	—
Herefordshire	—	—	28	7	—	—
Kidderminster and District	—	137	190	67	—	—
Worcester and District	91	81	620	34	—	—
Shropshire	433	843	128	109	—	16
Mid-Staffordshire	192	758	194	158	—	—
North Staffordshire	739	3,159	457	352	—	—
South East Staffordshire	2,411	1,915	280	220	—	—
Rugby	799	1,024	102	135	—	—
North Warwickshire	173	458	78	94	—	—
South Warwickshire	28	26	101	128	—	—
Central Birmingham	94	1,470	270	82	—	—
East Birmingham	—	263	30	17	—	—
North Birmingham	—	—	279	16	—	—
South Birmingham	161	188	25	81	—	—
West Birmingham	461	258	131	37	—	—
Coventry	33	53	203	288	36	37
Dudley	3	33	344	317	—	—
Sandwell	462	1,406	153	101	—	—

District Health Authority	Out-patients 1983	Out-patients 1986	Day cases 1983	Day cases 1986	Regular day patients 1983	Regular day patients 1986
Solihull	3	384	2	3	—	—
Walsall	474	1,199	273	229	—	—
Wolverhampton	424	1,013	44	38	—	—
Regional Health Authority Total	7,795	15,061	3,949	2,531	36	53
Mersey Regional Health Authority						
Chester	203	237	5	19	—	—
Crewe	1,273	3,554	496	808	—	—
Halton	9	244	—	41	—	—
Macclesfield	345	365	95	274	28	—
Warrington	90	528	401	392	—	—
Liverpool	351	943	186	223	—	—
St. Helens and Knowsley	3,307	1,967	257	222	—	—
Southport and Formby	—	460	65	198	—	—
South Sefton	2	542	14	105	—	—
Wirral	1,182	1,414	102	55	—	—
Regional Health Authority Total	6,762	10,254	1,621	2,337	28	—
North Western Regional Health Authority						
Lancaster	106	377	216	21	—	—
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde	279	495	145	56	—	—
Preston	1,166	1,078	324	544	—	—
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley	18	213	3	55	—	—
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	322	175	248	230	—	—
West Lancashire	1,463	2,020	70	111	—	—
Chorley and South Ribble	—	101	6	9	—	—
Bolton	—	275	238	—	—	—
Bury	489	1,116	403	421	—	—
North Manchester	402	507	21	21	—	—
Central Manchester	41	164	173	514	—	—
South Manchester	9,715	14,544	296	214	—	—
Oldham	780	876	75	89	—	—
Rochdale	339	380	4	14	—	—
Salford	335	2,028	37	57	—	—
Stockport	266	572	42	46	—	—
Tameside and Glossop	401	172	46	80	—	—
Trafford	177	153	61	58	—	—
Wigan	236	1,631	279	291	—	—
Regional Health Authority Total	16,535	26,877	2,687	2,831	—	—
Special Health Authorities						
Hospital for Sick Children	1,697	2,024	183	201	—	—
National Hospital for Nervous Diseases	1,962	1,710	82	3	—	—
Moorfields Eye Hospital	—	1,493	37	19	—	—
Bethlem Royal and Maudsley Hospitals	120	103	7	5	—	—

District Health Authority	Out-patients 1983	1986	Day cases 1983	1986	Regular day patients 1983	1986
National Heart and Chest Hospitals	3,390	3,335	5	107	—	—
The Royal Marsden Hospitals	10,044	10,537	220	112	74	9
Hammersmith and Queen Charlottes	3,016	3,557	386	423	—	—
Eastman Dental Hospital	282	398	—	—	—	—
Regional Health Authority Total	20,511	23,157	920	870	74	9
England Total	190,768	253,499	32,312	28,225	419	623

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Commercial Vehicles

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the total output of lorries and commercial vehicles, the percentage exported and the proportion of the domestic market taken by imports in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* West Germany and *(c)* Japan in 1958, 1960, 1965, 1970, 1975 and in each year from 1979 to 1987.

Mr. Atkins The available information is shown in the tables.

Trends in the commercial vehicle output: United Kingdom

	Production of lorries	Exports as percentage of total	Importers share of United Kingdom market	Production of commercial vehicles	Exports as percentage of total	Importers share of United Kingdom market percentage
	(Units: thousands)			(Units: thousands)		
1958	n/a	n/a	n/a	312·9	38·7	n/a
1960	n/a	n/a	n/a	458·0	36·7	n/a
1965	n/a	n/a	n/a	455·2	38·3	n/a
1970	n/a	n/a	n/a	457·5	41·6	4·0
1975	n/a	n/a	3·8	380·7	49·0	11·2
1979	111	50·6	13·1	408·4	39·8	23·2
1980	99	52·9	14·9	389·2	40·2	24·1
1981	55	62·6	17·0	229·6	49·6	31·4
1982	60	48·6	20·7	268·8	34·4	29·5
1983	48	39·0	24·2	244·5	25·7	34·1
1984	45	29·6	26·7	224·8	22·2	36·2
1985	48	31·9	28·5	266·0	24·7	36·7
1986	35	26·4	31·8	228·7	21·8	39·6
1987	n/a	n/a	n/a	[1]246·5	[2]31·9	38·1

n/a = Not Available.
[1] Provisional.
[2] Estimated.
Source: Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders Ltd.

Trends in West German commercial vehicle output
West Germany

	Production of commercial vehicles (Units: thousands)	Exports as percentage of total Per cent.	Importers share of West German market Per cent.
1958	188·4	54·8	n.a.
1960	238·4	49·3	n.a.
1965	242·7	44·6	n.a.
1970	314·4	56·5	n.a.
1975	278·4	61·0	n.a.
1979	317·2	57·9	15·4
1980	357·6	56·0	n.a.
1981	319·2	63·9	n.a.
1982	301·2	68·9	19·8
1983	276·8	61·5	n.a.
1984	255·3	63·6	22·8
1985	279·2	66·0	24·2
1986	286·1	69·3	n.a.

Note: n.a. = not available.
Data only readily available for all commercial vehicles (including lorries).
Source: Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders Ltd.

Trends in Japanese commercial vehicle output
Japan

	Production of commercial vehicles (Units: thousands)	Exports as percentage of total Per cent.	Importers share of Japanese market Per cent.
1958	138	5·5	n.a.
1960	316	4·0	n.a.
1965	1,179	7·9	n.a.
1970	2,110	14·5	n.a.
1975	2,373	35·8	n.a.
1979	3,460	42·2	0·0
1980	4,004	50·4	0·0
1981	4,206	50·0	0·0
1982	3,850	47·3	0·0
1983	3,960	47·1	0·0
1984	4,392	48·5	0·0
1985	4,624	49·8	0·0
1986	4,450	45·7	0·0

Note: n.a. = not available.
Data only readily available for all commercial vehicles (including lorries).
Source: Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders Ltd.

Imports

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will give imports as a percentage of home demand in 1987 or over the maximum available period of 1987 projected on a yearly basis for *(a)* all manufactures, *(b)* chemicals, *(c)* motor vehicles, *(d)* textiles, *(e)* clothing and footwear, food and so on, *(f)* metals, *(g)* metal manufactures N. C. S., *(h)* mechanical engineers, *(i)* electrical engineering and *(j)* office/data processing instruments.

Mr. Atkins: Information on import penetration is contained in Business Monitor MQ12 "Import penetration and export sales ratios for manufacturing industry", copies of which are in the Library of the House.

Research and Development

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has on the regional distribution of civil research and development expenditure by Government and industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The information is not available and could only be produced at disproportionate cost.

Accident Statistics

Mr. Janner: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has on the number of people who have died of asphyxiation from accidentally swallowing a pen top, how many of these were children, and how many of these accidents occurred in school.

Mr. Butcher: Information is available for England and Wales from three sources: (i) a study of all children's deaths registered as inhalation of a foreign body between 1964 and 1984, (ii) the home accident deaths database for 1982-1985, and (iii) a newspaper cutting service (though the latter is not regarded as exhaustive).

A total of 10 cases is known to my Department. All the victims were children. Two of the accidents occurred in schools, the other eight at home.

The following table gives details of the extent of information available.

Deaths in England and Wales from asphyxiation following swallowing of a pen top

Year	Children under 15 years			Adults aged 15+ years	
	At home	At school	Elsewhere	At home	Elsewhere
1964	0	0	0	[1]—	[1]—
1965	0	0	0	[1]—	[1]—
1966	0	0	0	[1]—	[1]—
1967	0	0	0	[1]—	[1]—
1968	0	0	0	[1]—	[1]—
1969	0	0	0	[1]—	[1]—
1970	3	0	0	[1]—	[1]—
1971	0	0		[1]—	[1]—
1972	0	0	0	[1]—	[1]—
1973	1	0	0	[1]—	[1]—
1974	1	0	0	[1]—	[1]—
1975	0	0	0	[1]—	[1]—
1976	1	0	0	[1]—	[1]—
1977	0	0	0	[1]—	[1]—
1978	0	0	0	[1]—	[1]—
1979	0	0	0	[1]—	[1]—
1980	0	0	0	[1]—	[1]—
1981	0	0	0	[1]—	[1]—
1982	0	0	0	0	[1]—
1983	1	0	0	0	[1]—
1984	1	1	0	0	[1]—
1985	0	[1]—	[1]—	0	[1]—
1986	Data not yet available				
1987	Data not yet available, 1 known case of a child at schoool				

[1]— = No data.

Note:
Where the table indicates that no data are available this means that while the Department is not aware of any cases, an exhaustive study of death registrations has not been made.

British Steel Corporation

Mr. Page: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he is in a position to announce a revised external financing limit for the British Steel Corporation.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: As hon. Members will know, BSC's performance in the first half of this year has been impressive. I am glad to say that the corporation's latest forecasts for the rest of the current financial year indicate that a reduction in the EFL from £66 million to minus £300 million is practicable, and this change has now been made.

EC (Research Council)

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what progress was made at the meeting of the Research Council of European Community Ministers on 21 December 1987, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Community's Council of Ministers (Research) met on 21 December in Brussels: I represented Her Majesty's Government.

The Council adopted a revision to the 1985-89 programme on radiation protection. This revision will provide a sum of 10 million ecu (£7 million) for additional work related to the Community's response to the Chernobyl accident.

The Council also adopted common positions on the ESPRIT II programme in information technology and on a revision to the BRITE programme in industrial technology.

ESPRIT II is the largest single programme in the Community's 1987-90 framework programme for research and development. ESPRIT II will, over five years, provide 1600 million ecu (£1120 million) of Community funding for projects in microelectronics and peripheral technologies, information processing systems and application technologies. The same amount of funding will be provided by the industrial partners and other contractors in the ESPRIT projects. The United Kingdom Government expect the ESPRIT II programme to make a major contribution to the research needs of the information technology industry.

The revision to the BRITE programme will provide a further 60 million ecu (£42 million) to support projects in industrial technologies such as wear and resistance, joining technologies, polymers and composite materials and flexible materials. As with ESPRIT, the Community funding is matched by similar contributions from contracting partners.

The United Kingdom has participated fully in this rapid progress towards the implementation of specific programmes within the framework programme. This underlines our commitment to the principle of collaborative research within the Community on programmes which are well defined and meet clear Community needs.

The Research Council also held a first debate on the Commission's proposals for the future programme of the joint research centre. The debate revealed a large measure of agreement that the JRC is in need of very considerable reform. I am hopeful that progress will be made towards this objective over the next few months.

Airbus

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will take steps to make public the financial structure and financial situation of Airbus Industrie; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 1 February 1988]:* Airbus Industrie is Groupement d'interet economique (grouping of mutual economic interest) established under French law. The Members of the partnership are Aerospatiale of France, with 37·9 per cent. participation, Deutsche Airbus of Germany, also with 37·9 per cent., British Aerospace of the United Kingdom, with 20 per cent. and CASA of Spain with 4·2 per cent. As a groupement d'interet economique, Airbus Industrie is not required to publish accounts. The results of the Airbus business of the partner companies are, of course, included in the annual accounts which these companies publish under their national laws.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the role which he has given to his special adviser Sir Jeffrey Stirling in relation to the Airbus project.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 1 February 1988]:* The Governments of the four Airbus partner countries have recently appointed a small group of wise men to consider the organisation of the Airbus programme. This step reinforces the continuous efforts of the partner companies, including British Aerospace, to improve the efficiency of the organisation. I have asked Sir Jeffrey Sterling to act as the United Kingdom member of this group.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations he has received concerning the provision of further subsidies for Airbus projects following the decline in the value of the dollar; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 1 February 1988]:* The United Kingdom Government have provided launch aid to British Aerospace for the Airbus A320 programme, and have agreed to provide it for the Airbus A330/A340 programmes. Launch aid is not a subsidy and is repayable with a real rate of return to the Government. Senior representatives of British Aerospace have discussed with my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster the effects on their Airbus business of the decline in the value of the dollar. They have not submitted an application for further launch aid.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make it his policy that Airbus Industrie should become a public limited company; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 1 February 1988]:* No. The partners in Airbus Industrie are British Aerospace and its partner companies in France, Germany and Spain. It is their responsibility to take any decisions about the future organisation of the Airbus programme. Airbus partner Governments have an interest in organisational questions as they have provided financial support to the programme. This is why they have asked the group of wise men to consider the matter and to advise them.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what recent discussions his Department or its representatives have had with the partner companies of Airbus Industrie or their sponsoring Governments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 1 February 1988]:* My Department has regular meetings at ministerial and official level with other Airbus partner Governments, and also with British Aerospace and Airbus Industrie. A wide range of topics of mutual interest is discussed at these meetings.

Household Glass (Accident Statistics)

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) how many children have been injured in accidents involving household glass and glazing in each of the last 10 years;

(2) how many accidents involving household glass resulted in personal injury for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Butcher *[holding answer 1 February 1988]:* The following estimates of the numbers of accidents involving household glass that were treated at hospitals in England and Wales from 1980 to 1987 have been made from sample data collected by my Department's home accident surveillance system. No other data are available.

Year	*Estimated numbers of accidents children under 15 years*	*Total*
1980	52,000	133,000
1981	36,000	102,000
1982	42,000	113,000
1983	44,000	124,000
1984	45,000	126,000

Year	Estimated numbers of accidents children under 15 years	Total
1985	39,000	122,000
1986	34,000	110,000
[1]1987	33,000	110,000

[1] provisional estimates.

These figures include the following articles: windows, doors containing glass, unfitted panes, glass cabinets, mirrors, bottles, jars, dishes, drinking glasses, binoculars, greenhouses and unspecified glass, even though the glass part of the article may not have been involved in the accident. Only some of the accidents will have involved broken glass.

Regional Development

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how much money has been spent in each of the last 10 years by his Department or agencies responsible to his Department on attracting industry from *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* overseas into (i) Scotland, (ii) Wales, (iii) Northern Ireland and (iv) the English regions, by region.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 1 February 1988]:* My Department's Invest in Britain Bureau promotes the United Kingdom as a whole as a location for overseas investment, and the Department also provides grants to five English regional development organisations similarly to promote their respective regions. The total amount of money my Department has spent in each of the last 10 years on promotional programmes, and on the regional development organisations, is as follows:

Year	Invest in Britain bureau	Grants to English RDOs (£)				
		NEDC/NDC[1]	Norwida/ Inward[2]	YHDA	DCBD	WMIDA
	Promotional effort for United Kingdom	NE Region	NW Region	YH Region	Devon and Cornwall	WM Region
1978-79	290,000	275,000	150,000	33,000	16,000	—
1979-80	236,000	365,000	149,000	68,000	45,000	—
1980-81	196,000	274,000	115,000	62,000	50,000	—
1981-82	72,000	230,000	129,000	65,000	55,000	—
1982-83	277,000	250,000	140,000	70,000	60,000	—
1983-84	598,000	850,000	178,000	163,000	110,000	50,000
1984-85	829,000	975,000	130,000	518,000	152,000	100,000
1985-86	1,734,000	760,000	187,000	400,000	210,000	130,000
1986-87	1,063,000	868,000	263,000	499,000	301,000	250,000
1987-88[3]	1,231,000	1,088,000	380,000	600,000	320,000	320,000

[1] NDC took over from the NEDC with effect from 1 April 1987. The grant figure for the NDC in 1987-88 includes £180,000 for a core programme of activities aimed at regional regeneration.
[2] Inward took over from Norwida with effect from 1 October 1985.
[3] Budget.

Funding for the promotional agencies in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland is a matter for their respective Secretaries of State.

In addition, my Department has spent the following amounts in the past three years on the promotion of the regional development grant and regional selective assistance schemes in England, and on the printing of booklets on the same schemes for use throughout Great Britain:

Year	£
1985-86	77,000
1986-87	104,000
1987-88 to date	71,000

Detailed records are unavailable for earlier years.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 3 February 1988

THE ARTS

Museums (Portsmouth)

Mr. Martin: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will give details of the sums of money allocated to help *(a)* the national maritime museum and *(b)* other museums in Portsmouth, for both maintenance and purchase grants for the most recent convenient period; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: The national maritime museum has been allocated £205,000 for purchases for the collection and £2,510,000 for building and maintenance work in 1988-89.

Central Government support for non-national museums in 1988-89 includes provision for £72 million within the rate support grant to English local authorities for museum capital and current expenditure, and some £4·5 million for the challenge grant schemes for, inter alia, purchases for collections and conservation and related capital work that are administered by the Museums and Galleries Commission and the English Area Museum councils.

Portsmouth is rich in history and is endowed with some fine museums. I had the pleasure of visiting a number of them just over a year ago.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Food (VAT)

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when value added tax on selected foods was first imposed; and for what stated purpose.

Mr. Lilley: Value added tax on selected foods was first imposed from 1 April 1974 by the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey). The stated purpose was contained in his Budget statement, the relevant extract of which is in the *Official Report* for 26 March 1974 at columns 308-309.

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which food products are subject to the standard rate of value added tax.

Mr. Lilley: I refer the hon. Gentleman to my reply to the hon. Member for Newcastle-upon-Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) on 1 February at column *463*.

Business Expansion Scheme

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if, pursuant to his answer of 27 January on business expansion scheme investment, he will give the number of investors falling within each of the categories shown in the table.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 2 February 1988]:* The table is derived from information collected in the survey of personal incomes. As the notes in "Inland Revenue Statistics" indicate, at the time when the survey was conducted, it is likely that a substantial number of claims for business expansion scheme relief for investments in 1984-85 had yet to be submitted. No alternative source of information on numbers of investors is available centrally. I regret therefore that it is not possible to provide the information requested.

Woodlands (Taxes)

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how many taxpayers were granted capital gains tax exemption of growing timber from commercial woodlands in the last year for which figures are available;

(2) how many taxpayers opted to have woodlands taxed under schedule B instead of schedule D in 1986-87; and if he will give for these taxpayers a breakdown showing the percentage paying tax at (i) 60 per cent., (ii) 55 per cent. and 50 per cent., (iii) 45 per cent. and 40 per cent. and (iv) 27 per cent.;

(3) if he will estimate the value of woodland liable to tax under *(a)* schedule B and *(b)* schedule D in 1986-87.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 2 February 1988]:* I regret that the information requested is not available.

Nurses

Ms. Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the percentage change of tax and national insurance as a percentage of average gross earnings, including overtime and other payments, of National Health Service nurses between 1980 and the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 27 January 1988]:* Between 1980-81 and 1987-88 the real take-home pay of nurses rose by 22 per cent. In the same period, the proportion of their earnings taken in income tax and NIC is estimated to have increased by 0·7 percentage points from 26·2 per cent. to 26·9 per cent. If the 1978-79 tax régime had been kept in place and simply adjusted for inflation the proportion of earnings taken in tax and NIC in 1987-88 would have been 28·3 per cent.

Earnings figures are derived from the "New Earnings Survey" occupation category, "Registered and enrolled nurses, midwives" and are for those employed full-time on adult rates whose pay was not affected by absence. The nurse is assumed to be contracted out of SERPS.

SCOTLAND

Radioactivity

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of farms, the number of sheep and the area of land, in acres, under restriction in Scotland as a result of radioactivity from the Chernobyl accident; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: About 66,000 acres with some 63,000 sheep on 69 farms are currently under restriction in Scotland as a result of radioactivity from the Chernobyl accident.

Health Funds

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the present value of projected budget

allocation for each health fund for the years 1988-89 and 1989-90, if a National Health Service pay and prices deflator of 2 per cent. above gross domestic product is assumed.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Individual allocations to health boards for recurrent expenditure are made annually and are not projected ahead to later years.

Cheese Manufacturers (Milk Supplies)

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what action has been taken, following the meeting between the Minister of State responsible for Agriculture and the hon. Members for East Lothian, for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes), for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) on 11 November 1987, to improve the supply of milk to cheese manufacturers in Scotland; and if he will make a further statement on the situation in that industry with particular reference to its ability to supply both existing and potential markets.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: While some commercial elements are still to be resolved, discussions between the Scottish Milk Marketing Board and its counterparts south of the border to secure a supply of milk for manufacturers in Scotland are now at an advanced stage. All recognised cheddar plants in the Scottish board's area are currently producing cheese. Their ability to meet market demand will depend to an extent on the outcome of the inter-board negotiations.

Employment and Training (Accident Statistics)

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list for each year since 1983 the number of fatalities and accidents involving participants in Government employment and training schemes in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: Figures for fatalities and accidents to participants on employment and training schemes are not available, other than for YTS. For YTS the information is set out in the table.

	Accidents[1]		
Period	*Fatal*	*Major*	*Minor*
1983 (1 April to 31 December)	1	11	73
1984	1	33	227
1985	1	28	263
1986 (1 January to 31 March)	—	8	68
1986 (1 April to 31 December)[2]	1	38	143
1987[2]	—	56	265

[1] The figures are compiled on a similar basis to those prepared by the Health and Safety Executive on employed persons, but also include a number of accidents, in particular road traffic accidents during scheme time and accidents in educational establishments, which may not have been reportable to the HSE had the individuals been employed. The fatality in 1984 was a road traffic accident in scheme time.

[2] Up to 31 March 1986 major injuries were classified according to the criteria in the Notification of Accidents and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1980. From 1 April 1986 major injuries have been classified according to the criteria in the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1986. This has had the effect of reclassifying some accidents from the minor to the major category and means that figures before and after 31 March 1986 are not directly comparable.

Respite Care

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what hospitals offer respite care in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Detailed information is not held centrally. Respite care facilities are available in most psychiatric and geriatric hospitals and units and in units for the younger physically handicapped. Such facilities are also available in a number of general hospitals.

Cash Limits

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether the Lord Advocate proposes any changes to the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service cash and running cost limits for 1987-88.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The cash limit on class XX, vote 21, will be reduced by £250,000 from £17,706,000 to £17,456,000 and the running costs limit by £250,000 from £16,892,000 to £16,642,000 subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate. Class XX, vote 22, will be increased by £250,000 from £3,586,000 to £3,836,000.

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he proposes to make any further changes to the cash limits for 1987-88 within his responsibility.

Mr. Rifkind: I shall be making the following changes. As announced on 23 July 1987, at columns *434-36*, the cash limit for class XVI, vote 2 (Agricultural Services and Fisheries, Scotland) was increased by £1·400 million, from £69·959 million to £71·359 million to reflect the carry forward of capital underspends allowed under the end year flexibility scheme. Following expected savings on a number of services this cash limit can be reduced by £800,000 to give a revised cash limit of £70·559 million.

This reduction will partly offset an increase of £1·876 million on class XVI, vote 3 (Regional and General Industrial Support, Scotland) from £127·029 million to £128·905 million. The increase results from an expected shortfall in receipts from the European Community of £2·395 million. This is partly offset by decreases of £500,000 in the grant-in-aid to the Scottish Development Agency which expects to realise additional receipts of that amount and £19,000 net from miscellaneous subheads.

The cash limit on class XVI, vote 11 (Administration of Justice, Scotland) will be reduced by £100,000 from £13·121 million to £13·021 million. This reduction, which arises from lower than anticipated expenditure on a computer project, is partly to offset increased expenditure of £550,000 on class XVI, Vote 13 (Legal Proceedings, Scotland) which is not cash limited.

The cash limit for class XVI, vote 14 (Prisons, hospitals and community health service etc., Scotland) will be increased by £12·650 million from £1,721·125 million to £1,733·775 million. Of this increase £7·6 million was announced by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Education on 18 December 1987 to allow extra funding for hospitals and community health services. The remainder reflects the net extra cost of implementation in Scotland of the fresh start initiative in the prison service, and is offset by extra receipts, £3·750 million, and from provision not now required on class XVI, vote 12 (Police Grant, Legal Aid and Criminal Injuries Compensation, Scotland) £1·3 million.

I shall also be seeking parliamentary approval to increase class XVI, vote 26 (Privatisation of the electricity supply industry, Scotland) by £310,000 to give a revised cash limit of £680,000. This allows for higher than anticipated advisers' fees in preparation for the privatisation of the South of Scotland Electricity Board and the North of Scotland Hydro Electricity Board. It will be fully met from a cash limit reduction on class XVI, vote 21 (Scottish Office Administration) which will reduce the cash limit from £114·584 million to £114·274 million.

There is a related increase in the running costs limit for the Scottish Office of £6 million from £171·956 million to £177·956 million arising from the implementation of fresh start.

These changes represent a net charge on the Reserve of £9·141 million and will not therefore increase the planned total of public expenditure.

Parliamentary approval for the changes in voted expenditure will be sought through Supplementary Estimates.

ENERGY

Coal Reserves

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has on assessed coal reserves in *(a)* England as a whole and *(b)* Northumberland.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is a matter for the British Coal Corporation, and I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member. The Department does not undertake its own assessments of coal reserves vested in British Coal.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Suspension Statistics

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many hon. Members have been suspended from the service of the House in each year since 1974; and if he will break these figures down by party affiliation of the hon. Members concerned.

Mr. Wakeham: The information requested is as follows:

Session	*Number of members suspended*
1974	None
1974-75	None
1975-76	None
1976-77	None
1977-78	None
1978-79	None
1979-80	None
1980-81	1 Democratic Unionist
	1 Labour (twice)
1981-82	3 Democratic Unionist
	1 Labour
1982-83	None
1983-84	3 Labour
1984-85	None
1985-86	1 Labour
	1 Plaid Cymru
1986-87	None
1987-88[1]	3 Labour
	1 Plaid Cymru

[1] To date.

Guidance to Ministers

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Lord President of the Council whether *(a)* the Cabinet Office, *(b)* the Cabinet Secretary or *(c)* the Prime Minister have ever issued guidance to departmental Ministers as to Government policy on the extent of detail given in ministerial replies to parliamentary questions.

Mr. Wakeham: No such guidance has been issued to Ministers by *(a)* the Cabinet Office, *(b)* the Cabinet Secretary or *(c)* the Prime Minister. The extent of detail given in replies to parliamentary questions is a matter left to the judgment of individual departmental Ministers subject to parliamentary conventions and considerations such as cost.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Apartheid

86. **Mr. Caborn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what efforts he has made to provide increased assistance to the victims of apartheid in line with the Commonwealth Okanagan statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: I refer the hon. Member to the answers I gave to my hon. Friends the Member for Birmingham, Hall Green (Mr. Hargreaves) on 1 December 1987, at column *483*, and for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) on 11 January, at column *12*.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Departmental Property (Sussex)

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is the cost of the alterations to the former Foreign and Commonwealth Office radio station at Kings Standing, Sussex for uses as a nuclear shelter;

(2) what use is to be made by the general public of the nuclear shelter currently under construction at Kings Standing in Sussex.

Mr. John Patten: Part of this site is being developed as an administrative centre for use in a possible emergency. It is not the practice to give detailed information about facilities of this kind. The building is not intended for use by the general public.

Criminal Damage (Compensation)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will initiate a scheme to compensate, in a similar way to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, those who have suffered damage to property as the result of crime; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: There are no plans to initiate such a scheme.

Juvenile Crime

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many juvenile crimes have been dealt with in Seaham and Peterlee magistrates' courts in the last five years.

Mr. John Patten: The readily available information relates only to indictable offences and is given in the following table:

Defendants aged 10 and under 17 proceeded against for indictable offences in the Easington division[1]

Year	*Total proceeded against*
1982	303
1983	229
1984	245
1985	238
1986	167

[1] Includes Seaham and Peterlee magistrates' courts. Figures for 1986 are published in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales supplementary volumes" a copy of which is in the Library.

BBC Wales

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last met the Controller of BBC Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: My right hon. Friend has not yet had the opportunity to meet the Controller of BBC Wales.

Cash Limits

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he intends to make any changes to the 1987-88 cash limits within his responsibilities and to his Department's running cost limit.

Mr. Hurd: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate, the cash limit on class XI, vote 2, Prisons, England and Wales, will be increased by £38,159,000 which, after the surrender of the increase of £3,233,000 for end year flexibility announced by my right hon. Friend, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on 23 July 1987 at columns *434-8*, will increase from £681,137,000 to £716,063,000.

The Home Office running cost limit will also be increased by £22,387,000 from £758,815,000 to £781,202,000.

This additional provision is necessary partly to cover the cost of accommodating prisoners in police cells and the measures taken to cater for the unforeseen surge in the prison population during the first half of the year, and partly to meet extra costs incurred as a result of the delayed and phased implementation of the Fresh Start package of reforms in working practices and management structures in penal establishments.

This additional provision now required for class XI, vote 2, is found partly from money set aside to meet possible additional costs associated with Fresh Start when this cash limit for 1987-88 was agreed, partly from savings on the Central Administration, Miscellaneous and Community Services and Civil Defence, England and Wales, class XI, vote 3 and partly from the reserve. There is therefore no increase to the planned total of public expenditure.

The cash limit for the Central Administration, Miscellaneous and Community Services and Civil Defence, England and Wales, is reduced by £10,500,000 from £408,320,000 to £397,820,000. This reduction includes the surrender of the increase of £2,000,000 for end year flexibility announced 23 July 1987.

Chimpanzees, Baboons and Gorillas

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many chimpanzees, baboons and gorillas were imported into the United Kingdom in each of the last 10 years, showing for each year for what purposes and from which countries of origin.

Mr. Moynihan: The best available statistics are published by the Department and by the European Commission in annual reports for the years 1978 to 1985 under the convention on international trade in endangered species. These and statistics as yet unpublished for 1986 and 1987, indicate the following imports during the last 10 years:

Year	*Number*	*Purpose*	*Country of origin*
Chimpanzees			
1978	—	—	—
1979	—	—	—
1980	—	—	—
1981	1	Trade	Kenya
1982	—	—	—
1983	1	Zoo	Zaire
1984	—	—	—
1985	1	Exhibition	USA (captive bred)
1986	—	—	—
1987	4	Breeding/Exhibition	Kenya
Baboons			
1978	230	Not stated	Kenya
	116	Not stated	Senegal
	50	Not stated	Ethiopia
1979	—	—	—
1980	758	Trade	Ethiopia
	605	Trade	Kenya
	411	Trade	Senegal
1981	780	Commercial	Ethiopia
	160	Commercial	Senegal
	132	Commercial	Kenya
1982	1,121	Trade	Ethiopia
	300	Trade	Kenya
	50	Trade	Senegal
	6	Research	USA
1983	690	Trade	Ethiopia
	310	Trade	Kenya
	10	Trade	Senegal
1984	578	Not stated	Ethiopia
	212	Not stated	Kenya
1985	651	Not stated	Ethiopia
	10	Not stated	Senegal
1986	745	Scientific	Ethiopia
	129	Scientific	Kenya
	18	Personal	South Africa
	12	Breeding/Exhibition	Kenya
	8	Scientific	Senegal
1987	207	Scientific	Ethiopia
	80	Scientific	Kenya
	21	Personal	Zimbabwe
	3	Scientific	Senegal
Gorillas			
1978	—	—	—
1979	—	—	—
1980	—	—	—
1981	—	—	—
1982	1	Zoo	Gabon
1983	—	—	—
1984	1	Breeding/Exhibition	Congo
1985	—	—	—
1986	—	—	—
1987	3	Breeding/Exhibition	Congo

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Crown Prosecution Service (Cash Limit)

Mr. Knox: To ask the Attorney-General whether any changes will be made to the Crown Prosecution Service's cash limit and running costs limit for 1987-88.

The Attorney-General: Yes. The cash limit on class XX, vote 25 (Law Charges, England and Wales) will be reduced by £22,209,000 from £107,009,000 to £84,800,000 and the running costs limit by £21,209,000 from £103,209,000 to £82,000,000. This is because the Department has, so far, failed to recruit sufficient staff to carry out its statutory duties. Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate, the non-cash limited class XX, vote 26 (Crown Prosecutions, England and Wales) will be increased by £8,100,000 gross. It will be offset by additional receipts of £4,500,000 increasing the net provision by £3,600,000 from £44,900,000 to £48,500,000. Most of this increase is needed to hire private agents to perform the functions of Crown prosecutors. The balance of £18,609,000 will be surrendered to the reserve.

TRANSPORT

Vehicle Registration

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made with his Department's review of the vehicle registration numbering system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: The consultative group which was asked to undertake the review has now submitted its report. The group examined a wide range of possible systems and conducted a major public consultation exercise. The majority of responses, from a wide variety of interested parties, showed a clear preference for the present system. After considering these responses, the group has unanimously recommended that the present registration numbering system, with the year prefix letter changing each August, should remain in place. having carefully considered the group's report, I have decided to accept its recommendation, and thus to retain the existing system unchanged.

The report is today being published and I am placing copies in the Library of the House.

Cash Limits

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what changes are proposed to the 1987-88 cash limit on his Department's votes and to his Department's running costs limit.

Mr. Channon: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate, the cash limit for class VIII vote 4 is to be increased by £1,477,000 from £116,179,000 to £117,656,000. The cash limit for class VIII vote 2 is to be reduced by £4,806,000 from £192,400,000 to £187,594,000 to take account of transfers of:—

(a) £2,500,000 to the non-cash limited class VIII vote 3 as a partial offset to the increased cost of port severances in the spring Supplementary Estimate on that vote, which is also subject to parliamentary approval;

(b) £1,477,000 to class VIII vote 4 as an offset to the spring Supplementary Estimate on that vote; and

(c) £829,000 to class VIII vote 5 as a partial offset to increased public expenditure on rural bus grants on that vote.

The balance of the spring Supplementary Estimate on class VIII vote 3 will be charged to the reserve and the balance of the increased requirement for rural bus grants will be offset by savings on class VIII vote 5, in neither case adding to the planning total of public expenditure.

The running costs limit of the Department of Transport has been reduced by £80,000 from £272,850,000 to £272,770,000. This £80,000 will be transferred to the running costs limit of the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland to cover the cost of additional work which it is undertaking as the agent of the Department of Transport on the licensing and registration of vehicles in Northern Ireland.

Pension Schemes (Government Contributions)

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to reduce the Government's contribution under the Transport Act 1980 to the British Rail pension scheme or to the National Freight Corporation pension scheme.

Mr. David Mitchell: I have no immediate plans to reduce these pension contributions. But the amounts involved are substantial (some £90 million a year to railway pension schemes, and £6 million to NFC schemes), so that the necessity for them must be kept under review. I am in touch with the chairman of British Rail about this and would, of course, also consult the chairman of the NFC before deciding on any action which would affect the contribution to NFC schemes.

Any changes in the existing arrangements for Exchequer funding of BR or NFC pensions would require primary legislation, and would not affect any pension rights already earned.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Equal Opportunities

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he plans to upgrade the equal opportunities officer post in his Department to grade 7, in line with civil service guidance.

Mrs. Rumbold: The grading of the equal opportunity officer's post will be considered in the light of a regular staffing review of the Department's personnel division now taking place.

Derbyshire (Capital Spending)

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was capital spending on education in Derbyshire for each parliamentary constituency in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Dunn: Data relating to individual constituencies are not available. Excluding expenditure on voluntary aided schools, gross capital expenditure on education in Derbyshire for the years in question was as follows:

	£
1986-87	9,647,731
1985-86	9,311,397

	£
1984-85	11,109,215
1983-84	9,367,044
1982-83	10,442,459
1981-82	10,062,010
1980-81	9,069,225
1979-80	6,913,713
1978-79	6,686,695
1977-78	7,138,386

Source: Department of Environment Form CO1.

Expenditure on voluntary aided schools in 1986-87 and 1985-86 was £186,580 and £310,314 respectively. Data in relation to earlier years could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Degree Courses

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion of children whose father's occupation is given as being in social class III, IV and V were university or polytechnic students undertaking degree courses in 1986; and what were the comparable figures in 1958, 1961, 1971 and 1981.

Mr. Jackson: It is estimated the number of university entrants from social classes IIIm, IV and V as a percentage of the relevant working class population was 3 per cent. in each of the years 1986, 1981 and 1971; 2 per cent. in 1961 and 1 per cent. in 1955. Information for 1958 is not available.

Similar information is not collected by the polytechnic central admissions system, but a sample survey of young people attempting examinations qualifying them for HE entry in 1985 indicated that about 7 per cent. of the relevant working class population entered some form of HE including sub-degree courses. A sample survey of 21-year-olds in 1962 indicated the equivalent percentage then was 3 per cent.

Cash Limits

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give details of any revised cash limits for his Department's votes in 1987-88.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimates where appropriate the following cash limit changes have been made:

£'000

Class	*Vote*	*Description of expenditure*	*Current cash limit*	*Revision*	*Revised cash limit*
XII	3	Universities etc.	1,708,028	−1,410	1,706,618
XII	4	Central administration	58,309	+450	58,759
XII	5	Agricultural and Food Research Council	54,427	+512	54,939
XII	7	Natural Environment Research Council	72,070	+1,250	73,320
XII	8	Science and Engineering Research Council	357,752	−290	357,462

The increase on vote 4 is needed to cover the running costs of extra staff required to implement the Government's education reforms. A reduction in expenditure on staff seconded to outside bodies means that the associated gross running costs limit is unchanged, but the consequent reduction in receipts for seconded out salaries results in the need for an increase in net provision.

The increase on vote 5 is required to reimburse the Agricultural and Food Research Council for costs incurred by the council in 1987-88 as a result of the sale of the National Seed Development Organisation and the assets of the Plant Breeding Institute.

The increase on vote 7 is to reinforce the work of the British Antarctic Survey.

The increases on votes 4 and 7 are offset by reductions on votes 3 and 8. Of the increase in vote 5, £200,000 will be met from unallocated expenditure provision within the science budget with the remainder charged to the reserve. These changes will not therefore add to the planned total public expenditure.

LINK Programme

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about progress on the LINK programme.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: In announcing the LINK initiative, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister indicated the Government's intention to boost industrially relevant research and development, and to make scientists and the business community more aware of the potential of science and technology for commercial exploitation. LINK will eventually range over the whole spectrum of science based technology.

Today, with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, I have announced the first five LINK programme areas. These are — molecular electronics, advanced semiconductor materials, industrial measurement systems, eukaryotic genetic engineering, and nanotechnology. Each of these programmes is in a key area of strategic research. The first five programmes will account for some £83 million. The total expenditure on LINK by Government and industry is expected to be at least £420 million over the next five years; Government will meet up to half of the cost of each programme.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

South Africa (Exports)

87. **Mr. Cunliffe:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy on the exportation of plastic film to South Africa, in the light of United Nations arms embargo.

Mr. Alan Clark: The export of plastic film to South Africa is not in breach of the United Nations arms embargo or any of our international commitments.

Apartheid

88. Mr. Turner: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what are the implications of Her Majesty's Government's support for the forthcoming United Kingdom South Africa Trade Association trade mission for his policy on apartheid; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: Government policy towards South Africa remains unchanged. Within the limits of our international obligations, the full range of DTI services is available to the United Kingdom South Africa Trade Association trade mission to South Africa.

Regional Development

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list by name and location the amount of regional development grant and regional selective assistance grant moneys made available for private nursing homes in Tyne and Wear, Northumberland, Durham and Cleveland in each of the last two years.

Mr. Atkins: Private nursing homes do not qualify for regional development grant. There were three offers of regional selective assistance in Tyne and Wear, Northumberland, Durham and Cleveland in the two years ended 31 December 1987. Details are as follows:

Name and location	*Amount* £
Mr. and Mrs. P. Smith, Whitley Bay	10,000
Redezeus, Sunderland	25,000
John Lisle, Whitley Bay	20,000

British Steel

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he last met the chairman of British Steel; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Atkins: I last met Sir Robert Scholey on 16 December when we discussed a number of matters relating to the corporation and its prospects.

Regional Development Grants

Mr. Allan Roberts: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list all those companies which have received regional development grants for the years 1979 to 1987, inclusive; and *(a)* how much each company received and *(b)* for what purpose the grant was provided.

Mr. Atkins: The information requested is only available at disproportionate cost. However, details of grant recipients above certain thresholds are published quarterly in "British Business". The relevant publication dates are given in the table.

		Date
1979	Q1	18 May 1979
	Q2	19 October 1979
	Q3	7 December 1979
	Q4	22 February 1980
1980	Q1	6 June 1980
	Q2	29 August 1980
	Q3	28 November 1980
	Q4	13 February 1981
1981	Q1	15 May 1981
	Q2	7 August 1981
	Q3	6 November 1981
	Q4	12 February 1982
1982	Q1	7 May 1982
	Q2	13 August 1982
	Q3	29 October 1982
	Q4	4 February 1983
1983	Q1	6 May 1983
	Q2	29 July 1983
	Q3	4 November 1983
	Q4	3 February 1984
1984	Q1	25 May 1984
	Q2	31 August 1984
	Q3	9 November 1984
	Q4	15 February 1985
1985	Q1	10 May 1985
	Q2	16 August 1985
	Q3	17 January 1986
	Q4	11 April 1986
1986	Q1	20 June 1986
	Q2	19 September 1986
	Q3	5 December 1986
	Q4	10 April 1987
1987	Q1	10 July 1987
	Q2	4 September 1987
	Q3	18 December 1987

Notes:
Details published are:

(i) original RDG scheme: individual payments which exceed £25,000;

(ii) revised RDG scheme: payments to individual undertakings in a Travel-to-work-Area which cumulatively exceed £25,000 in any one quarter.

Pest Control Services (Report)

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when the report of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission on the supply of pest control services is to be published; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: The commission found that a monopoly situation existed in favour of the Rentokil Group plc and its subsidiary operating company, Rentokil Ltd., which supplied over 60 per cent. of the United Kingdom market for pest control services. They concluded that Rentokil had established a dominant position in the market which enabled it to fix its prices largely unconstrained by competition. Many customers were charged higher prices than they would be in conditions of normal competition. There was an unduly limited choice of suppliers, particularly for customers who required a nationwide service.

Where Rentokil does encounter competition, the commission noted that its high profitability — as illustrated by its 28 per cent. return on turnover and its 92 per cent. return on capital employed—had enabled it to cut its prices selectively, thus inhibiting the development of competition. The commission found that Rentokil's differential pricing practices operated against the public interest.

As a remedy against the charging of high prices, the commission has proposed that Rentokil should provide more information in written statements to its customers about the way its charges have been calculated.

The commission pointed out that some of Rentokil's past acquisitions of smaller pest control companies had been designed to reduce competition or frustrate the expansion of potentially larger companies. Rentokil's

stated policy was now to expand by organic growth of its existing business rather than through further acquisitions. Nevertheless, the commission referred to the Director General of Fair Trading's duty under the Fair Trading Act 1973 to keep himself informed about the creation of merger situations and suggested that this task would be facilitated if Rentokil gave an undertaking to notify him of any proposed acquisitions of other pest control companies.

Where an MMC report finds that aspects of a monopoly operate against the public interest, the Fair Trading Act gives me powers to take appropriate action to remedy the adverse effects. These powers include a requirement to divest assets and prohibition of price distrimination. Although this report did not specifically canvass these possibilities, I thought it right to consider these and other options. However, I accept the MMC's view that in the circumstances of this case, the most appropriate remedy is that Rentokil should provide the customer with more information.

I am consequently asking the Director General of Fair Trading to hold discussions with Rentokil with a view to obtaining appropriate undertakings; that Rentokil should provide more information about its charges to customers and that the company will notify him of any proposal to acquire further pest control companies.

Cash Limits

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether any changes will be made to his Department's cash limits and running cost limit for 1987-88.

Mr. Butcher: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimates, the cash limit for Class V, Vote 2 will be reduced by £7,498,000 to £456,751,000 to offset the increased provision on Class V, Vote 1. The cash limit for Class V, Vote 3 will be reduced by £2,000,000 to £148,085,000 since £2,000,000 of the planned expenditure on accommodation works for the DTI has been met from PSA expenditure on Class XX, Vote 19. The Department's running cost limit has been reduced by £165,000 to £275,207,000 to reflect the reclassification of £139,000 of Industrial Research Establishment expenditure and to allow an increase of £26,000 in the Government Actuary's Department's running costs to cover additional work on behalf of my Department's insurance division. No net increase to public expenditure results from these changes.

Chile (Ministerial Visit)

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if, pursuant to his answer of 30 November 1987, *Official Report*, column *380*, he will list the representatives of the Chilean opposition whom the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Clark), met during his trip to Chile, indicating whether the meetings were separate or in a group, and giving the venue for each.

Mr. Alan Clark *[holding answer 2 February 1988]:* I met the following in the British embassy residence. I had discussions with them individually and we then assembled for a private dinner hosted by His Excellency Mr. Alan White.

Sr. Patricio Phillips, President, National Party.
Sr. Juan Hamilton, Vice-President, Christian Democrat Party.
Sr. Heraldo Munoz, University of Chile.
Sr. Rene Abeliuk, Former President, Social Democratic Party.
Sr. German Molina, Chilean Human Rights Commission, Member, Izquierda Cristiana Party.
Sr. Armando Jaramillo, President, Republican Party.
Sr. Ricardo Claro, University of Chile.
Sr. Jovino Novoa Vasquez, Member, Renovacion Nacional Party.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

AIDS

7. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further plans he has to contribute to the international effort to combat the spread of AIDS.

Mr. Eggar: We will continue to play a full and active part in international co-operative efforts.

On 26-28 January, we hosted in London a world summit of Ministers of Health on programmes for AIDS prevention. This conference, jointly organised with the World Health Organisation, was attended by representatives of 149 countries of whom over three quarters were Ministers. A London declaration on AIDS prevention was adopted by consensus; this should help to give a significant impetus to the development of public education and information programmes as the single most important component — in the absence of vaccine or cure — of national AIDS programmes.

As my right hon. Friend Secretary of State for Social Services announced on 26 January, we will, subject to parliamentary approval, be contributing a further £4·5 million from the overseas aid programme to the World Health Organisation's global programme on AIDS in 1988.

NATO-Warsaw Pact (Force Balances)

14. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the progress being made in talks on the present imbalance in conventional forces between NATO and the Warsaw pact.

Mr. Mellor: The MBFR talks, which deal with a limited area of central Europe, have made no real progress for the last 15 years. The main reason has been the Warsaw pact's failure to provide adequate data on its forces or to accept proper verification. Informal discussions are now under way in Vienna with a view to setting up a new negotiating forum within the framework of the CSCE process. This would deal with the whole of Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals. Progress has so far been encouraging. We hope that substantive talks can begin later this year.

Drug Running

15. **Mr. Gerald Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what his Department is doing to counter the international threat from drug runners.

Mr. Eggar: We are taking a leading role both bilaterally and in multilateral organisations. We have played an active part in United Nations activities in this field and within the Council of Europe. We make substantial

contributions to international assistance programmes and are working to conclude reciprocal agreements for the tracing, seizing and confiscation of traffickers' assets.

65. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government are receiving co-operation from the Government of Thailand in tackling the question of drug running.

Mr. Eggar: There are frequent exchanges between the drug enforcement bodies of the Royal Thai Government and their British counterparts. I will be visiting Thailand next week with a view to establishing areas for further co-operation on drugs matters.

71. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government is receiving co-operation from the Government of Pakistan on tackling the question of drug running.

Mr. Eggar: There are regular exchanges between the Pakistan enforcement bodies and the corresponding British authorities. When I visit Pakistan later this week I will be looking to see if this valuable co-operation can be improved further.

Cyprus

16. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current situation in Cyprus.

Mrs. Chalker: For the last few months, attention in Cyprus has been focused on the presidential election which is to take place on 14 February. Once the election is over, we believe the United Nations Secretary-General's new permanent special representative will begin fresh efforts to find a way forward.

45. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to make an official visit to Cyprus; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend has no present plans to visit Cyprus.

Middle East

17. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response he has made to the statement made by the Palestine Liberation Organisation leader Yasser Arafat in January that the Palestine Liberation Organisation would recognise Israel in exchange for Israeli and United States' agreement to participate in an international peace conference on the middle east.

Mr. Mellor: None. The Palestine Liberation Organisation cannot expect to play a role at an international peace conference until it unambiguously renounces violence, accepts United Nations Security Council resolutions 242 and 338, and acknowledges Israel's right to a secure existence.

25. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he intends to discuss middle east problems with his opposite number in the European Economic Community member states; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend expects to discuss middle eastern questions with his European colleagues at their next meeting on 8 February.

33. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will take steps to promote an international conference to promote peace in the middle east.

Mr. Mellor: We shall continue to work for an international conference under United Nations auspices as the framework for negotiations between the parties directly concerned.

Sharpeville Six

18. **Mr. Meale:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the South African Government to secure the grant of clemency in relation to the Sharpeville Six.

73. **Mr. Corbett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what instructions he has given to the British embassy in South Africa with regard to securing a grant of clemency in relation to the Sharpeville Six; and if he will make a statement.

75. **Mrs. Ann Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action Her Majesty's Government have taken towards securing a grant of clemency in relation to the Sharpeville Six.

Mrs. Chalker: In February 1986, Her Majesty's ambassador expressed to the South African Government our concern at the death sentences and at allegations that some of the accused had been tortured. After their appeals had been dismissed last December, the members of the European Community made a collective appeal for clemency. We also supported a statement issued on behalf of the United Nations Security Council. We have since reiterated our concern direct to the South African Government.

23. **Mr. Buchan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has contacted the South African ambassador over the issue of the granting of clemency in relation to the Sharpeville Six; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: In February 1986, Her Majesty's ambassador expressed to the South African Government our concern at the death sentences and at allegations that some of the accused had been tortured. After their appeals had been dismissed last December, the German ambassador made an appeal for clemency on behalf of the European Community. We also supported a statement issued on behalf of the United Nations Security Council urging the South African Government to commute the death sentences on the six. We have since reiterated our concern direct to the South African Government.

Chinese Foreign Minister

19. **Mr. Andrew MacKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next plans to meet the Chinese Foreign Minister.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As I said in the House on 20 January, I look forward to welcoming Mr. Wu Xuegian on an official visit to Britain in the spring.

EC (Foreign Policy)

20. **Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he is satisfied with the progress being made towards achieving co-operation in foreign policy between European Community members.

Mrs. Chalker: Yes. The ability to speak and act together with the Twelve is a significant help in achieving British objectives. The Twelve have issued declarations on a wide range of major international issues as they have arisen. At the European Council in December 1987 they welcomed the INF agreement between the United States and Soviet Union; called on the Soviet Union to withdraw all its troops from Afghanistan by a date in 1988; reiterated their support for an international conference on the middle east; expressed their concern at the situation in the occupied territories; and called for an end to the Iran-Iraq conflict and a follow-up resolution to enforce implementation of Security Council resolution 598.

51. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next proposes to have discussions with his European Community partners concerning the developments of common European foreign policies.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend will be meeting his colleagues from the Twelve to discuss European political co-operation matters on 8 February.

Nigeria

21. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on relations between the Federal Government of Nigeria and Her Majesty's Government, in the light of the recent visit to Nigeria by the Prime Minister.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's visit to Nigeria demonstrated the close and cordial relations we enjoy with a fellow Commonwealth member.

Mr. Govan Mbeki

22. **Mr. McLeish:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the South African Government about the restrictions being placed upon Mr. Govan Mbeki by the South African police and the security services.

Mrs. Chalker: We regret the South African Government's decision to place restrictions on Mr. Mbeki and have made our views known to them.

African National Congress

24. **Mr. Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last made official contact with representatives of the African National Congress.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend met the president of the African National Congress, Mr. Oliver Tambo, on 20 September 1986 when he was president of the Foreign Affairs Council of the European Community.

Afghanistan

26. **Mr. Couchman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has about Soviet intentions towards withdrawing from Afghanistan.

78. **Mr. Soames:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has about the Soviet Union's intentions with regard to a total withdrawal of their military forces from Afghanistan.

Mr. Eggar: We welcome the Soviet Union's publicity expressed wish to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan. We look to it to do so this year.

46. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to meet his counterpart in the Afghanistan Government; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: No.

Austria

27. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on United Kingdom relations with Austria.

Mrs. Chalker: Relations between the United Kingdom and Austria are friendly and reflect the common interests of our Governments and peoples.

Pakistan

28. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has about the extent of the Afghan refugee burden on Pakistan.

Mr. Eggar: There are some 3 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan. We admire Pakistan's generosity in giving them refuge. We have ourselves provided about £50 million in assistance to these refugees since 1980.

Central America (Peace Plan)

29. **Mr. McTaggart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to congratulate the President of Nicaragua on his compliance with the Arias central American peace plan, and enjoin all parties to the conflict in Nicaragua, including the United States of America, similarly to comply.

Mr. Eggar: The central American Presidents decided on 15-16 January that they were not entirely satisfied that the peace agreement had been fully complied with. Statements issued by the Twelve members of the European Community on 15 and 26 January urged all the central American countries to fulfil their outstanding obligations without delay and requested all parties indirectly involved to contribute to the efforts to achieve peace.

63. **Mr. Hood:** To ask the Secretary of State for foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with his counterparts in central America about the progress of the Arias peace plan; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Her Majesty's ambassadors in the region maintain close contact with the Governments of Central America about the peace plan. We shall have the

opportunity to discuss it with central American Foreign Ministers during the European Community/Central America/Contadora meeting in Hamburg on 29 February to 1 March. The United Kingdom will take an active part in these discussions.

72. **Mr. MacDonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has made any offer of assistance to President Arias of Costa Rica in his efforts to bring peace to central America.

Mr. Eggar: We and our European Community partners have strongly supported his efforts to bring peace and strengthen democracy in the region. As recently as 26 January a statement by the Twelve reaffirmed our readiness to assist the peace process to the best of our ability. The doubling of European Community aid commitments to the region underlines our support.

Moscow

80. **Sir George Young:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has any plans to pay an official visit to Moscow.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. and learned Friend will be visiting the Soviet Union from 14 to 17 February at the invitation of the Soviet Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Eduard Shevardnadze. He expects to discuss a broad range of issues, including bilateral relations, arms control, regional questions and human rights.

South Africa

31. **Mr. Anderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether any ministerial visits are planned to South Africa over the coming year.

Mrs. Chalker: No ministerial visits to South Africa are at present planned.

37. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will name those black moderate leaders within South Africa, or their representatives, whom he has met since June 1983 and the places and dates of his meetings.

Mrs. Chalker: Since June 1983 my right hon. and learned Friend has met many representatives of black opinion in South Africa including Chief Buthelezi, Archbishop Tutu, Chief Mabuza, members of the House of Delegates and members of the National African Federated Chamber of Commerce. In the last 18 months, I have met among others, Dr. Phatudi, Archbishop Tutu, Mr. Gumede and Dr. Boesak.

67. **Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the South African Government about the recent curbs on legal trade union activity.

Mrs. Chalker: We have welcomed the legalisation of black trades unions in South Africa. We continue to follow their development with interest. We have made repeated representations to the South African Government about the detention without charge of trades unionists and others.

Gaza Strip

32. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to pay an official visit to the Gaza strip.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. and learned Friend has no present plans to visit the Gaza strip.

EC (Political Development)

34. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on political development on the EEC in 1988 to date.

Mrs. Chalker: Negotiations have concentrated on the future financing of the Community. We have made it clear that effective and binding control over Community spending is essential to any agreement.

EC (Internal Market)

35. **Mr. Quentin Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will raise at the next Foreign Affairs Council the progress being made towards achieving an internal market in the European Community by 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend and I regularly discuss progress towards completing the single European market with EC Foreign Ministers. Detailed discussions on the single market are pursued in the internal market and other specialist councils. Over 100 measures towards that goal have been agreed in the past 18 months, 48 of them during the United Kingdom presidency.

Gulf (Protection of Shipping)

36. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received concerning the protection of shipping in the Gulf area.

Mr. Mellor: We are in close and frequent contact with a wide range of Governments, shipping organisations and unions about the protection of shipping in the Gulf. We remain committed to the principle of freedom of navigation, and will continue to do everything possible to assist British merchant shipping in the region.

Falkland Islands Council

38. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next intends to meet representatives of the Falkland Islands Council; and what matters he intends to discuss.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend has no current plans to meet Falkland Islands councillors.

Chemical Weapons

39. **Mr. Moss:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the progress being made towards achieving a verifiable worldwide ban on chemical weapons.

Mr. Mellor: Encouraging progress was made last year in the chemical weapons negotiations in Geneva. In July the United Kingdom tabled a paper on practical steps

needed to ensure the effective implementation of a ban. However, complex issues remain to be dealt with, particularly on verification and arrangements for an international inspectorate, if we are to achieve an effective convention.

Acid Rain

40. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received from foreign Governments concerning the pollution of other European countries by acid rain, resulting from pollution emanating from Britain.

Mr. Eggar: We maintain close contact at all levels with a number of countries, mainly in Europe, on a range of pollution issues including acid rain.

UNESCO

41. **Sir Russell Johnston:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government will now reconsider British membership of UNESCO.

Mr. Eggar: As we made clear when we withdrew from UNESCO, we would need to see clear evidence that fundamental and far-reaching reform had been achieved in the organisation before we could reconsider our position on membership. We welcome the appointment of a new director-general; but our fundamental concerns remain UNESCO's programmes and administration. We shall follow developments in UNESCO closely, in order to see how the reform process proceeds and will keep an open mind.

44. **Sir Jim Spicer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representation he has received about the Government's policy towards contacts with UNESCO.

Mr. Eggar: We have received no formal representations.

Angola

42. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will have discussions with the Angolan Government about how Britain could best assist the People's Republic of Angola, in the light of the South African Government's failure to comply with United Nations Security Council Resolution 602; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: We are in regular contact with the Government of Angola through normal diplomatic channels.

56. **Mrs. Wise:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make representations to the South African Government about the withdrawal of its troops from the territory of the People's Republic of Angola; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: We support United Nations Security Council resolutions 602 of 25 November and 606 of 23 December, both of which called for the immediate withdrawal of South African troops from Angola. We continue to urge this upon the South African Government.

Namibia

43. **Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he has taken to secure South Africa's compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 601 on Namibia, and the early implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 435; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: We have taken every opportunity, both publicly and in private, to urge on the South African Government the pressing need for them to withdraw from Namibia and allow the early implementation of Security Council resolution 435.

76. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last conveyed to the South African Government Her Majesty's Government's demand for South African withdrawal from Namibia; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: We take every opportunity, both publicly and in private, to urge on the South African Government the pressing need for them to withdraw from Namibia and allow free and fair elections in accordance with the United Nations plan for Namibian independence.

Anglo-Japanese Relations

47. **Mr. Gerald Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current state of Anglo-Japanese relations.

Mr. Eggar: Relations are good and friendly. During my right hon. and learned Friend's recent visit to Japan he and Foreign Minister Uno reaffirmed both Governments' commitment to building and strengthening our mutually beneficial partnership.

Hong Kong

48. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met the Governor of Hong Kong and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend last met the Governor on 26 October last year. Their discussions reviewed the whole range of current issues involving Hong Kong. Such meetings play an important part in our close and regular consultations with Hong Kong.

57. **Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received about the introduction of greater democracy in Hong Kong; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend has received representations on this subject from a variety of sources in Hong Kong and the United Kingdom, covering a range of opinions. These have been carefully considered and will be taken fully into account in the decisions which will be announced in the Hong Kong Government's White Paper in February.

British Citizens (Overseas Assistance)

49. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action the Government are taking to ensure that adequate help is given to British citizens abroad in genuine distress.

Mr. Eggar: Her Majesty's consular staff overseas make every effort to give prompt, sympathetic and effective advice and whatever help they properly can to distressed British nationals seeking assistance.

Demand for consular services continues to rise sharply with nearly 27 million people travelling abroad from the United Kingdom in 1987 compared with only 5·5 million 20 years ago. Both procedures and staffing are kept under constant review to ensure the optimum use of available resources.

The aim of our public education activities, including the wide distribution of the consular leaflet "Get It Right Before You Go", is to explain what consuls can and cannot do and to encourage self-help, wherever possible, so as to enable consular staff to concentrate on cases of genuine distress.

European Parliament (Electoral System)

50. **Mr. Fearn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will report on the progress which has been made towards the establishment of a uniform electoral system for the European Parliament in time for the 1989 elections.

Mrs. Chalker: Discussion has so far produced no agreement among the member states of the European Community on a uniform electoral procedure.

PLO

52. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will hold an official meeting with the London representative of the Palestine Liberation Organisation to discuss the recent development of Palestine Liberation Organisation policy on the recognition of Israel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: No.

Common Agricultural Policy

53. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the Government will take steps to ensure that there is a thorough reform of the common agricultural policy before any further money is provided for the European Community.

Mrs. Chalker: I have nothing to add to the statement made by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on Tuesday 8 December, at column 167, following the European Council.

Ministerial Visits (Central America)

54. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when was the last visit by a Minister of Her Majesty's Government to *(a)* Costa Rica, *(b)* El Salvador, *(c)* Guatemala, *(d)* Honduras and *(e)* Nicaragua.

Mr. Eggar: Baroness Young the then Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, visited Costa Rica in January 1986 and Guatemala in February 1987. There have been no ministerial visits to Honduras, El Salvador or Nicaragua in recent years.

Gulf (UN Naval Command)

55. **Mr. Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he is yet in a position to report on progress towards a United Nations naval command in the Gulf

Mr. Mellor: The Soviet Union has put forward a number of proposals relating to the establishment of a United Nations naval force for the Gulf. We continue to believe that such a force would be impractical in current circumstances.

Japan

58. **Mr. Gregory:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he discussed the balance of trade between the United Kingdom and Japan during his recent visit to Japan; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend's talks with Foreign Minister Uno, with International Trade and Industry Minister Mr. Tamura, and with leading representatives of Japanese industry included discussion of trade. He called for Japanese efforts to increase domestic demand to open her markets. We note the United Kingdom exports to Japan rose 30 per cent. in the first 11 months of 1987 and are now worth over £1,500 million per annum.

Nelson Mandela

59. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last made representations to the South African Government for the release of Mr. Nelson Mandela and other imprisoned leaders of the African National Congress.

Mrs. Chalker: With the Commonwealth and our European partners we have long called for the unconditional release of Mr. Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners. The issue was last raised with the South African Government in January.

United States Ambassador

60. **Mr. Lamond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met the ambassador of the United States of America; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend regularly meets the United States ambassador to discuss a wide range of bilateral and international topics and values this frank and constructive dialogue. They last met on 19 January.

Third World Debt

61. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will meet the other Foreign Ministers of the EEC to discuss Third world debt; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend meets his counterparts from the European Community and other leading industrialised countries regularly. Debt is often discussed.

Kampuchea

64. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he intends to review Her Majesty's Government's current policy on Kampuchea.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to the statement I made during the Adjournment debate on Cambodia on 21 January, at column 1224.

French Government (Visa Requirements)

66. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made in response to the imposition of visa requirements by the French Government in the light of the problems which have arisen in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

Mrs. Chalker: None.

Spain and Portugal

68. **Mr. Curry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what ministerial contacts there have been recently with Spain and Portugal on European affairs.

Mrs. Chalker: I visited Madrid and Lisbon from 17 to 19 January for talks with Spanish and Portuguese Ministers.

SADCC Countries

Mr. Wells: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on the progress of the policy he is pursuing with SADCC countries.

Mrs. Chalker: Britain has long been involved in working to strengthen the economies of SADCC states, to reduce their economic dependence on South Africa and, through the SADCC organisation, to restore the natural pattern of transport in the region by rehabilitation of regional routes through Mozambique. From 1980 to 1986 Britain gave £819 million in bilateral aid to SADCC states.

My hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development visited Tanzania from 26 to 30 January to attend SADCC's annual meeting in Arusha (28-29 January) and for bilateral discussions. During his visits my hon. Friend announced a further £10 million of British aid for the SADCC organisation's projects, taking our total pledges to SADCC to £45 million. He also announced £20 million additional programme aid for Tanzania. Our aid is highly valued by SADCC states. Steady progress is now being made in the rehabilitation of the regional transport routes.

Diplomats (Parking Fines)

70. **Sir Anthony Grant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government have any plans to seek to reduce further the number of unpaid parking fines by diplomats in London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: We seek continually to reduce the number of unpaid parking fines by diplomats in London through the firm application of the policy described in its White Paper on diplomatic immunities and privileges (Cmnd. 9497). The figures for unpaid fines for the full year of 1987 are not yet available, but will be published as soon as possible. We expect that they will show a further decrease on those for 1986.

Middle East (Killings)

74. **Mr. McCartney:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to instruct Her Majesty's consulate in Jerusalem to forward Her Majesty's Government's condolences to the families of those shot dead by the Israeli security services during the recent disturbances in the occupied territories; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: No. We sympathise with all those—Palestinians and Israelis—who have suffered as a result of the recent violence.

Chile

77. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met the Chilean ambassador to discuss relations with Chile.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend last met the Chilean ambassador on 1 December 1987 to discuss bilateral relations, including the question of human rights.

Syria (Nerve Gas)

79. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the implications for the middle east peace process of allegations by the Government of Israel that Syria is developing nerve gas production facilities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The development of chemical weapons by any state in the region cannot but further complicate an already difficult and dangerous situation. We are working for a global ban on chemical weapons as the only practical way to relieve mankind of this terrible threat overshadowing his future.

Nicaragua

80. **Dr. Moonie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to expand United Kingdom diplomatic representation in Nicaragua.

Mr. Eggar: Yes. A third United Kingdom-based diplomatic service officer is shortly to be posted to Managua as proconsul.

African National Congress Office, Bulawayo (Attack)

81. **Miss Mowlam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the South African Government about the infringement of Zimbabwean sovereignty during the attack by the South African armed forces on the African National Congress office in Bulawayo in January.

Mrs. Chalker: So far as we know, the Zimbabwe Government have not claimed that the South African armed forces were involved in the attack. However, we are opposed to cross-border violations in either direction

however and wherever they occur. We have consistently urged the South African Government to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of their neighbours.

South Lebanon (Bombing Raids)

82. **Ms. Short:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further representations he has made to the Israeli Government about the retaliatory bombing raids by the Israeli air force against civilian targets in South Lebanon; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The Israeli Government are well aware that we condemn such raids.

Occupied Territories (Deportation)

83. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he proposes to make to the Israeli Government about the breach of international law involved in the deportation of Palestinians from the occupied territories to the Lebanon.

Mr. Mellor: We have already made representations to the Israelis bilaterally and together with our partners in the Twelve. We voted for United Nations Security Council resolutions 607 and 608 which called on Israel to refrain from deporting Palestinian civilians and to ensure the safe return of those already deported.

Argentina

84. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many British citizens are currently resident in Argentina.

Mr. Eggar: In the period since 1982, 3,741 Argentine residents entitled to British nationality have registered with the British interests section in Buenos Aires. Of these, 647 males over 18 are recorded as holding exclusively British nationality. The remainder are not categorised as holding single or dual nationality.

Gibraltar

85. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the United Kingdom-Spanish agreement on Gibraltar, dated 2 December 1987, will come into operation.

Mrs. Chalker: The first step is for the Gibraltar House of Assembly to adopt the necessary amendments to current Gibraltar customs and immigration legislation. Once this has been done, the agreement will come into operation not later than one year after the United Kingdom notifies Spain of the House of Assembly's decision. During this period, the new Spanish terminal will be built.

Bophuthatswana

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on what dates since 1 January 1983, British Embassy staff in South Africa have visited Bophuthatswana; with whom discussions or consultations were held; and what was the purpose of these visits.

Mrs. Chalker: Staff at Her Majesty's embassy in South Africa pay regular visits to Bophuthatswana. Full details of the information requested are not available.

Drug Trafficking (Caribbean)

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he intends to take any action to discourage drug trafficking on British dependent territories in the Caribbean.

Mr. Eggar: We are currently implementing a number of recommendations arising out of our 1986 survey to improve the defences of the dependent territories against drug-trafficking. These have included assistance with training and advice, and provision of detection and surveillance equipment, including an aircraft and police launch. It is part of our continuing programme to combat drug-trafficking in the Caribbean as a whole, in co-operation with regional Governments and the Government of the United States.

British Council

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received from British arts companies touring abroad concerning the effect on their activities of the levels of funding for the British Council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: None. The British Council has maintained a suitable level of arts promotion activity overseas.

Northern Ireland (Administration of Justice)

Mr. McCusker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has asked the Government of the Irish Republic to list the precise objections held by them to the administration of justice in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: I have been asked to reply.

The Government of the Republic of Ireland have made known to us their concerns about the present arrangements for the administration of justice in Northern Ireland. They have put forward a number of proposals for change which we have considered as part of our continuing commitment to enhancing public confidence in the administration of justice in Northern Ireland.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are employed in the confectionery, cake and biscuit industries in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lee: In September 1987, the latest date for which figures are available, there were 129,000 employees in employment in the bread, biscuits and flour confectionery industries in Great Britain. The figure is unadjusted for the effects of seasonal variations. Estimates for the United Kingdom are not available.

Dock Labour Scheme

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Pembroke of 14 January, *Official Report*, columns *362-63*, why the administrative costs of individual local dock labour scheme boards are not made public.

Mr. Nicholls: I regret that the information is not held centrally and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Restart Interviews

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will place in the Library a copy of the specimem answers to be used as guidelines by his Departments staff when interviewing claimants for the restart interview.

Mr. Lee: No. Other than as a training aid, no such specimen answers have been issued. Staff are instructed to approach the interview on the basis that clients have individual needs and treat them accordingly.

WALES

NHS Expenditure

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the expenditure per head in real terms in Wales on the National Health Service in 1980 and in 1986.

Mr. Grist: Expenditure per head at 1986-87 prices in 1980-81 was £299·52 and in 1986-87 £350·69.

BBC Wales

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he last met the controller of BBC Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I met him on 2 February on the train from Swansea somewhere between Slough and Paddington.

Hospital Beds

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the number of National Health Service beds in 1979 and in 1986, in Wales and in each Welsh county.

Mr. Grist: The information is given in the following table:

District Health Authority	*Average daily available NHS beds during:*	
	1979	*1986*
Clwyd	3,053	2,769
East Dyfed	2,098	1,758
Gwent	3,883	3,509
Gwynedd	1,570	1,630
Mid Glamorgan	4,943	4,498
Pembrokeshire	466	473
Powys	1,266	1,014
South Glamorgan	3,584	3,460
West Glamorgan	2,594	2,574
Wales	23,457	21,685

But I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will wish to know the substantial increase in in-patients treated during the same period. These are as follows:

District Health Authority	*1979*	*1986*	*Difference*	*Per cent*
Clwyd	47,741	57,519	+ 9,778	(20)
East Dyfed	27,725	31,405	+ 3,680	(13)
Gwent	49,843	65,991	+16,148	(32)
Gwynedd	28,698	34,867	+ 6,169	(21)
Mid Glamorgan	64,182	80,119	+15,937	(25)
Pembrokeshire	10,885	13,186	+ 2,301	(21)
Powys	5,411	6,842	+ 1,431	(26)
South Glamorgan	67,526	81,891	+14,365	(21)
West Glamorgan	47,684	62,050	+14,366	(30)
Wales	349,695	433,870	+84,175	(24)

Housing Grants

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what his estimate is of the number of outstanding applications for *(a)* general and repair grants, *(b)* standard grants and *(c)* improvement grants for each district authority; and how many of these grants in each category and district have been outstanding for (i) four years, (ii) three years, (iii) two years, (iv) one year and (v) under one year.

Mr. Grist: The numbers of renovation grant applications outstanding at September 1987 and the estimated numbers outstanding since April 1986 or earlier are shown in the following tables. Information is not collected regularly on the period for which grants have been outstanding.

Number of renovation grants applications outstanding at September 1987

Welsh districts	*Improvement and Conversion*	*Repairs*	*Intermediate*	*Special*	*Total*
Aberconwy	63	33	1	0	97
Alyn and Deeside	88	226	2	0	316
Arfon	59	178	1	1	239
Blaenau Gwent	1,143	3,045	747	0	4,935
Brecknock	46	413	12	0	471
Cardiff	1,164	3,703	385	166	5,418
Carmarthen	237	412	3	1	653
Ceredigion	119	730	12	0	861
Colwyn	203	55	0	4	262
Cynon Valley	145	1,793	1,236	0	3,174
Delyn	5	21	10	0	36
Dinefwr	49	324	7	0	380
Dwyfor	49	368	12	0	429
Glyndwr	110	228	52	0	390
Islwyn	86	365	13	0	464
Llanelli	32	431	0	0	463
Lliw Valley	33	152	24	0	209
Meirionnydd	5	0	0	0	5
Merthyr Tydfil	8	1,017	59	1	1,085
Monmouth	3	9	2	0	14
Montgomeryshire	41	338	53	0	432
Neath	208	579	11	0	798
Newport	452	1,697	91	23	2,263
Ogwr	321	975	50	11	1,357
Port Talbot (Afan)	105	379	29	0	513
Preseli	637	793	1	1	1,432
Radnor	94	183	18	0	295
Rhondda	1,196	3,629	837	0	5,662
Rhuddlan	43	17	0	0	60
Rhymney Valley	316	2,298	20	0	2,634
South Pembrokeshire	276	147	7	0	430
Swansea	772	714	111	12	1,609
Taff Ely	68	242	0	4	314
Torfaen	427	950	269	0	1,646
Vale of Glamorgan	20	995	0	7	1,022
Wrexham Maelor	58	242	19	0	319

Welsh districts	Improvement and Conversion	Repairs	Intermediate	Special	Total
Ynys Môn	70	328	10	0	408
WALES TOTAL	8,751	28,009	4,104	231	41,095

Number of pre-April 1986 renovation grant applications outstanding at September 1987

Welsh districts	Improvement and conversion	Repairs	Intermediate	Special	Total
Aberconwy	—	—	—	—	—
Alyn and Deeside	41	179	—	—	220
Arfon	—	—	—	—	—
Blaenau Gwent	913	2,801	307	—	4,021
Brecknock	32	340	—	—	372
Cardiff	805	1,841	—	—	2,646
Carmarthen	35	57	—	—	92
Ceredigion	109	684	—	—	793
Colwyn	32	55	—	2	89
Cynon Valley	—	—	—	—	—
Delyn	—	1	—	—	1
Dinefwr	38	306	—	—	344
Dwyfor	44	267	—	—	311
Glyndwr	85	158	24	—	267
Islwyn	71	89	—	—	160
Llanelli	—	—	—	—	—
Lliw Valley	1	3	—	—	4
Meirionnydd	—	—	—	—	—
Merthyr Tydfil	—	978	—	—	978
Monmouth	3	—	—	—	3
Montgomeryshire	38	338	31	—	407
Neath	180	528	—	—	708
Newport	298	1,119	67	—	1,484
Ogwr	17	15	3	—	35
Port Talbot/Afan	85	341	—	—	426
Preseli	316	400	—	—	716
Radnor	70	150	—	—	220
Rhondda	1,185	2,701	—	—	3,886
Rhuddlan	40	16	—	—	56
Rhymney Valley	273	2,028	—	—	2,301
South Pembrokeshire	24	22	2	—	48
Swansea	—	—	—	—	—
Taff Ely	—	—	—	—	—
Torfaen	171	596	174	—	941
Vale of Glamorgan	14	818	—	—	832
Wrexham Maelor	35	175	—	—	210
Ynys Môn	86	301	—	—	387
Wales Total (LA)	5,041	17,307	608	2	22,958

ENVIRONMENT

Housing Waiting Lists

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many households were recorded on local authority housing waiting lists at a convenient date in each of the last five years in *(a)* Vale Royal and *(b)* Chester.

Mrs. Roe: The numbers of households on waiting lists at April, and the changes in the previous 12 months, appear in columns B51 and B53, respectively, of the 1986 and 1987 Housing Investment Programme "All items prints", which are available in the Library. Information for earlier years is not available centrally.

The figures reported by Chester district council in their 1986 return included transfer list cases; excluding these cases, the numbers on the waiting list in 1985 and 1986 were, respectively, 4,940 and 2,962.

Local authorities' criteria for inclusion of names on the waiting lists are not uniform and the frequency of reviewing the lists varies.

Rating Reform

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the number of pensioner couples who will *(a)* gain and *(b)* lose as a consequence of the replacement of domestic rates by a community charge.

Mr. Howard: On the basis of data contained in the family expenditure survey, I estimate that 0·8 million pensioner couple households would gain from the introduction of the community charge without safety nets and 1 million would lose. On the other hand 80 per cent. of single pensioner households 2 million would gain. On the basis of the 1988-89 rebate arrangements all pensioner couples reliant entirely on the state retirement pension will qualify for an 80 per cent. community charge rebate.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what additional regulations or advice his Department will produce to ensure that the collection of personal data for use in the community register complies with the terms of the first data protection principle; and whether he will make a statement;

(2) what additional regulations or advice his Department will produce to ensure that the disclosure of personal data from the community charge register complies with the terms of the third data protection principle; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I am continuing to discuss the implications of the Data Protection Act for the operation of the community charge with the Data Protection Registrar. My right hon. Friend will consider the need for guidance to local authorities and community charge registration officers in due course.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will reproduce the information in the tables in annex F to Cmnd. 9714, "Paying for Local Government" *(a)* for England only and *(b)* on the decile basis used in his reply of 16 December 1987 to the hon. Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) *Official Report*, column *522*, in the latter case together with information from the equivalent tables in his Department's note on the relationship between local taxes and income and the distributional impact of the community charge.

Mr. Howard: No. I have already given my latest estimates based on 1986-87 information. These replace the estimates based on 1984-85 data as published in Cmnd. 9714 and reflect decisions taken since that time.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the estimated *(a)* over 18 years and *(b)* total population in the households and tax units referred to in figures six to 10 of his Department's note on the relationship between local taxes and income and the distributional impact of the community charge.

Mr. Howard: Figures 6 to 10 of the note on 13 January are based on a sample of 24,120 households in England and scaled to an adult population for England of 35·2 million. This is consistent with a total population of 47·2 million.

Pollution Inspectorate

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the text of the letters sent by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution in December 1987 to all local planning and waste authorities.

Mr. Moynihan: Yes. Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution sent one letter, in December 1987, to all the authorities referred to; which was on the subject of "Licensing and Control of Landfills Evolving Gas." Copies of the letter have been placed in the Library.

Right-to-Buy Applications

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many outstanding right-to-buy applications there are at present in Lambeth, Ealing, Tower Hamlets and Westminster; and what proportion of these have been outstanding for more than one year.

Mrs. Roe: At the end of November 1987, some 4,882 right-to-buy applications were being dealt with by Tower Hamlets borough council. It is not known how long each application had been outstanding. Regular statistics on the handling of applications by the other councils are not collected because their right-to-buy performance is not formally monitored by the Department.

House Condition Survey

Mr. Allan Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he plans to publish the initial results of his Department's English house condition survey 1986; and whether this will be before or after he brings forward legislation to reform the current system of grant aid for home improvements, as proposed in his Department's consultation paper of 5 November 1987.

Mr. Waldegrave: We hope to publish the results of the 1986 English house condition survey before the summer recess. This will precede legislation to reform the current system of grant aid for home improvements.

Home Improvements

Mr. Allan Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is his Department's estimate of *(a)* the number of dwellings which are currently unfit and *(b)* the number of dwellings which are currently below target under the standards proposed in his Department's consultation paper on home improvement policy, issued on 5 November 1987; and what is his Department's estimate of the proportion of these dwellings which are (i) publicly and (ii) privately owned;

(2) what is his Department's estimate of the number of households who would currently qualify for (1) mandatory assistance *(a)* with the full cost and *(b)* with part of the cost of eligible work to bring their homes up to fitness and (2) discretionary assistance *(a)* with the full cost and *(b)* with part of the cost of eligible work to bring their home up to target, under the standards and the means test proposed in his Department's consultation paper on a new framework for home improvement grant aid, published on 5 November 1987;

(3) what estimates his Department has prepared of *(a)* future levels of expenditure and *(b)* future levels of activity on (i) improvement assistance; (ii) slum clearance; and (iii) group repair of dwellings under the new framework for home improvement policy, proposed in his Department's consultation paper of 5 November 1987.

Mr. Waldegrave: Firm estimates cannot be made before the results of the 1986 English house condition survey are available. Estimates of grant entitlement, and of future levels of expenditure and activity will also depend on other factors, including the eventual form of the test of applicants' resources, on which the consultation paper invited comments.

Mr. Allan Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he plans to publish the full results of his Department's distribution of grants inquiry of 1983; and whether this will be before or after he brings forward legislation to reform the current system of grant aid for home improvements, as proposed in his Department's consultation paper of 5 November 1987.

Mr. Waldegrave: We plan to publish a further report on the Department's distribution of grant inquiry before legislation to reform the home improvement grant system is brought forward.

Housing Statistics

Mr. Allan Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his Department's latest estimate of *(a)* the rate of deterioration in the state of repair (i) of the publicly-owned housing stock and (ii) of the privately-owned housing stock and *(b)* the level of expenditure required to prevent any increase in the rate of deterioration in the state of repair (i) of the publicly-owned housing stock and (ii) of the privately-owned housing stock.

Mr. Waldegrave: The latest estimates of change in the condition of the housing stock are those provided by the 1981 English house condition survey. They show that (i) Between 1976 and 1981 the condition of the publicly-owned housing stock did not change. (ii) Between 1976 and 1981 the proportion of the privately-owned housing stock estimated to require repairs costing more than £7,000 (at 1981 prices) increased from 6·2 per cent. to 7·1 per cent.

Estimates of the expenditure required to maintain the stock in a steady state are not available.

North Sea

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is now able to issue advice on the action required to follow up the second international conference on the protection of the North sea; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: My Department has today issued a guidance note to explain the implications of the agreements contained in the ministerial declaration of the second international conference on the protection of the North sea held in London last November. This demonstrates that the Government have moved more quickly than any other North sea country in following up that declaration with proposals for action. The guidance note is directed particularly at the water industry, other public utilities and industrial interests. Several aspects of the follow-up action will also be the subject of further detailed guidance following consultation with the bodies directly concerned.

I am arranging for copies of the guidance note to be placed in the Library.

Ordnance Survey (Cash Limit)

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if there are any proposals to change the 1987-88 cash limit and running costs limit for the Ordnance Survey.

Mr. Moynihan: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate, the cash limit for class XX, vote 10 will be decreased by £227,000 from £21,420,000 to £21,193,000 and the running costs limit will be increased by £1,035,000 from £52,299,000 to £53,334,000. The increase in running costs is required for payments on surveying contracts and for unavoidable VAT payments. There will be an increase in the VAT refund from Customs and Excise of £245,000. The decrease in the cash limit is due to Ordnance Survey not taking up the end-year flexibility provision of £1,017,000 as announced by my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury to the House on 23 July 1987, *Official Report* columns *434-38*. The balance will be surrendered to the Reserve.

Rate-capping

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what further developments have taken place since his announcement in December 1987 of the proposed limits for rate-capped authorities in 1988-89.

Mr. Ridley: Of the 17 rate-capped authorities, three —Manchester, Middlesbrough and Kingston upon Hull —accepted the proposed rate limit within the statutory period. I understand that a further authority, Tower Hamlets, also accepts the limit proposed in December.

The remaining 13 authorities have not accepted the proposed limit. After considering the representations made by authorities, including proposals from some of them to agree with me an increase in the limit, and having taken into account any other relevant information, I am proposing

(a) in the case of eight of these authorities — Basildon, Haringey, Lewisham, Waltham Forest, Thamesdown, Newcastle upon Tyne, Lambeth and Liverpool—no increase in the provisional limit;

(b) in the five other cases a higher limit, on which I am seeking agreement, as follows:

Hackney 136·00p (12·20p above the proposed limit)
Southwark 101·00p (2·98p above the proposed limit)
Camden 117·00p (1·59p above the proposed limit)
Greenwich 136·00p (10·28p above the proposed limit)
Ealing 167·00p (41·94p above the proposed limit)

Where I am unable to reach agreement with an authority on a different limit from the one proposed in December, I am required under the Rates Act to specify the maximum by order.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Alternative Land Use

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he is taking to encourage farmers to plant trees as an alternative land use.

Mr. Gummer: We propose to introduce a farm woodland scheme later this year following the passage of the Farm Land and Rural Development Bill and the necessary subordinate legislation.

In addition, the Community set-aside scheme, on which discussions are continuing in the Council of Ministers, is expected to include provision for land taken out of arable crop production to be used for woodland. The consultation document issued by the Agricultural Departments on 8 December 1987 contained suggestions as to how this option might be put into practice in the United Kingdom and linked with the new farm woodland scheme. I and my colleagues will wish to consider the matter further in the light of the Community's final decisions and of views expressed during our own consultation exercise.

Fishing Industry

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what arrangements he has made regularly to assess the financial state of the fishing industry.

Mr. Gummer: The financial state of the industry is kept under regular review through the collection of data on the value and volume of fish landings, imports and exports, vessel numbers, levels of investment and numbers of fishermen. The results of these surveys are published annually by Fisheries Departments in the form of sea fisheries statistical tables.

"An Extensification Scheme"

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what he considers will be the environmental consequences of his recent proposals contained in the consultation document, "An Extensification Scheme".

Mr. Gummer: The consultation document suggests that one of the objectives of the scheme should be to foster a changed pattern of land use in the countryside so as to improve conditions for wildlife and to enhance the landscape and the environment generally. My colleagues and I are considering the views expressed on this and other points.

Farm Effluents

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received seeking the extension of the 60 per cent. grant for farm effluent control and disposal to lowland areas not in less-favoured areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I received some representations from the Farmers Unions, the County Landowners' Association and the Scottish Landowners' Federation during last year's annual review discussions about the need to increase grants for effluent facilities outside the less favoured areas.

Grants for effluent facilities, which are kept under regular review, are now at the highest level available under the agriculture improvement scheme.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the number of grants and amounts paid under the agriculture improvement scheme for effluent disposal systems since 1985.

Mr. Gummer: Estimated expenditure on effluent handling facilities in the United Kingdom in 1986 was £7·7 million and 1987 £14·2 million. I regret that a detailed breakdown of this expenditure on the lines requested is not yet available.

Pig Industry

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the current level of profitability in the pig industry in *(a)* England and *(b)* Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The pigmeat market is weak thoughout the European Community and the United Kingdom. The EC Pigmeat Management Committee, responding to pressure from the United Kingdom and other member states, has recently decided to reintroduce a scheme of aids for private storage. I hope this decision will help to strengthen the market.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list in the *Official Report* the changes that have occurred in United Kingdom pig prices since October 1987.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Monthly average all pigs prices in the United Kingdom since October 1987 have been as follows:

	p/kg deadweight
October	97·63
November	96·10
December	94·11
January	[1]90·47

[1] To 23 January only.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will consider immediate introduction of a low cost private storage scheme for pig producers.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The Pigmeat Management Committee has decided to reintroduce aids for private storage as from 15 February. This decision was taken as a result of pressure from the United Kingdom and some other member states.

Pork Processing Units

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will list in the *Official Report* any port processing units in *(a)* England and *(b)* Wales which have been closed since 1979, indicating, the location of the unit and the date of closure in each case;

(2) if he will list in the *Official Report* every existing pork processing unit currently in operation in *(a)* England and *(b)* Wales.

Mr. Donald Thompson: This information is not available.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Resources (Allocation)

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to announce the results of his review of the resources allocation working party; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: We expect the review's programme of analysis and research to be completed shortly. Any recommendations will then be carefully considered.

Mentally Disordered Prisoners

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what measures have been taken by his Department to implement the recommendations of the joint Home Office-Department of Health and Social Security working group of officials chaired by the director of prison medical services on the problems presented by mentally disordered offenders in the prison system in England and Wales;

(2) what steps have been taken to implement the recommendation in the report of the director of prison medical services on the problems presented by mentally disordered offenders in the prison system in England and Wales that further encouragement should be given to regional health authorities to develop a comprehensive network of provisions to meet mental health care needs in their regions.

Mr. Newton: The report has been sent to regional general managers, asking them to bring it to the attention of those in charge of their regions' strategies for mental health. The report was also circulated to the royal colleges and other professional organisations.

Whenever the opportunity arises, regional health authorities are reminded of the need to provide the comprehensive mental health service referred to in the report, including provision for both those chronically mentally ill people and those mentally handicapped people who may need longer-term secure facilities as described in the then Minister's letter of October 1986 to regional chairmen. This comprehensive service is also a topic which features often in the regional reviews held annually between Ministers and regional health authorities.

The recommendations in the report aimed at increasing the extent to which mentally disordered offenders are detained other than in prison custody are being taken forward in discussion between Home Office and DHSS officials.

AIDS

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make it his policy to encourage regular testing for HIV antibody status amongst laboratory workers handling the virus; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The Department with the Health and Safety Executive has already issued guidance that local arrangements should be made to test, or store for future testing, serum from those laboratory staff who request this in connection with their work. The take-up of this facility is entirely voluntary.

Regular testing would not play any part in further reducing the extremely remote risk of HIV infection by laboratory workers through occupational exposure.

Waiting Lists

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services by how much National Health Service waiting lists have changed in percentage terms between 1979 and the latest available year in *(a)* the Mersey regional health authority and *(b)* England.

Mr. Newton: The information requested is given in the table.

Number of cases on in-patient waiting list at 31 March.

	1979	*1987*	*Percentage change 1979-87*
Mersey Region	41,103	29,147	−29·1
England	752,422	687,945	−8·6

Dentists (AIDS)

Mr. Redwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what guidance has been issued to dentists on the sterilisation of drills, brushes, mouth suctions and other equipment, in view of the AIDS epidemic.

Mr. Newton: The chief dental officer issued guidance to dentists in April 1986 on the precautions to be exercised when treating HIV positive patients. The guidance indicated simple procedures to ensure that exposure to the virus during the course of dental treatment would be minimised.

The need for further guidance is kept under regular review.

NHS Patients (Statistics)

Mr. Redwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people died as a result of operations in National Health Service hospitals in 1986; and how many of these deaths resulted from *(a)* surgical error and *(b)* unnecessary operations.

Mrs. Currie: This information is not held centrally. The recent report of the confidential inquiry into peri-operative deaths (CEPOD) looked at deaths in 1986 within 30 days operations. In three regions (Northern, South Western and North East Thames) it was found that the proportion of deaths which were attributable to avoidable surgical or anaesthetic factors was small. The overall death rate following half a million operations was found to be 0·7 per cent. Most of those who died were elderly and death was due to the progression of their illness or to other co-existing disease. One one in 25,000 operations resulted in death which was thought to be due solely to "avoidable surgical or anaesthetic factors", although there were "avoidable elements" in 0·14 per cent. which could have contributed to death. A copy of the CEPOD report has been placed in the Library.

Private Health Care

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the average amount currently being paid by an average family of four by way of the annual subscription to private health care schemes; and what are the comparable figures in terms of taxes and charges payable in respect of the National Health Service.

Mr. Newton: In 1986, the latest year for which United Kingdom data are available, the annual average subscription to private health care schemes per family of four was £468. Gross NHS expenditure for the same year was £1,380 per family of four. However, these figures are not directly comparable. Health Service expenditure includes the family practitioner service as well as care for the mentally ill, mentally handicapped and frail elderly, services not generally covered by private health insurance.

Macclesfield District Health Authority

Mr. Neil Hamilton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will tabulate the number of cases dealt with by the Macclesfield district health authority for the years 1981 to 1986, in *(a)* general medicine, *(b)* paediatrics, *(c)* geriatric medicine, *(d)* general surgery, *(e)* trauma and orthopaedics, *(f)* neurosurgery,

(h) gynaecology, *(i)* obstetrics, *(j)* special care baby unit, *(k)* mental handicap, *(l)* mental illness, *(m)* general practice other and *(n)* other specialties.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested is given in the table.

Number of patients by selected specialty for Macclesfield District—District Health Authority

Specialty	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
General medicine						
Discharges and deaths	1,782	1,820	1,901	2,072	2,535	2,400
Day case attendances	59	38	70	127	196	283
Out-patient attendances	9,498	9,620	10,218	9,914	10,586	10,488
Regular day patients	0	0	0	0	0	0
Paediatrics						
Discharges and deaths	650	687	693	797	968	950
Day case attendances	0	0	0	0	6	40
Out-patient attendances	4,752	4,679	4,961	4,694	5,048	4,398
Regular day patients	0	0	0	0	0	0
Geriatrics						
Discharges and deaths	777	799	652	604	413	603
Day case attendances	0	0	0	0	0	0
Out-patient attendances	1,543	1,595	1,733	1,886	1,869	1,957
Regular day patients	6,333	6,829	7,515	7,999	6,986	7,151
General surgery						
Discharges and deaths	2,471	2,230	2,322	2,484	2,737	3,026
Day case attendances	414	166	357	1,256	1,563	1,635
Out-patient attendances	9,155	9,041	8,859	10,521	11,597	11,144
Regular day patients	0	0	0	0	0	0
Trauma and orthopaedics						
Discharges and deaths	1,134	1,267	1,448	1,277	1,287	1,275
Day case attendances	408	208	397	385	518	566
Out-patient attendances	14,018	13,436	12,052	13,897	14,491	13,777
Regular day patients	0	0	0	0	0	0
Neurosurgery						
Discharges and deaths	43	40	65	98	63	53
Day case attendances	0	0	0	0	0	0
Out-patient attendances	0	0	0	0	0	0
Regular day patients	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gynaecology						
Discharges and deaths	924	819	1,027	1,119	1,265	1,421
Day case attendances	791	723	656	753	777	653
Out-patient attendances	5,092	5,393	5,413	5,308	5,819	5,550
Regular day patients	0	0	0	0	0	0
Obstetrics and GP Mat						
Discharges and deaths	1,882	1,594	1,602	1,470	1,548	1,562
Day case attendances	91	98	77	56	83	47
Out-patient attendances	7,899	7,363	7,393	7,025	6,831	7,040
Regular day patients	0	0	0	0	0	0
S.C.B.U.						
Discharges and deaths	477	250	244	215	268	221
Day case attendances	0	0	0	0	0	0
Out-patient attendances	0	0	0	0	0	0
Regular day patients	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mental handicap						
Discharges and deaths	0	91	76	92	94	55
Day case attendances	0	0	0	0	0	0
Out-patient attendances	18	61	61	66	89	91
Regular day patients	0	31	116	194	233	62
All mental illness						
Discharges and deaths	789	736	767	773	917	1,048
Day case attendances	0	0	0	0	0	0
Out-patient attendances	3,705	3,876	4,325	5,328	5,297	6,225
Regular day patients	6,827	13,070	14,921	17,078	23,985	55,101
GP other						
Discharges and deaths	535	566	584	567	527	607
Day case attendances	4	7	3	0	0	0
Out-patient attendances	0	0	0	0	0	0

Specialty	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
Regular day patients	0	0	0	0	0	0
All other specialties						
Discharges and deaths	915	809	814	716	419	793
Day case attendances	86	75	77	107	102	231
Out-patient attendances	15,563	15,995	16,843	16,671	16,891	18,241
Regular day patients	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total						
Discharges and deaths	12,379	11,708	12,195	12,284	13,041	14,014
Day case attendances	1,853	1,315	1,637	2,684	3,245	3,455
Out-patient attendances	71,243	71,059	71,858	75,310	78,518	78,911
Regular day patients	13,160	19,930	22,552	25,271	36,204	62,314

Birth Statistics

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what proportion of babies are born at home in each health authority.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested has been placed in the Library.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the lightest and lowest cost for deliveries of babies and what is the average cost of deliveries of babies for each health authority in England and Wales.

Mrs. Currie: I regret the information requested is not available centrally. I expect information about the hospital costs of obstetric cases to become available in 1989.

North East Thames Regional Health Authority

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he next intends to meet the chairman of the North East Thames regional health authority; and what matters he expects to discuss.

Mrs. Currie: Ministers will next meet the chairman of North East Thames regional health authority, together with all regional chairmen, on 16 March. This is one of a series of regular meetings Ministers have with regional chairmen at which current topics affecting the NHS are discussed.

Single Payments

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will provide a breakdown for each of the last four years for which figures are available of single payments made from his Department's Blyth and Cramlington office to *(a)* pensioners, *(b)* single parents, and *(c)* long-term unemployed.

Mr. Scott: The information requested regarding single payments made to single parents and long-term unemployed during the last four years is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

However, information on the yearly totals of numbers and amounts of payments made to claimants of pension age, to claimants registered as unemployed and to those neither registered unemployed nor of pension age for the years April 1983 to April 1987 by the Department's Blyth local office is given in the table:

	Year April to April			
	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	[1]1986-87
Claimants of pension age				
Number	266	369	588	572
Amount (£)	13,737	20,979	29,719	30,333
Claimants registered unemployed				
Number	2,348	3,645	4,270	3,232
Amount (£)	160,765	210,233	288,579	215,666
Claimants neither registered unemployed nor of pension age				
Number	1,803	2,473	3,300	2,675
Amount (£)	120,237	170,575	250,401	185,882

[1] The figures for April 1986 to April 1987 are provisional and subject to amendment.

Accident and Emergency Services

Mrs. Rosie Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what procedures are followed when a decision is made to transfer excess accident and emergency services from one district health authority to a neighbouring one.

Mrs. Currie: The Community Health Councils Regulations 1985 (SI 1985 No. 304) require a district health authority to consult a community health council on proposals to make any substantial variation in the provision of the health service in the council's district. Provision is made for urgent temporary closures to be implemented without consultation. If the hon. Member has a particular instance in mind, perhaps she would like to write to the chairman of the health authority concerned.

Cervical Cancer

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to improve the provision of cervical cancer screening in the Lewisham and North Southwark health district; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: As a response to our development of screening services, the existing recall system operated by Lewisham and North Southwark health authority will be improved from April 1988 by the implementation of a fully computerised call and recall system for all local women aged between 20 and 65. With a view to reducing waiting times, the health authority is now reviewing its colposcopy service and will consider if extra sessions at Guy's hospital and Lewisham hospital would be helpful.

National Insurance

Mr. Colin Shepherd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the total sum collected in national insurance contributions for the year 1986-87 and that anticipated for 1987-88; and if he will show it broken down with employees, employers and self-employed contributions.

Mr. Scott: The information is as follows:

Estimated receipts from National Insurance Contributions
£ million

	Great Britain	
	1986-87	*1987-88*
Class 1		
Employees	11,750	12,550
Employers[1]	12,450	13,500
Self-employed (classes 2 and 4)	700	750
Total	24,900	26,800

[1] Net of SSP deductions of £750 million in 1986-87, and of SSP and SMP deductions of £950 million in 1987-88.

The total excludes voluntary class 3 contributions, which yielded £30 million in 1986-87, and an estimated £25 million in 1987-88.

Bassetlaw Area Health Authority

Mr. Ashton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) whether he will make extra money available to the Bassetlaw health authority for the underfunding of pay awards to staff, the additional cost of hiring junior medical locum staff from agencies, new and additional consultant staff posts, an increase of stock levels in certain areas and increased levels of activity in a number of services;

(2) whether he will make an extra allocation of £700,000 to Bassetlaw area health authority to prevent the closure of wards in Retford and Worksop hospitals .

Mrs. Currie: Trent regional health authority is responsible for allocating funds to its districts, including Bassetlaw. In December, The Government made available a further £5·8 million to Trent RHA for this financial year. For 1988-89, Trent RHA's revenue allocation will be £1,050 million, an increase of 6·3 per cent. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman of the regional health authority for details of how these additional sums are to be allocated.

Earnings Rule

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services at what level of income the earnings rule has operated in respect of retirement pensions in each year from 1984-85.

Mr. Scott: The retirement pension earnings rule applies for the first five years after minimum pension age (60 for women and 65 for men). In November 1984 the specified level of earnings net of certain expenses was £70, rising to £75 in November 1985. Pension is reduced on a sliding scale for earnings over the specified level. Entitlement to full basic retirement pension would generally be extinguished when the level of earnings net of expenses reached the amounts shown:

	£
November 1984	107·80
November 1985	115·30
July 1986	115·70
April 1987	116·50
April 1988	118·14

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the value of the earnings rule for retirement pensions as a percentage of *(a)* gross and *(b)* net average earnings for each year since 1984.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is shown in the table.

Average weekly earnings: Male manual workers

(1) *Date*	*(2)* *Earnings rule*	*(3)* *Gross*	*(4)* *Net*	*(5)* *Column (2) as a percentage of column (3)*	*(6)* *Column (2) as a percentage of column (4)*
	£	£	£	*Per cent.*	*Per cent.*
November 1984	70·00	159·60	108·90	43·9	64·3
November 1985	75·00	168·70	115·60	44·5	64·9
July 1986	75·00	176·20	122·30	42·6	61·3
April 1987	75·00	185·50	131·30	40·4	57·1

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to abolish the earnings rule for retirement pensions.

Mr. Scott: We do not feel able at present to give this issue priority over other claims on resources.

Pensioners

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many couples of pensionable age share a pension book and are not eligible to receive £8 each as an adjustment to their pension following the miscalculation in the retail prices index.

Mr. Scott: It is not possible for a retired couple to have both of their pensions paid on the same order book. In all cases, therefore, each will receive an £8 payment. It is possible for a pensioner to receive an increase to his or her pension in respect of a spouse who has not retired. However, this increase was unaffected by the error in the retail prices index. Such a pensioner's single £8 payment will accordingly fully compensate him or her.

Health Authorities (Fire Regulations)

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list for each district health authority the money spent over the previous five years on meeting fire regulations.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that the information is not available.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what advice he gives to health authorities about fire regulations; and what information he has about the way in which decisions are made about the amount of money to be spent for this purpose.

Mrs. Currie: The Department in November 1987 published new and updated guidance to health authorities in "FIRECODE", a comprehensive suite of documents which advise on fire precautions regulations, policy and management as well as giving technical guidance on various building, engineering and equipment fire precautions matters. Health authorities are expected to discuss fire precautions with local fire authorities and to meet the cost of compliance with statutory and other regulations and guidance from within their normal allocations.

London Ambulance Service

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps his Department has taken to test the electronic or mechanical efficiency of the telecommunications equipment at the headquarters of the London ambulance service; if he is satisfied with the arrangements made with British Telecom plc; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: Arrangements for the testing of electronic and mechanical efficiency of the telecommunications equipment at the headquarters of the London ambulance service are the responsibility of the South West Thames regional health authority as managers of the service.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what specific allocation of funds he makes to the South West Thames regional health authority in respect of the London ambulance service.

Mrs. Currie: No specific figure is identified for the London ambulance service in the allocation of funds made by the Department to the South West Thames regional health authority. However, I understand that the regional health authority has set aside £45 million from its 1988-89 budget for this purpose.

Leukaemia

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to receive the formal report by the Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment into the incidence of leukaemia clusters.

Mrs. Currie: COMARE reports from time to time on individual topics within its terms of reference. Its next report will cover the incidence of childhood leukaemia in the vicinity of Dounreay, and is expected to be available before the summer.

Meningitis

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the number of cases of meningitis recorded in the past 12 months *(a)* in the Wirral as a whole and *(b)* by individual hospitals in the Wirral; and if he will list the number of deaths from meningitis (i) in the Wirral and (ii) by individual hospitals in the Wirral.

Mrs. Currie: Mortality data for 1987 are still being processed: during 1986, meningococcal infection (ICD 9 036) was mentioned on the death certificates of four usual residents of Wirral county district. Of these one was meningococcal meningitis (ICD 036.0). Mortality data at hospital level are not released for reasons of confidentiality.

In 1986, there were 30 notifications of acute meningitis from Wirral county district. Of these, 17 were meningococcal meningitis. The figures for 1987 were 28 and 21, respectively. Hospital data are not collected on the infectious disease notification form.

Infant Mortality

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he is taking to investigate possible reasons for the rise in infant mortality in England and Wales in 1986.

Mrs. Currie: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan (Mr. Wray) on 26 January 1988 at column *219*.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many post neonatal deaths there have been in the United Kingdom; and what are the comparable figures for *(a)* France, *(b)* Holland, *(c)* the Federal Republic of Germany and *(d)* Denmark, in each year since 1975.

Mrs. Currie: The latest available data are shown in the table.

Postneonatal mortality numbers and rates (per 1,000 livebirths) for the United Kingdom, 1975-86 and also France, Holland, Federal Republic of Germany and Denmark, 1975-84.

	United Kingdom	*France*	*Holland*	*Federal Republic of Germany*	*Denmark*
1975					
Number	3,575	3,462	540	3,559	170
Rate	5·1	4·6	3·0	5·9	2·4
1976					
Number	3,097	3,209	536	3,327	190
Rate	4·6	4·5	3·0	5·5	2·9

	United Kingdom	France	Holland	Federal Republic of Germany	Denmark
1977					
Number	3,028	3,039	509	3,034	185
Rate	4·6	4·1	2·9	5·2	3·0
1978					
Number	3,102	2,954	528	3,147	180
Rate	4·5	4·0	3·0	5·5	2·9
1979					
Number	3,358	3,211	491	2,840	184
Rate	4·6	4·2	2·8	4·9	3·1
1980					
Number	3,325	3,407	532	2,956	166
Rate	4·4	4·3	2·9	4·8	2·9
1981					
Number	3,324	3,398	510	2,899	156
Rate	4·4	4·2	2·9	4·6	2·9
1982					
Number	3,290	3,351	543	2,848	180
Rate	4·6	4·2	3·2	4·6	3·4
1983					
Number	3,096	3,091	528	2,612	158
Rate	4·3	4·1	3·1	4·4	3·1
1984					
Number	2,854	2,702	559	2,422	156
Rate	3·9	3·6	3·2	4·1	3·0
1985					
Number	2,980	2,856	542	2,337	173
Rate	4·0	3·7	3·0	4·0	3·2
1986					
Number	3,179	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Rate	4·2	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Postneonatal mortality: deaths at ages 28 days and over but under one year.

Sources:
World Health Statistics, 1986.
Annual Abstract of Statistics, 1987.
Eurostat Demographic Statistics, 1987.
n/a = Not available.

DEFENCE

British Army Equipment Exhibition

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if, to show his support for the work of the third United Nations special session on disarmament due to be held in June, he will cancel the British Army equipment exhibition planned for Aldershot from 27 June to 1 July.

Mr. Sainsbury: No. The British Army equipment exhibition has no relevance to the United Nations special session on disarmament. The United Kingdom remains firmly committed to seeking arms control agreements which are both balanced and verifiable.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if the implementation of decisions or recommendations taken at Montebello in November 1983 or Luxembourg in March 1985 by the NATO planning group will lead to an increase in *(a)* the number of nuclear warheads available for use by NATO from western Europe, *(b)* the total nuclear fire power of NATO available for use from locations in western Europe, *(c)* the number of air-launched or sea-launched or similar nuclear weapons available for use from western Europe, to a level in excess of that available (i) before and (ii) after implementation of the intermediate nuclear forces agreement 1987;

(2) whether the implementations of improvements submitted by SACEUR and approved for implementation at th nuclear planning group meetings in 1985 will lead to any increase in the number of air or sea-launched missiles deployed in western Europe, including the United Kingdom, to a level greater than that which existed prior to the recent intermediate nuclear forces agreement;

(3) whether he will make a statement as to the effect of the Montebello 1983 NATO planning group's recommendation and decisions on the modernisation of nuclear weapons on the present numbers of nuclear weapons deployed.

Mr. Ian Stewart: At their meeting in Montebello in 1983, NATO Defence Ministers agreed both to a reduction by 1,400 warheads of the Alliance's land-based nuclear stockpile in Europe and on the need for possible

improvements to ensure the continuing effectiveness, responsiveness and survivability of remaining systems. SACEUR's detailed proposals for implementing the Montebello decision, which he submitted to the nuclear planning group in 1985, are confidential. The INF agreement, when implemented, will lead to a further reduction in the stockpile.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what reductions and increases in nuclear deployment in the report of the NATO high level group were approved by NATO Ministers prior to the publication of the 1984 Defence Estimates;

(2) which proposals from the NATO high level group were endorsed at the Montebello NATO planning group conference in 1983.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I refer the hon. Member to the communiqué issued following the ministerial meeting of the nuclear planning group at Montebello in 1983, a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether all the decisions and recommendations taken at the 1983 Montebello NATO planning group conference, as they affect the United Kingdom, were known to all the parties during the course of the recent intermediate nuclear forces negotiations, which led to an agreement on a reduction in nuclear weapons.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The proceedings of NATO's nuclear planning group are confidential. However, a very full official communiqué was issued at the end of the ministerial meeting of the group at Montebello in 1983. I assume the contents of this were known to the parties involved in the INF negotiations.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will name those British officials who are members of the NATO nuclear high level planning group.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Mr. Stanley) to the hon. Members for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) and for Merionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Thomas) on 8 May 1987 at column *556*. It is not our practice to name individual officials involved in specific activities of this kind.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recommendations or decisions taken by the Montebello NATO planning group conference he does not intend to implement in relation to the modernisation of nuclear weapons.

Mr. Ian Stewart: SACEUR's recommendations for implementing the agreement by NATO Defence Ministers at Montebello in 1983 to a reduction in the Alliance's land-based nuclear stockpile in Europe and on the need for improvements in its effectiveness were submitted to the meeting of the nuclear planning group in Luxembourg in 1985. As regards the modernisation recommendations addressed to the United Kingdom, no decisions have been taken.

RAF Stornoway

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the calculation of the current noise contour maps around RAF Stornoway took into account run-and-break manoeuvres by incoming aircraft.

Mr. Freeman: No. However, run-and-break manoeuvres will be taken into account in the forthcoming noise survey at RAF Stornoway if this is practicable.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the calculation of the current noise contour maps around RAF Stornoway took into account the noise of aircraft on the ground.

Mr. Freeman: Yes. The current noise contours for RAF Stornoway take into account all noise from aircraft operations, including noise emitted by aircraft prior to take-off and after landing. Noise from ground engine running is not included, but the forthcoming noise survey will take this into account if practicable.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what modifications to the Airnoise I aircraft noise model were made in mapping the noise contours around RAF Stornoway.

Mr. Freeman: Two major modifications have been made to the original Airnoise I computer model which formed the basis of the predicted noise contour used for the 1981 public inquiry at Stornoway. The current contour based on the Airnoise II model incorporates a bend to the north-east of the airfield reflecting the fact that militry aircraft taking-off fly over the sea in order to avoid the villages of Tong and Coll. The current contour is also slightly narrower because more reliable source data, derived from actual measurements of the RAF Phantom and Tornado aircraft, and more sophisticated computation methods, incorporating allowances for sound transmission through the atmosphere and close to the ground surface, have been used. These modifications are in line with internationally agreed criteria.

Aircraft Noise

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the aircraft types whose source noise and operational flight profiles are held in the data bank for *(a)* the Airnoise I aircraft noise model and *(b)* the Airnoise II aircraft noise model.

Mr. Freeman: All the aircraft types used for the Airnoise computer models are listed in a report called "External noise of MOD military aircraft", a copy of which is in the Library. At RAF Stornoway, the noise source data and operational flight profiles for the Phantom and Tornado aircraft have been used to produce the predicted noise contours.

Royal Artillery Range, Hebrides

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what is the purpose of the volumatic disintegrator to be installed on the royal artillery range, Hebrides.

Mr. Freeman: A "volumatic disintegrator"—a large paper shredding machine—has been installed on the Royal Artillery ranges Hebrides since 1981.

Nimrod (Search and Rescue)

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will consider the privatisation of Nimrod aircraft tasked in the SAR role.

Mr. Freeman: No.

Pilots

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many pilots left the Royal Air Force in 1987 without completing their engagements.

Mr. Freeman: The numbers of pilots who left the RAF in 1987 without completing their engagements are as follows:

	Number
Through premature voluntary retirement	74
At a recognised optional exit point	65
Other exits (medical, death, disciplinary etc.)	11
Total	150

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many pilots left the Royal Air Force in 1987 or have expressed a desire to leave the service.

Mr. Freeman: The number of pilots who left the RAF in 1987 was 224. The number of pilots who in 1987 expressed a desire to leave the service was 232.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many pilots have expressed a desire to leave the Royal Air Force without completing their engagement.

Mr. Freeman: The numbers of pilots who in 1987 expressed a desire to leave the RAF without completing their engagements are as follows:

	Number
Through premature voluntary retirement	88
At a recognised optional exit point	119
Total	207

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current cost of training a fast jet pilot for the Royal Air Force.

Mr. Freeman: The average cost to the Ministry of Defence of training a student pilot to the point when he joins an operational fast jet squadron is approximately £3 million at current prices.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many servicemen entered the Royal Air Force college Cranwell to train as pilots in 1987.

Mr. Freeman: Two hundred and forty-eight.

Navigators

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current cost of training a fast jet navigator for the Royal Air Force.

Mr. Freeman: The average cost to the Ministry of Defence of training a student navigator to the point when he joins an operational fast jet squadron is approximately £1 million at current prices.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many servicemen entered the Royal Air Force college Cranwell to train as navigators in 1987.

Mr. Freeman: Eighty-five.

RAF Brawdy (Rescues)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list by category the number of rescue sorties carried out by the search and rescue detachment at RAF Brawdy, Pembrokeshire, in 1987.

Mr. Freeman: In 1987, a total of 70 search and rescue sorties were carried out by helicopters based at RAF Brawdy, resulting in the following numbers of persons being recovered:

Military	*Civilian*		*Total*
3	[1]9	[2]62	74

[1] Category includes merchant seamen and civilians on passenger vessels for example, ferries.
[2] Other civilians, including fishermen, pleasure craft and those rescued on land.

Cash Limits

Mrs. Widdecombe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he proposes to make any changes to the defence cash limits for 1987-88.

Mr. Younger: Yes. The following changes are being made, subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary spring Supplementary Estimates.

£'000s

Class and vote	*Current cash limit*	*Increase/ decrease*		*Revised cash limit*
I, 1	7,257,411	+162,048	transferred from I, 2	7,419,459
I, 2	9,152,897	−259,048	transferred to I, 1 and to I, 4	8,893,849
I, 4	1,478,330	+97,000	transferred from I, 2	1,575,330

These changes allow for transfers within the Ministry of Defence's block cash limit, to reflect the expected pattern of expenditure. The changes have no net effect on public expenditure.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Blood

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his estimate of the proportion and number of adults in Northern Ireland that would be suitable for blood donation.

Mr. Needham: About 75 per cent. of adults eligible (only adults in the 18 to 64 age group are considered eligible for blood donation); some 670,500 people.

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proportion and number of suitable adults give blood in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: The information is not available in the form requested. Approximately 65,000 donations are collected each year which represents roughly one in 10 from suitable adults.

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proportion and number of suitable adults are needed to give blood to make Northern Ireland self-sufficient in blood-derived products.

Mr. Needham: Northern Ireland is self-sufficient apart from the blood product albumen. An increase in blood donations of about 10 per cent. — 6,500 — would be required to attain total self-sufficiency.

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will consider reducing the period between permitted donations of blood to four months from six, to ease the shortage of blood and blood-derived products, and to make Northern Ireland self-sufficient; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: The Northern Ireland blood transfusion service already collects blood at four-monthly intervals from male donors. The service is striving to achieve total self-sufficiency through its programmes to increase both the number of donations and the plasma yield from donations.

Cervical Cancer

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what guidance he has issued to health and social services boards to ensure that the current backlog of cervical cancer tests is cleared; whether he intends to issue to boards in Northern Ireland DHSS Health Circular HC (88)I on health services management of cervical cancer screening; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: The Department of Health and Social Services is in regular contact with the health and social services boards over ways of increasing the rate of processing cervical smear tests. The backlog of tests has been reduced by 30 per cent. over the past two months. A Northern Ireland circular comparable to HC (88)I is being prepared and will be issued shortly.

Cash Limits

Dr. Hampson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the cash limits for the Northern Ireland Office and for Northern Ireland Departmental Services for 1987-88.

Mr. Stanley: Subject to parliamentary approval to the necessary Supplementary Estimate, the cash limit for the Northern Ireland Office — class XVIII, vote 1 — for 1987-88 is being increased by £32,203,000 from £512,405,000 to £544,608,000 to cover increased requirements for expenditure on law, order, protective and miscellaneous services. The increase is mainly due to higher than anticipated police activity levels, prison officers' overtime costs, and rent allowance payments for police and prison officers, expansion of the police capital works programme and an increase in the level of criminal damage compensation claim settlements, partly offset by savings arising from slippage in various capital works programmes.

This increase is partly covered by a decrease of £22·6 million in the cash limit for Northern Ireland departmental services, NID1, from £2,447·8 million to £2,425·2 million: this reflects emerging savings in that sector. The balance of £9·6 million is being met from the Reserve and there is therefore no increase in total public expenditure.

In addition, the Northern Ireland public expenditure total for 1987-88 has been increased by £2·1 million for health and personal social services, as announced by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Health on 16 December, at columns 1093-1106, and by £1·7 million in respect of the costs to Northern Ireland Departments of the weather damage in October. These are also being met from the Reserve and do not increase total public expenditure, I do not propose to increase NID1 correspondingly.

Hospital Beds

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Belfast, South on 22 January, *Official Report*, column *875*, whether he will instruct health boards to collect information about beds available at both 12 noon and 12 midnight; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: It is considered that the recording of bed availability by the midnight count is sufficient to meet all planning requirements. It is not proposed to introduce an additional daily bed count at noon.

Glaucoma

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people in Northern Ireland in the last three years for which figures are available have been given free eyesight tests and free dental examinations; and how many cases of glaucoma have been diagnosed in Northern Ireland over that period.

Mr. Needham: Figures are not kept which identify the number of people who receive free sight tests and dental examinations but the number of tests carried out in Northern Ireland in each category over the last three years was:

	Sight tests	*Dental examinations*
1985	219,259	780,463
1986	226,080	801,202
1987	240,660	817,723

The number of glaucoma cases diagnosed is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Cost Limits

Mr. Charles Wardle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the 1987-88 running cost limit for the Northern Ireland Office and the Northern Ireland Departments.

Mr. Stanley: I have reviewed the running cost requirements for Northern Ireland Departments and the Northern Ireland Office for 1987-88 and I have agreed that the running cost limit should be increased by £4·187 million from £476·762 million, which I announced on 23 July 1987, to £480·949 million. This mainly reflects additional requirements for prisons and social security. It includes also provision for additional costs to Northern Ireland Departments of administering certain programmes on behalf of the International Fund for Ireland, and a

transfer of £80,000 from the Department of Transport to the Department of the Environment (NI) in respect of vehicle licensing. The necessary resources will be found from within existing public expenditure provision or, in the case of the international fund, receipts.

Republic of Ireland (Extradition)

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects further applications for extradition to be made in respect of persons believed living in the Irish Republic where the persons sought are wanted in respect of *(a)* terrorist offences and *(b)* other offences.

Mr. Stanley: The Royal Ulster Constabulary continues to give consideration to possible extradition cases involving both terrorist and non-terrorist offences. As I said in my reply to the hon. Gentleman on 10 November, at column 166, it is not the practice to give details of possible individual extradition cases.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many of the applications for extradition from the Irish Republic made between 1 December 1987 and 14 December 1987 were for terrorist offences.

Mr. Stanley: All three.

Dog-licensing Law

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he has any plans to bring Northern Ireland dog-licensing law into line with the law in Great Britain; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers: No. Requirement for dog control in Northern Ireland are separate from those which exist in Great Britain. The present dog-licensing arrangements in Northern Ireland are part of control measures introduced after extensive discussion with local interests to meet Northern Ireland requirements.

Salmon (Tagging)

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether the proposals by the Government of the Irish Republic to introduce a system of tagging salmon will apply in any part of the area covered by the Foyle Fisheries Commission.

Mr. Viggers: The Government of the Republic of Ireland have not made any proposals to introduce a salmon-tagging scheme and speculation on the application of a salmon-tagging scheme in any part of the Foyle area would be premature.

Housing Executive (Contracts)

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* to show what sums have been paid to date in respect of loss and expense claims by contractors made in respect of Housing Executive contracts let in the financial years 1978-79 to 1987-88, relating to *(a)* legal costs, *(b)*professional advisers costs, *(c)* Housing Executive staff time costs, *(d)* interest charges and *(e)* capital sums; and if he will show under each heading what sums relate to measurable and evaluated items, and which sums arose under contractual claims;

(2) if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* to show the sums recovered from and the claims outstanding against contractors by the Housing Executive in respect of contracts having been let in the financial years from 1978-79 to 1987-88;

(3) if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* showing what sums have been paid to date for loss and expense by contractors and how many claims and for what sums are still not settled, in respect of Housing Executive contracts let in each financial year 1978-79 to 1987-88, for *(a)* new build, *(b)* rehabilitation work and *(c)* other capital expenditure.

Mr. Needham: These are matters for the chairman of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive who has informed me that the information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table showing, for each district of the Eastern Health and Social Services Board, the number of people on waiting lists for each specialty for the last five years for which figures are available, giving a breakdown of the total waiting list by time spent on list.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 28 January 1988]:* Since the answer is in lengthy tabular form, I will arrange for a copy to be placed in the Library.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 4 February 1988

NORTHERN IRELAND

Punishment Attacks

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what figures are available to indicate the known numbers of punishment attacks for each year since 1975, indicating if possible the nature of the attacks, the areas in which they took place and the organisations who admitted or are suspected of responsibility.

Mr. Stanley *[holding answer 29 January 1988]:* The information is as follows:

Punishment attacks[1]

Year	*Loyalist*	*Republican*	*Total*
1975	50	139	189
1976	36	62	98
1977	28	98	126
1978	17	50	67
1979	25	51	76
1980	26	51	77
1981	14	66	80
1982	25	64	89
1983	10	24	34
1984	7	63	70
1985	15	47	62
1986	36	46	82
1987	94	90	184

[1] Paramilitary organisations believed to be responsible.

Details of the areas where these attacks took place are not readily available for earlier years but, since 1983, the following information is available:

	1983	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
Greater Belfast	24	53	49	66	158
Other areas	10	17	13	16	26

Details of the nature of these attacks, broken down between punishment shootings and punishment assaults, are available from 1982 and are as follows:

Year	*Punishment shootings (see note 1) (Paramilitary organisations believed to be responsible)*			*Punishment assaults (see note 2) (Paramilitary organisations believed to be responsible)*		
	Loyalist	*Republican*	*Total*	*Loyalist*	*Republican*	*Total*
1982	22	58	80	3	6	9
1983	9	22	31	1	2	3
1984	6	20	26	1	43	44
1985	11	21	32	4	26	30
1986	24	17	41	12	29	41
1987	67	57	124	27	33	60

Note 1: Punishment shootings are primarily kneecappings.
Note 2: Punishment assaults are primarily with sticks, metal bars, breeze blocks and electric drills.

Farm Effluents

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many applications for grant aid in respect of disposal of farm effluents were received from 4 November 1987 until closure of applications; how many applications were accepted and how many refused; and what are the sums involved in respect of applications accepted and acknowledged.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 3 February 1988]:* In the period 4 November 1987 to 31 December 1987 the Department of Agriculture received 2,934 prior notifications from farmers intending to undertake the provision of farm effluent disposal facilities. All prior notifications continue to be acknowledged. No prior notifications have been refused by the Department.

It will not be possible to indicate the amount of money involved until claims in respect of completed work have been received by the Department.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will reintroduce grants for the provision of effluent disposal on farms in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 3 February 1988]:* My noble Friend Lord Lyell announced on 31 December 1987 that a decision about the future of the agriculture improvement scheme (national scheme) would be made as soon as possible after 29 February 1988. This remains the position.

Grants for effluent disposal facilities continue to be available to farmers who include such works in farm improvement plans submitted under the agriculture improvement scheme which is reimbursable by FEOGA.

Potato Cyst Nematode

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he has any plans to remove potato cyst nematode from the list of notifiable diseases of farm crops.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 3 February 1988]:* A proposal to remove potato cyst nematode from the list of notifiable pests in Northern Ireland is presently the subject of consultation with industry interests.

Potatoes

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland for what reasons his Department requires that potatoes shall not be grown more than once in five years on the same land; and if he now has any plans to remove this requirement.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 3 February 1988]:* Limitations on the growing of ware potatoes to once in five years on the same land were introduced with the intention of preventing the build up of potato cyst nematode. A proposal in light of current circumstances to remove the frequency of planting restriction in respect of ware potatoes in Northern Ireland is at present the subject of consultation with industry interests.

Agricultural and Horticultural Stocks

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he intends to take and what measures are at present in force to maintain the present standards of health in agricultural and horticultural stocks and crops in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 3 February 1988]:* Arrangements to maintain the standards of plant health in agriculture and horticultural stocks and crops in Northern Ireland have been established under the Plant Health Act (Northern Ireland) 1967. They provide for restrictions and prohibitions on imports of plant material and for measures to eradicate outbreaks of diseases and pests in Northern Ireland and to prevent the spread of certain serious pests and diseases already established there.

Industry interests are being consulted about proposals to consolidate and update present arrangements in line with current circumstances.

WALES

Rents

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many cases referred to the rent assessment committees in each county in Wales resulted in a reduced rent in each of the last five years.

Mr. Grist: Information relating to the numbers of reductions in rent as a result of all referrals to the rent assessment committee is not held centrally. However, an analysis of a sample of cases[1] shows that the committee's determination was lower in percentage terms than the rent officer's assessment as follows:

Rent registration area	*1982*[2] *Per cent.*	*1983*[3] *Per cent.*	*1984*[3] *Per cent.*	*1985*[3] *Per cent.*	*1986*[3] *Per cent.*
Clwyd	—	6 (50)	3 (40)	7 (30)	3 (34)
Dyfed	—	22 (18)	13 (18)	0 (20)	8 (12)
Gwent	—	29 (14)	29 (7)	8 (12)	6 (16)
Gwynedd	—	100 (5)	— (0)	6 (17)	0 (11)
Mid Glamorgan	—	64 (11)	69 (52)	17 (29)	67 (94)
Powys	—	14 (7)	0 (28)	14 (7)	25 (4)
South Glamorgan	—	7 (214)	4 (235)	3 (74)	11 (171)
West Glamorgan	—	15 (52)	5 (39)	0 (38)	0 (57)

[1] Including regulated and housing association cases.
[2] Data not available.
[3] Figures in brackets indicate the total number of cases in sample.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many appeals have been taken to the rent assessment committee in each county in Wales in each of the last five years.

Mr. Grist: The information is as follows:

Rent Act 1977: Total number of reference of fair rent cases to rent assessment committees, Wales 1983-87

Rent Registration Area	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
Clwyd	44	59	32	51	28
Dyfed	24	11	37	18	38
Gwent	26	53	15	59	83
Gwynedd	21	15	23	15	36
Mid Glamorgan	30	53	114	70	61
Powys	8	34	10	5	11
South Glamorgan	164	188	105	196	254
West Glamorgan	70	73	32	66	49

This includes regulated and housing association cases.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many applications there have been for registered fair rents in each of the last five years in each county in Wales.

Mr. Grist: The number of applications received for Registered Fair Rents between 1983 and 1987 are as follows:

County	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
Clwyd	2,028	1,820	2,078	2,672	2,482
Dyfed	854	1,060	1,083	1,554	1,421
Gwent	2,945	2,359	3,408	3,600	3,596
Gwynedd	729	605	854	925	1,073
Mid Glamorgan	4,166	3,298	4,439	3,816	4,625
Powys	530	771	758	777	771
South Glamorgan	4,353	3,534	4,943	4,705	6,253
West Glamorgan	2,193	2,056	2,637	2,274	2,862

This includes regulated and housing association cases.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the percentage change in the number of applications for fair rents in Wales over the past five years.

Mr. Grist: The total number of applications for fair rent for regulated and housing association tenancies in Wales in 1982 was 13,790. The total in 1987 was 23,083. This represents an increase of 67 per cent.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many properties have been assessed for fair rent in Wales in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Grist: In 1987 the total number of registrations for fair rents in Wales was 22,677. This includes regulated and housing association cases.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the level of fair rent in the private sector in Wales in each county, in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Grist: The following information shows the mean rent for registrations in 1986:

Rent Act 1977: Mean registered Rents, Wales 1986

	Unfurnished £ per annum	*Furnished £ per annum*
Rent Registration Area		
Clwyd	874	1,212
Dyfed	942	1,351
Gwent	897	1,080
Gwynedd	765	1,210
Mid Glamorgan	701	1,108
Powys	1,012	1,228
South Glamorgan	1,038	1,442
West Glamorgan	793	1,231
Wales total	853	1,231

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many applications have been made for fair rent by local authorities in Wales in each county in each of the last five years.

Mr. Grist: Information on the number of applications by local authorities for review of a fair rent is not held centrally. However, the total number of first registrations of fair rents where the application has been made by the local authority is as follows:

Rent Act 1977: First registrations only, resulting from application from local authorities, Wales 1982-86

Rent registration area	[1]*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	[2]*1986*
Clwyd	—	2	50	108	82
Dyfed	—	19	108	166	54
Gwent	—	2	46	102	72
Gwynedd	—	0	8	13	8
Mid Glamorgan	—	0	7	17	40
Powys	—	2	102	63	20
South Glamorgan	—	0	0	113	89
West Glamorgan	—	22	173	187	61
Wales Total	—	47	494	769	431

[1] Data not available.
[2] First half of 1986.

Alyn and Deeside (Industry)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what is the total amount of resources earmarked by his Department for the Welsh Development Agency for rural initiatives in Clwyd for traditional factories, bespoke projects and new development sites in market centres; and if he will make a statement;

(2) in which areas in Alyn and Deeside he proposes to provide small industrial estates and workshops; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what is his estimate of the demand for starter units in Alyn and Deeside; how many he has so far allocated; how many he will allocate for 1988-89; what land he will make available for starter units in Alyn and Deeside; what partnerships he envisages with the private sector and local authorities concerning starter units; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what is his estimate of the increase in the square footage, expressed also as a percentage of factory working space on *(a)* Deeside industrial park and *(b)* other named industrial locations in Alyn and Deeside for the year 1988-89 compared with the previous year;

(5) what plans he has for the Alyn and Deeside district for the new property development initiative; and if he will make a statement;

(6) what plans he has to upgrade Deeside industrial park, Engineer park and other industrial locations in Alyn and Deeside; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: The Welsh Development Agency is still developing its detailed plans for all elements of its 1988-89 budget. Its property development programme for the year was published on 28 January and is available in the Library of the House. Other information on the agency's programmes is not yet available on a district basis.

Demand for starter units in Alyn and Deeside is strong and the agency's latest factory programme and property development initiative are aimed at meeting it.

Present estimates suggest that in 1988-89 agency-related factory floor space will increase by nearly 140,000 sq ft or 17 per cent. at Deeside industrial park. It is too early to forecast the outcome of the property development initiative on accommodation at Engineer park.

The Welsh Development Agency plans to spend up to £1 million on infrastructure at Deeside industrial park in order to pave the way for futher development.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Conveyancing

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Attorney-General when he expects the scheme prepared by the Council for Licensed Conveyancers in accordance with paragraph 4 of Schedule 3 to the Administration of Justice Act 1985 to be made available to hon. Members for comment before it receives the Lord Chancellor's approval.

The Attorney-General: The draft scheme was placed in the Library last month.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Attorney-General what representations have been made to the Lord Chancellor relating to postponing the effective date for implementing the scheme provided for in paragraph 4 of schedule 3 to the Administration of Justice Act 1985.

The Attorney-General: The Lord Chancellor has received no representations about the timetable for the implementation of the scheme for the next council. The Council for Licensed Conveyancers has intimated that its aim is that the new council should assume office on 1 March 1989.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Attorney-General, further to his answer given on 9 November 1987, *Official Report*, column *16*, why the Council for Licensed Conveyancers' recognised bodies rules and the Council for Licensed Conveyncers' recognised bodies practice rules have not yet been made; and when the Lord Chancellor expects to give them his approval.

The Attorney-General: I understand the Lord Chancellor wrote to the hon. Member on 1 February.

Judiciary

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Attorney-General if he will give under appropriate headings the total number of

members of the judiciary in post at the latest convenient date, giving under each heading the numbers born in or before 1920.

The Attorney-General: Excluding the Lord Chancellor, the total number of members of the judiciary in post on 1 February 1988 is set out in the table:

Post	*Total*	*Post holders born in or before 1920*
Lord of Appeal in Ordinary	9	4
Heads of Divisions	4	2
Lords Justices	27	5
High Court Judges	77	17
Circuit Judges	392	63
	509	91

Mr. John Stalker

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Attorney-General what consideration he is giving to the prosecution of Mr. John Stalker, under the Official Secrets Acts, in relation to information contained in his book "Stalker", published by Tiptreee Book Series; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: I shall not be able to complete consideration of this matter until after the book has been published and examined.

Social Security Commissioners

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Attorney-General during 1988 how many oral hearings have been held by the social security commissioners in *(a)* London, *(b)* Edinburgh and *(c)* Northern Ireland; and how many non-resident commissions conducted hearings in Cardiff.

The Attorney-General: The information requested, which relates to the period 1 January to 1 February 1988, is given in the table:

Location	*Oral hearings of appeals*
London	28
Edinburgh	6
Northern Ireland	5

In the same period, a Commissioner sat in Cardiff for three days to deal with five oral hearings.

DNA Tests (Legal Aid)

Mr. Madden: To ask the Attorney-General if he will make arrangements to ensure legal aid is made available throughout the United Kingdom to those eligible to pay for DNA tests; which area legal aid committees already accept legal aid applications for DNA costs; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: I assume that the hon. Member is referring to the use of DNA tests in immigration cases. In England and Wales, such tests may be paid for under the legal advice and assistance scheme if the area office concerned extends the normal limit for expenditure under the scheme. Extensions are normally granted for this purpose where the validity of a claimed relationship is the decisive factor in an immigration decision and DNA tests are needed to resolve any doubts about the relationship. The legal aid head office of the Law Society has issued guidance to area offices in order to promote a consistent approach. The same principles apply in Northern Ireland.

PRIME MINISTER

Official Information

Q8. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Prime Minister what is her policy towards setting up formal internal inquiries into the improper leaking of official information in cases where the salient facts appear to be known in advance of such an inquiry; what criteria she uses in such cases in deciding what fresh evidence an inquiry might produce and how effective a use of public funds and officials' time such an exercise is likely to prove; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman's question is based on a premise which I do not accept.

EC Budget

Q107. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has now finalised proposals to be put to the forthcoming meeting of the European Council on the budgetary crisis facing the EEC; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the statement I made on 8 December on the outcome of the Copenhagen European Council.

Retford Hospital

Q134. **Mr. Ashton:** To ask the Prime Minister whether she will pay an official visit to Retford hospital.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Governor-General of New Zealand

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Prime Minister on how many occasions in the past two years Her Majesty's Government has corresponded with the Governor-General of New Zealand; and on what subjects.

The Prime Minister: None.

Economic League

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Prime Minister whether any Government Department has used the services of the Economic League since 1979, when considering applications for jobs; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I am advised by the Civil Service Commissioners who are responsible for recruitment to the higher levels of the Civil Service that they have not used the services of the Economic League. Recruitment to the more junior levels is the responsibility of Government Departments individually and details are not held centrally of recruitment schemes they operate. I am not aware, however, that any Department has used the League's services when considering applications for jobs. Civil Service recruitment at all levels is governed by the principle of fair and open competition and selection on merit.

Engagements

Mr. John M. Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 4 February.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 4 February.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 4 February.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 4 February.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 4 February.

Mr. Yeo: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 4 February.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 4 February.

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 4 February.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

TRANSPORT

M1 (Congestion)

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has for relieving congestion at the southern end of the M1 from Luton to junction 1.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A scheme for the improvement of junction 1 was included in the trunk road programme last year. In addition, climbing lanes are to be provided between the A41 overbridge and junction 4 and at junction 9. The M40 extension between London and Birmingham is expected substantially to relieve the M1.

Cargo Reservation

Mr. Sayeed: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which countries enforce cargo reservation policies that are detrimental to British shipping interests; what type, tonnage and percentage of cargoes are affected; and what remedial measures he intends to take.

Mr. David Mitchell: A wide variety of cargo reservation measures have been introduced, largely, but not exclusively, by developing countries. However these are applied with varying degrees of severity and it is impossible to quantify their impact. The most comprehensive statement of these measures is produced by the OECD maritime transport committee and its latest report is in the Commons Library.

The United Kingdom plays a major part in tackling these restrictionist policies in collaboration with our partners in the Community and through our chairmanship of the consultative shipping group.

Air Traffic

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make plans to move air traffic from the London area to regional airports.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We support the growth of air services to and from regional airports to meet demand in the regions concerned. It is not our policy that traffic wishing to fly to and from the London area should be redirected to the regions.

National Bus Company

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish a list of further disposals of National Bus Company subsidiaries since his answer to the hon. Member for Burnley of 18 December 1987, *Official Report*, columns 777-78.

Mr. David Mitchell: The following National Bus Company subsidiaries have been sold since 18 December 1987:

Management/employee buy out
Crosville Wales Ltd.
London Country (North West) Ltd.

Third Party Purchases
Midland Red North Ltd.
Lincolnshire Road Car Company.

In all, 59 subsidiaries have now been sold, 33 to management or employee teams.

Heavy Goods Vehicles

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many vehicles registered within the private sector have been tested under the Department of Transport heavy goods vehicle annual test, in *(a)* Scotland and *(b)* the United Kingdom in each year since 1979; and how many vehicles have failed the test;

(2) how many vehicles registered for each public body within Scotland and the United Kingdom have been tested under the Department of Transport heavy goods vehicle annual test, in *(a)* Scotland and *(b)* the United Kingdom in each year since 1979; and how many registered public sector vehicles have failed the test.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: This information is not available. The vehicle inspectorate does not keep separate records distinguishing between private and public sectors.

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many vehicles have failed the Department of Transport heavy goods vehicle annual test, in *(a)* Scotland and *(b)* the United Kingdom in each year since 1979;

(2) how many vehicles have been tested under the Department of Transport heavy goods vehicle annual test, in *(a)* Scotland and *(b)* the United Kingdom in each year since 1979.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The tables give the number of heavy goods vehicles first and annual tests in Great Britain and Scotland for the years 1980-81 to 1986-87 for motor vehicles and trailers. Figures prior to this date are not available.

Motor vehicles

	United Kingdom	*Scotland*
1980-81		
Tested	540,091	50,913
Failed	113,171	10,326
1981-82		
Tested	522,493	47,822
Failed	108,018	8,973
1982-83		
Tested	514,023	46,557
Failed	116,324	9,721

	United Kingdom	Scotland
1983-84		
Tested	524,244	47,284
Failed	128,715	12,309
1984-85		
Tested	525,954	47,412
Failed	126,991	12,269
1985-86		
Tested	536,619	48,897
Failed	130,223	12,365
1986-87		
Tested	537,133	47,679
Failed	130,040	11,228

Trailers

	United Kingdom	Scotland
1980-81		
Tested	205,333	19,881
Failed	28,638	2,594
1981-82		
Tested	202,624	19,250
Failed	28,394	2,339
1982-83		
Tested	203,696	19,018
Failed	28,637	2,302
1983-84		
Tested	199,174	18,335
Failed	28,788	3,283
1984-85		
Tested	206,682	18,983
Failed	34,429	3,402
1985-86		
Tested	214,815	19,834
Failed	37,846	4,009
1986-87		
Tested	213,212	19,576
Failed	37,550	3,755

Statistics for Northern Ireland are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Breeches Buoy Equipment

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how often the coastguard service has used breeches buoy equipment in the last five years to save life.

Mr. David Mitchell: During the five-year period, 1983-1987 inclusive, throughout the coastguard service, rescue was effected by breeches buoy equipment on two occasions.

Preston Station (Accident)

Mr. Hargreaves: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he proposes to take consequent upon the report on the rail accident at Preston station on 18 January 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The Inspecting Officer of Railways concluded that the accident was caused by an error on the part of the train driver. Any further action is a matter for the British Railways Board.

Mr. Hargreaves: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received concerning the report of the accident at Preston station on 18 January 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: I have had no representations, but one of my hon. Friend's constituents has corresponded with the Inspecting Officer of Railways.

Mr. Hargreaves: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recommendations of the report on the accident at Preston station on 18 January 1986 have been implemented; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The report made no firm recommendations, but did suggest that consideration be given to installing an audible alarm, which would sound in the signal box, if a train passes a signal at danger at the entrance to complex station or junction areas. The British Railways Board has considered this suggestion but has concluded that the work to reduce the number of signals passed at Danger that it is already undertaking will be more beneficial.

Train Drivers' Cabs

Mr. Hargreaves: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what advice his Department gives regarding the carriage of passengers in the driver's cab of a moving train; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The carriage of unescorted passengers in the driving cabs of trains is prohibited under the British Railways Board's own rules. My Department fully endorses this policy.

Mr. Hargreaves: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to how widespread is the carrying of passengers in the driving cab of a moving train; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: Carrying of passengers in driving cabs of trains is known to occur on rare occasions. The British Railways Board takes appropriate action on these.

Double Decker Buses

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the minimum lateral stability angle required for a double decker bus.

Mr. David Mitchell: Twenty-eight degrees.

Abnormal Loads

Mr. John M. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has made any progress in the study of the track costs and vehicle excise duty rates of vehicles used to move abnormal loads.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A report "Goods Vehicles in Restricted Tax Classes: 1986" covering the work of vehicles involved in the movement of abnormal loads has been published by the Department today. A copy has been placed in the House of Commons Library. The report shows that there are about 400 "special type" motor

vehicles (generally with specialised trailers) which are used to move abnormal indivisible loads—very heavy, wide, or long. On average these vehicles cover about 16,000 miles (26,000 km) per year and have an average axle weight of over 9 tonnes when loaded. We estimate that this means they impose, on average, at least the same wear and tear on the roads as a standard 38 tonne articulated vehicle. However, the vehicle excise duty for a "special type" is £130 per year, compared with £3,100 for a five-axle 38-tonne vehicle. We are looking at how this new evidence might affect the allocation of road tract costs, with a view to ensuring that all vehicles are treated in the same way.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Standard Passport

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is the date for the introduction of the EEC standard passport; and if he will make a statement; (2) if he will estimate the total cost of replacing existing British passports with the EEC standard format passport.

Mr. Renton: Work is well advanced on plans for the introduction of a computerised system to enable British passports to be issued in the format adopted by the EEC and to be machine-readable internationally.

It is planned to commence operation of the system in the Glasgow passport office from July this year. Its phased implementation in other passport offices should be complete by the end of 1989. The cost of producing a British passport in the new format will not be greater than that of producing the existing passport. In preparing passport offices to receive and operate a computer-based system for the issue of machine-readable British passports in the format adopted by member states of the EEC, we estimate that the Home Office will incur capital expenditure of about £7 million. The overall aim of computerisation is to achieve greater efficiency in the passport-issuing process.

Juvenile Crime

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he is willing to finance to combat juvenile crime in the Easington district.

Mr. John Patten: The availability of central Government funding for measures to combat juvenile crime depends on the exact nature of the measures proposed. The report of the Home Office standing conference on crime prevention working group on juvenile crime, a copy of which is in the Library, emphasises the need for juvenile crime prevention initiatives to have a local focus and local support. It also stresses the importance of an inter-agency approach. We believe that a great deal can be achieved at local level through this approach.

Refugees

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to adopt a code of practice as proposed by Amnesty International for fair treatment of refugees in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: I shall shortly be meeting Amnesty International to discuss its proposals in detail. I have already confirmed to it that many of the proposals in the code of practice represent existing Home Office practice. The Government cannot, however, accept the principal proposal that there should be an in-country right of appeal for all applicants: as the evidence of other countries demonstrates, such a right would be likely to encourage abuse of our asylum procedures.

Interception of Communications

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the number if warrants reviewed by category under the Interception of Communications Act 1985 in each year since 1985.

Mr. Hurd: The figures for the number of interception warrants issued by the Home Secretary and Secretary of State for Scotland in force on 31 December 1985 and 1986 are recorded in the table. The information was given in an annex to the report of the commissioner, the right hon. Lord Justice Lloyd, on the first year of operation of the Interception of Communications Act 1985 which was presented to Parliament in March 1987 (Cmnd. 108). I understand that the corresponding figures for 31 December 1987 are to be given in a annex to the commissioner's next annual report, which I expect my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to present to the House shortly. I do not propose to publish statistics additional to those in the commissioner's reports.

	Telecommunications	*Letters*	*Total*
Warrants in force on 31 December 1985			
Home Secretary	212	74	286
Secretary of State for Scotland	22	2	24
Warrants in force on 31 December 1986			
Home Secretary	206	76	282
Secretary of State for Scotland	33	2	35

Amusement Arcades

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to complete his assessment of the findings of the review of the present laws governing jackpot gaming machine arcades; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Our aim is to take this work forward as quickly as possible. We expect the results of this analysis to be available within the next few weeks.

Police (Leicestershire)

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from the

chief constable of Leicestershire concerning the level of police requirements in the county; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to his question on 2 February at column *527*. I have received no separate representations from the chief constable.

Radio

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what frequency separation he anticipates will be imposed by the new Radio Authority on *(a)* FM and *(b)* AM.

Mr. Renton: This will be a matter for the radio authority to determine in assigning the frequencies allocated to it to stations which it licenses.

Demonstrations

Mr. Dicks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will institute legislation to enable the police to charge organisers of demonstrations the full cost of policing those demonstrations; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will introduce legislation to protect members of the public going about their lawful business from being inconvenienced by demonstrations on the streets of the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will introduce legislation to prohibit demonstrations on the streets of the United Kingdom by foreign nationals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The question whether organisers of demonstrations should be charged for the cost of policing them and whether demonstrations by foreign nationals should be subject to special controls, were among matters which were considered in the Government's review of public order law published in May 1985 (Cmnd. 9510). We concluded that it was neither feasible nor desirable to do so. We are satisfied that the Public Order Act 1986, which stemmed from the review, strikes the right balance between the rights of the peaceful protester and those of the wider community.

Mr. Dicks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to how many police officers, vehicles and motor cycles were needed to police the demonstration held in London on Saturday 30 January by Iraqi nationals, and as to the cost to the public purse.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the commissioner that 300 officers, 21 vehicles and 15 motor cycles were deployed in policing this demonstration at an additional cost of around £6,960.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Pen Tops

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has received any representations regarding the danger to children of asphyxiation and death from accidentally swallowing a pen top; and whether he has considered steps to seek to ban pen tops from schools.

Mrs. Rumbold: I have not received any representations on this matter, but the media coverage of one recent tragic accident will have served to alert both parents and teachers to the risks involved when pen tops or other objects are put in the mouth.

Medical Students

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list in the *Official Report* the number of *(a)* women and *(b)* men students recruited by all medical schools in the United Kingdom in 1984, 1985, 1986 and 1987.

Mr. Jackson: The intake of pre-clinical medical students to United Kingdom medical schools was as follows:

	Academic year starting in			
	1984	*1985*	*1986*	[1]*1987*
Men	2,311	2,224	2,258	2,246
Women	1,814	1,869	1,861	1,874

[1] Provisional.

ILEA (Education Costs)

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much it cost the Inner London education authority in 1986-87 and each of the preceding five years to educate *(a)* a primary school pupil and *(b)* a secondary school pupil for one year, broken down into (1) teaching costs, (ii) administration costs and (iii) other costs,; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Detailed figures for actual expenditure by ILEA in 1986-87 are not yet available. The table gives net recurrent institutional expenditure per primary and secondary pupil in ILEA broken down between teaching and non-teaching costs for the years 1981-82 to 1985-86. ILEA's central administration and inspection costs over the same period are shown separately per head of population.

ILEA net recurrent institutional expenditure per pupil, £

	1981-82	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*
Primary schools					
Teaching cost	621	686	727	759	804
Non-teaching cost	410	432	481	508	511
Total	1,031	1,118	1,208	1,267	1,315
Secondary schools					
Teaching cost	852	955	1,029	1,140	1,253

	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86
Non-teaching cost	554	609	726	802	832
Total	1,406	1,564	1,755	1,942	2,085
ILEA central administration and inspection expenditure per head of population, £	19·5	20·6	23·8	27·6	29·3

School Leavers

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what percentage of school leavers during the academic years 1985-86 and 1986-87 had no graded examination results in *(a)* England, *(b)* the Inner London education authority, *(c)* Birmingham, *(d)* Croydon, *(e)* Leeds, *(f)* Manchester, *(g)* Liverpool, *(h)* Kingston, *(i)* Barnet and *(j)* Harrow;

(2) what percentage of all school leavers in the academic years 1985-86 and 1986-87 had at least five exam passes at grades A, B or C in O-level or grade one in CSE in *(a)* England, *(b)* the Inner London education authority, *(c)* Birmingham, *(d)* Croydon, *(e)* Leeds, *(f)* Manchester, *(g)* Liverpool, *(h)* Kingston, *(i)* Barnet and *(j)* Harrow.

Mr. Dunn: Information for the authorities requested is given in the table.

Leavers from maintained schools
Average of academic years 1983-84, 1984-85 and 1985-86

	Percentage of leavers with 5 or more higher[1] grades at GCE O level or CSE	*No graded result at GCE or CSE*
England	23·7	10·0
ILEA	15·5	21·3
Birmingham	18·4	14·6
Croydon	24·9	9·2
Leeds	22·3	10·4
Manchester	18·2	21·0
Liverpool	17·3	20·9
Kingston-upon-Thames	35·8	8·6
Barnet	39·9	5·8
Harrow	38·9	5·5

Source:
School Leavers Sample Survey. Data subject to sampling error.
Note:
1 O level grades A-C, CSE grade 1

Mode 3 Examinations

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give the annual rate of increase over the last three years for the utilisation of mode 3 examinations in *(a)* England and Wales and *(b)* the Inner London education authority.

Mrs. Rumbold: This information is not held centrally.

Education Reform

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what discussions have taken place between local education authorities, voluntary bodies and business communities on the training of school governors to help them discharge their duties under the Education Reform Bill.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend is aware of a number of discussions and initiatives, which he welcomes. For its part the Department is considering with all those interested, partly through the forum of an informal working group, what steps can usefully be taken on a national basis.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether, under the provisions of the Education Reform Bill, local education authorities will be financially responsible towards teachers who have been made redundant by the governors; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: LEAs will be responsible for making redundancy payments to teachers who have been made redundant following the decision of the governing body of a school with financial delegation. It will be for governors to decide whether to offer compensation in excess of that provided for by statute or by contractual rights acquired on or before 20 November 1987. The LEA will bear the costs of the redundancy payments outside the school's delegated budget unless it has good reason to deduct them from that budget.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether, under the provisions of the Education Reform Bill, governors who, acting in good faith incur debts, will be able to ask the local education authorities to relieve them of their duties; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: In preparing their schemes of financial delegation LEAs will have to establish systems for the monitoring and audit of school budgets handled by governing bodies. LEAs should therefore be aware at an early stage of any difficulties governors may be experiencing and will be able to step in to give advice, or where appropriate, to withdraw the delegation until such time as the governors could take it on again.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether, under the provisions of the Education Reform Bill, local education authorities will be financially liable if an industrial tribunal decides that a teacher has been unfairly dismissed but that the governing body acted in good faith; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The LEA would be liable to pay compensation and costs awarded by the industrial tribunal. Where a school had financial delegation, the LEA would meet those costs outside the school's delegated budget unless it had good reason for deducting the costs from that budget. What would be a good reason would fall to be determined in the circumstances of the case.

Assisted Places Scheme

Mr. Hargreaves: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about the level of parental contributions to the fees of pupils in the assisted places scheme 1988-89.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Subject to the usual consultations and to parliamentary approval, the parental contribution scales will be adjusted upwards for the school year 1988-89 as follows:

Part of relevant income to which specified percentage applies	*One assisted pupil Per cent.*	*Each of two assisted pupils Per cent.*	*Each of three assisted pupils Per cent.*
That part which exceeds £7,092 but does not exceed £7,711	9·00	6·75	5·25
That part (if any) which exceeds £7,711 but does not exceed £8,341	12·00	9·00	7·00
That part (if any) which exceeds £8,341 but does not exceed £9,591	15·00	11·25	8·75
That part (if any) which exceeds £9,591 but does not exceed £11,513	21·00	15·75	12·25
That part (if any) which exceeds £11,513 but does not exceed £14,023	24·00	18·00	14·00
That part (if any) which exceeds £14,023	33·00	24·75	19·25

SCOTLAND

Pig Industry

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the current level of profitability in the pig industry in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Overproduction in pigmeat within the European Community, coupled with certain difficulties on third country markets, is currently having an adverse effect on the profitability of the Scottish pig industry. The Government have taken, and will continue to seek to take, steps to improve the situation within the context of the EC pigmeat regime and the CAP generally.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* any pork processing units in Scotland which have been closed since 1979 indicating, the location of the unit and the date of closure in each case;

(2) if he will list in the *Official Report* every existing pork processing unit currently in operation in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Pork processing units range from large, single species plants to very small enterprises processing pork and other meats. Lists of these units are not maintained by my Department.

Pigs

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total importation to Scotland in each of the past five years of cereal replacer-substitutes for the use of pig producers.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My Department does not maintain records on the importation of cereal substitutes for incorporation in pig feed. Cereals remain the main component in Scottish pig feed rations and manioc is not currently being used in substitution.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many recent representations he has received about current difficulties being faced by pig producers in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The National Farmers Union of Scotland has recently made representations to my noble Friend the Minister of State about the overproduction of pigmeat within the European Community, which coupled with certain problems on third country markets, is currently presenting difficulties for the Scottish pig industry.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total number of people employed in pig production in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information is not available in the form requested. The table sets out the labour force (which need not be employed on pig production) on units returning pigs at the June 1987 agricultural census.

Pig size groups	*Units*	*Total labour*
1 - 2	124	312
3 - 9	99	246
10 - 19	60	159
20 - 29	44	103
30 - 59	48	107
50 - 99	69	162
100 - 199	66	155
200 - 249	55	70
250 - 499	58	397
500 and over	199	1,371

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the total number of pig producers in Scotland in each of the past five years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is set out in the table.

	Total producers[1]	*Total pigs*
1983	1,169	442,238
1984	960	405,483
1985	933	418,465
1986	906	413,736
1987	822	425,745

[1] Based on units returning pigs at the June agricultural census.

Meat Production (Subsidies)

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total level of subsidy paid to on *(a)* red meat, *(b)* pig meat and *(c)* poultry to producers in Scotland in 1987.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The European Community operates "light" regimes in the pigmeat and poultrymeat sectors involving protection of the Community market from third country imports, but little direct support. In contrast, under the Community arrangements for supporting beef and sheep production it is estimated that in Scotland in the 1987-88 financial year £151 million will be paid.

Gaming Machines

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the latest information he has on the level of abuse of gambling or gaming machines by minors in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The findings of a research project on this issue carried out on behalf of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and extending to Scotland are currently being assessed.

Mr. A. Graeme Adam

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when the report on investigations into alleged fraud by Mr. A. Graeme Adam was given by Strathclyde police to the procurator fiscal; whether the report has been referred to the Lord Advocate; and when he expects action to be taken on the report.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: A report on investigations to date was made to the procurator fiscal by the police on 3 February 1988. Investigations will continue under the direction of the procurator fiscal.

Surgery (Private Sector)

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will place in the Library a copy of the recent letter sent to Fife health board concerning financial allocations for surgical procedures to be carried out in the private sector.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have placed a copy of the recent letter to Fife health board, concerning the additional allocations, in the House of Commons Library. Following further consideration by the board of its proposal to treat NHS patients in private hospitals, I have agreed that the board may use the resources set aside for this purpose in its own facilities.

Media (Meeting)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland for what purpose Mr. Ian Dean, the Crown Agent, was present at the meeting with representatives of broadcasting and the press in Scotland on 4 December 1987 in Edinburgh.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The meeting in question was one of the periodic dinners which my right hon. and learned Friend has, accompanied by a number of ministerial colleagues and senior civil servants, with senior broadcasting executives. The purpose of the meeting was informal discussion on a broad range of Scottish affairs.

Ophthalmology

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the waiting time for an ophthalmology out-patient appointment for every hospital in each health board.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information available is given in the table. The waiting times relate to routine cases, that is, cases where there is no indication of special urgency.

Minimum and maximum waiting times for a first consultation as an ophthalmology out-patient (routine cases): by hospital
Year ending 31 March 1987

Health Board and Hospital	*Minimum waiting time (weeks)*	*Maximum waiting time (weeks)*
Ayrshire and Arran		
Isle of Arran War Memorial	—	—
Crosshouse	13	21
Heathfield	6	12
Ballochmyle	13	13
Borders		
Borders Peripheral Clinics	—	—
Galashiels Health Centre	7	7
Argyll and Clyde		
Dunoon and District General	2	13
Mid-Argyll	4	32
The Cottage Hospital, Campbeltown	4	12
Victoria Hospital, Rothesay	16	20
West Highland	2	2
Dumbarton Health Centre	6	7
Inverclyde Royal	—	12
Royal Victoria Eye Infirmary	—	—
Paisley District General	—	—
Renfrew Clinic	—	—
Barrhead Clinic	—	—
Fife		
Victoria Hospital, Kirkcaldy	2	16
Peripheral Clinic, East Fife	—	—
Dunfermline and West Fife	6	6
Peripheral Clinic, West Fife	—	—
Glasgow		
Townhead Health Centre	—	—
Baillieston Health Centre	—	—
Glasgow Royal Infirmary	20	20
Stobhill	10	15
Victoria Infirmary, Glasgow	12	13
Southern General	2	8
Drumchapel	—	—
Gartnavel District General	3	7
Royal Hospital for Sick Children, Drumchapel	—	—
Royal Hospital for Sick Children, Yorkhill	10	11
Western Infirmary	3	20
Glasgow Eye Infirmary	14	18
Highland		
Caithness Central Hospital	2	19
Lawson Memorial	30	30
Raigmore	4	6
Belford	34	34
Mackinnon Memorial	—	—
Portree	—	—
Ross Memorial	28	28
Lanarkshire		
Cumbernauld Health Centre	—	—
Monklands DGH	77	77

Health Board and Hospital	Minimum waiting time (weeks)	Maximum waiting time (weeks)
Law	5	5
Strathclyde	1	7
William Smellie Exteral Clinics	—	—
Hunter Health Centre	—	—
Blantyre Health Centre	—	—
Hairmyres	—	5
Stonehouse	5	6
Larkhall Health Institute	—	—
Hamilton Central Clinic	—	—
Craighead School Clinic	—	—
Grampian		
Aberdeen Royal Infirmary	7	11
Woodend General	—	—
Royal Aberdeen Childrens Hospital	6	6
Kingseat	—	—
Royal Cornhill	—	—
Peterhead Cottage	10	10
Fraserburgh	12	16
Huntly Jubilee	8	8
Chalmers	34	34
Dr. Gray's	8	8
Seafield	—	7
Turner	—	—
Leanchoil	4	4
Lothian		
West Port Clinic	—	—
North Berwick Health Centre	—	—
Leith	2	4
Newton Port Clinic	—	—
Western General	—	—
Prestonpans Health Centre	—	—
Tranent Health Centre	—	—
Edinburgh Royal Infirmary	10	12
Bangour General	10	10
Tayside		
Ninewells	3	9
Dundee Eye Institute	—	—
Perth Royal Infirmary	5	5
Crieff Cottage	—	—
Blairgowrie and Rattray Cottage	—	—
Murray Royal	—	—
Arbroath Infirmary	16	16
Brechin	25	25
Montrose Royal Infirmary	—	—
Stracathro	2	2
Forth Valley		
Falkirk Royal Infirmary	4	8
Bo'ness	—	—
Stirling Royal Infirmary	6	12
Western Isles		
Lewis	—	—
Daliburgh	—	—
Dumfries and Galloway		
Dumfries and Galloway Royal Infirmary	20	52
Kirkcudbright Cottage	—	—
Garrick	—	—
Newton Stewart Health Centre	—	—
Castle Douglas Health Centre	—	—
Shetland		
New Gilbert Bain	—	—

—: Means that a person would wait less than one week or would be seen at the next clinic.

Mentally Handicapped People

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what are the numbers of mentally handicapped people in Scotland;

(2) what are the numbers of profoundly mentally handicapped people in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: It is not possible to give exact figures or reliable estimates for the numbers of people with mental handicap in Scotland since reported prevalence rates for milder degrees of mental handicap show wide variation.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Regional Aid

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations he has received concerning his Department's recently announced changes in regional aid to industry.

Mr. Atkins: Since the publication of the DTI White Paper on 12 January we have received several representations on aspects of regional policy which refer, amongst other things, to the changes we have made.

Schools (Industry Links)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what plans he has to strengthen schools-industry links.

Mr. Butcher: A number of measures to strengthen school-industry links were announced as part of the enterprise initiative in the White Paper "DTI — the department for Enterprise" published on 12 January 1988. Three new targets were set:

— every year, 10 per cent. of teachers should have the opportunity to gain some personal experience of the world of business

— every young person should have two or more weeks of work experience, suited to his or her ability and needs, before leaving school

— every trainee teacher should gain an appreciation of the needs of employers and the importance of links between schools and employers

The DTI will also continue to support a wide range of innovative school-employer link activities, courses and projects which promote better understanding between employers and education and the development of practical, adaptable and enterprising attitudes in young people.

Origin Marks (Harmonisation)

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he intends to have further early discussions with equivalent Ministers in the European Economic Community Council of Trade and Industry Ministers' Committee about harmonising origin marks, brand name designation, and trade marks policy in the Community.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Council of Ministers (Internal Market) discussed trade marks both in December and most recently on 2 February. Some outstanding technical problems need more consideration. I expect colleagues to be involved in further policy discussions with Community colleagues on this subject.

Debt

Mr. Stern: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he has any policy to encourage the availability of free advice on debt.

Mr. Maude: A great deal of advice and help on debt problems is already provided free of charge by citizens advice bureaux. I have encouraged the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux, which is funded by central Government, to seek additional funding for this specialised service from the finance industry. Two money advice support projects, one in the south-east and one in the north-west of England, are already under way as a result of private sector funding and I understand that agreement has been reached on a third major scheme which will be announced soon.

Private Nursing Homes

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the number, name and location of private nursing homes in the northern region which have received regional selective assistance or regional development grant over the last five years, together with the amount of grant payable in each case and the date upon which payment was made.

Mr. Atkins: Private nursing homes do not qualify for regional development grant. There were five offers of regional selective assistance in the northern region — Tyne and Wear, Northumberland, Durham, Cleveland and Cumbria in the five years to 31 December 1987. Details of offers made are as follows:

Name and location	*Amount offered* £
R. Harrison—Whitley Bay	25,000
Burnside Lodge Ltd.—Whitley Bay	40,000
Mr. and Mrs. P. Smith—Whitley Bay	10,000
Redezeus—Sunderland	25,000
John Lisle—Whitley Bay	20,000

Mergers

Mr. Darling: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list any information he has as to the major industrialised countries with mandatory pre-notification procedures for mergers; and if he will indicate above what size these procedures come into effect.

Mr. Maude: Countries with merger prenotification requirements include the United States of America, Canada, Japan and the Federal Republic of Germany. the rules are complicated but in general the requirement to prenotify applies:

in the USA, if one party has annual sales or assets of $100 million, the other party has annual sales or assets of $10 million, and as a result of the transaction the acquiring firm would hold at least $15 million or 15 per cent. of the stock of the acquired firm;

in Canada, if the combined annual sales or assets of the parties exceed Can $400 million and if the value of the assets acquired exceeds $35 million;

in Japan, to all pure mergers and transfers of a substantial part of a business (through a simplified procedure applies to certain small mergers where the assets of each party are less than 5 billion yen);

in the FRG, if one party to the transaction has annual sales of at least DM 2,000 million, or if both parties have annual sales of at least DM 1,000 million.

Trading Standards

Mr. Darling: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what extra resources he proposes to provide to trading standards departments to inspect equipment for use in trade.

Mr. Butcher: The rate support grant settlements for England, Scotland and Wales, approved by Parliament on 9 and 15 December 1987, make adequate provision for trading standards—consumer protection in 1988-89. It is for each local weights and measures authority to provide from the rate support grant for its trading standard department to give effect to the purposes of the Weights and Measures Act.

Trade Statistics

Mr. Darling: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list United Kingdom trade with, *(a)* the European Community, *(b)* the United States of America, and *(c)* the rest of the world in 1975 and 1987 at real and constant prices.

Mr. Alan Clark: Details of United Kingdom trade in current prices are as follows. Information on constant prices by geographical area is not available.

United Kingdom Trade with the European Community, the United States of America and the Rest of the World in 1975 and 1987
£ million, OTS basis

	1975		*1987*	
	Exports	*Imports*	*Exports*	*Imports*
European Community	6,844	9,352	39,417	49,557
United States of America	1,810	2,362	11,014	9,136
Rest of the World	10,953	12,332	29,420	35,322

Charter Group Initiative

Mr. Darling: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the cost to his Department of becoming a full member of the Charter Group initiative; and if he will list the other members of the initiative.

Mr. Butcher: It is not possible to give the cost of the DTI becoming a full member of the Charter Group initiative since the terms for participation have not yet been agreed. More than 150 organisations have so far indicated their interest in, and intended support for, the initiative.

Enterprise Initiative

Mr. Darling: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps he intends to take to ensure that private consultants appointed using grants under the enterprise initiative are professionally competent.

Mr. Atkins: Before a consultancy practice can undertake assignments under the terms of the enterprise initiative, it must satisfy two basic criteria. First, the practice must have been established for at least two years. Second, it must provide four satisfactory business references for work undertaken on its own account. In addition, every assignment undertaken by a consultancy is closely monitored by the organisations contracted to administer the consultancy schemes. A consultancy practice that fails to deliver quality and value for money will not be used again.

Single Company Projects

Mr. Darling: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the projected budget for providing assistance to exceptional cases of single company projects offering significant national benefits.

Mr. Atkins: Assistance is available under this facility for a limited number of investment projects and research and development projects that meet the demanding criteria for support. The budget envisaged for 1988-89 is £4 million.

Government Policies (Impact on Business)

Mr. Darling: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps he intends to take to ensure that in assessing the impact on business of all of the Government's policies, he receives the views of a wide range of companies.

Mr. Atkins: Ministers and officials receive the views of companies through numerous contacts with trade organisations and individual firms. I expect these to continue, and to be helped by the steps we are taking to strengthen and extend my Department's regional office network.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps he intends to take to ensure that in assessing the impact on business of all of the Government's policies, he receives the views of the workers in small businesses.

Mr. Atkins: It is the Government's practice to consult fully on proposals for change.

Small Businesses (Employees)

Mr. Darling: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he has any plans to consult the employees of small businesses about the effect of deregulation on their working conditions.

Mr. Atkins: It is the Government's practice to consult fully on proposals for change.

Contracting-out

Mr. Darling: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list his Department's services which he is currently examining with a view to contracting-out to the private sector.

Mr. Butcher: In recent years the Department of Trade and Industry has contracted-out the majority of cleaning, laundry, catering, maintenance and security-guarding, and the position in the few examples which remain in-house is currently under review. Some financial appraisal casework and company accounts analysis has recently been market-tested; the export marketing research scheme is currently undergoing such testing; and the possibility of market testing some messengerial work is under examination.

Enterprise Counsellors

Mr. Darling: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether individuals from the private sector to be used by his Department as part of the organisation of teams of enterprise counsellors will be paid according to Civil Service pay scales; and to whom they will be responsible.

Mr. Atkins: No. Enterprise counsellors will be contracted to the Department of Trade and Industry at £70 per day plus reasonable expenses. They will be responsible directly to the DTI through its regional office network.

Manufactures

Mr. Darling: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the United Kingdom share of world trade in manufactures by value for each year since 1979.

Mr. Alan Clark: I refer the hon. Member to table E2 in the "Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics", a copy of which is in the Library.

Small Firms (Exemption from Regulations)

Mr. Darling: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster which regulations he proposes to exempt small firms from complying with as indicated in the White Paper "DTI—the department for Enterprise".

Mr. Atkins: It is the Government's policy to examine all areas of regulation to ensure that any compliance costs for business, including small businesses, are reduced to the minimum. As stated in "DTI — the department for Enterprise" further proposals for deregulation will be included in a White Paper to be published in the summer.

Consumer Protection

Mr. Darling: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what plans he has to seek to amend consumer protection legislation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: I refer the hon. Member to the replies given by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Pollok (Mr. Dunnachie) on 18 November, at column *552* to my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page) on 16 December at column *540* and to the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) on 13 January at column *315*.

We are also considering proposals for revised regulations on pyramid selling and for amending the Unsolicited Goods and Services Acts. The Government intend to repeal the Trade Descriptions Act 1972 by replacing it with a new order under the Trade Descriptions Act 1968 in order to introduce new requirements on the origin marking of goods.

Regulations made under the Consumer Protection Act 1987 (which includes a general safety requirement for consumer goods) and its predecessors will be kept under continuous review with the aim of revising, revoking or adding to them where this is necessary, to provide specific protection to consumers. In particular, the House will be aware of my hon. Friend's statement on 11 January about regulations on the flammability of domestic upholstered furniture.

Microgravity Research

Mr. Stott: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he intends to increase the funding of microgravity research in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Atkins: The Government have no intention at present to increase the funding of microgravity research in

the United Kingdom. Any proposals for research in this field will be considered on their merits in competition with other demands on resources.

Earth Observation

Mr. Stott: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the Government's interest in Earth observation, whether by means of the polar platform or a number of smaller satellites.

Mr. Atkins: Proposals for developing earth observation satellites such as the polar platform in the earth observation field are under consideration.

Space Policy

Mr. Stott: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the recommendations contained in the House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology's report on a United Kingdom space policy.

Mr. Atkins: The Government are considering the report and a reply will be given to the House of Lords Select Committee in due course.

RADARSAT

Mr. Stott: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what plans he has for bilateral collaboration with *(a)* the United States of America and *(b)* Canada in space development of RADARSAT.

Mr. Atkins: Proposals for bilateral collaboration on RADARSAT are under consideration.

Radio and Electronic Equipment

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, what has been the level of exports of radio and electronic equipment suitable for military use to *(a)* Israeli and *(b)* Palestinian destinations over each of the last four years.

Mr. Alan Clark: Information on such exports to countries in the middle east could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Proofing of Guns

Mr. Key: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he has any plans to regulate the arrangements for the proofing of guns; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: Gun barrel proofing is already closely regulated by legislation dating back to the Gun Barrel Proof Act 1868, and I do not consider further regulation necessary. On the contrary, I am currently consulting on a modest measure of deregulation, to enable the proof houses to set their own charges independently of Government.

Information Technology

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will give the balance of trade figures for information technology for each year from 1979.

Mr. Butcher: The available information is given in the table.

Information Technology and Electronics Industries[1]

£ million

Year	*Crude trade balance*[2]
1979	−444
1980	−355
1981	−1,060
1982	−1,471
1983	−2,137
1984	−2,186
1985	−1,647
1986	−1,839

Notes:

[1] Activity headings 3301, 3302, 3441, 3442, 3443, 3444, 3453 and 3454 of the SIC 80.

[2] Exports (fob) less imports (cif).

Airbus

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the nature and extent of Her Majesty's Government's commitment to the Airbus project; and what is the total sum so far committed to the project by way of grants or loans to *(a)* British Aerospace plc and *(b)* other companies and bodies.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 1 February 1988]:* Her Majesty's Government are committed to promote the success of Airbus Industrie projects which are the subject of its arrangements with those Governments. Under principles of co-operation established in 1978 with the Governments of France and Germany, Her Majesty's Government fully support British Aerospace's participation in Airbus Industrie and stand behind the discharge by British Aerospace of its financial obligations to Airbus Industrie.

The Government will provide up to £700 million in launch aid to enable British Aerospace to participate in the A320 and A330-A340 projects.

In addition, £60 million launch aid has been paid to Rolls-Royce in connection with the development of the V2500 engine, which is intended for use with Airbus aircraft: and a total of approximately £4·25 million has been made available in selective financial assistance to suppliers of equipment to the Airbus programme.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Fiji

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has had any recent representations from groups in Britain about the situation in Fiji; and if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's present attitude to the Fijian Government.

Mr. Eggar: We have received virtually no such representations recently. We welcome the move from a military Government to a predominantly civilian Government in Fiji, which we hope will be a step towards a return to parliamentary democracy and constitutional government.

India ("Panorama" Programme)

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has received any representations from the High Commissioner for India concerning

the recent "Panorama" programme about the Indian Government, shown on BBC1 on 18 January; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tim Eggar: No. The BBC has full editorial responsibility for the programmes it broadcasts.

Royal Prerogative

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if pursuant to his answer of 1 February, he will provide the information on the exercise of the royal prerogative requested in respect of Hong Kong.

Mr. Eggar: The constitutional arrangements for Hong Kong are set out in letters patent and royal instructions, which are issued from time to time in exercise of the royal prerogative. The Governor of Hong Kong exercises his powers in accordance with letters patent and royal instruction and any other laws in force in the colony.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, pursuant to his answer of 1 February, he will provide the information on the exercise of the royal prerogative requested in respect of the Falkland Islands.

Mr. Eggar: Under the Falkland Islands Constitution Order 1985, the executive authority of the Falkland Islands is, subject to the constitution and any other law, exercised on behalf of Her Majesty by the governor either directly or through officers subordinate to him. The governor is obliged by the terms of the constitution to act in accordance with any instructions which Her Majesty may from time to time give him through a Secretary of State.

THE ARTS

Library Services

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Minister for the Arts what plans he has for the privatisation of local authority library services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: I have no plans for the privatisation of these services. However, I hope to provide new opportunities to help public libraries to find additional resources for improving their services by allowing them to charge for a wider range of additional and specialised services, perhaps in partnership with the private sector, and by encouraging them to contract-out parts of their operations. I shall shortly be issuing a consultative paper on how this might best be done.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Smoke Detectors

Ms. Walley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether, in the light of recent announcements about the dangers of foam in domestic furniture, he will consider zero-rating smoke detectors for value added tax purposes.

Mr. Lilley: No. The case for zero-rating smoke detectors cannot be considered in isolation from many other equally deserving candidates for special treatment. To grant relief from VAT in all these cases would be unacceptably expensive in revenue terms and would in the long run undermine the broad-based nature of the tax.

Inflation

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which are his latest prospects for the inflation rate in 1988.

Mr. Lilley: The forecast in the Autumn Statement was that inflation would be 4½ per cent. in the fourth quarter of 1988. My right hon. Friend will present a new forecast at Budget time in the usual way.

"Adjustment With a Human Face"

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what consideration he has given to the United Nations Children's Fund's recent study entitled "Adjustment With a Human Face", a copy of which has been forwarded to him; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: The IMF recognises the need to take full account of the effect of structural adjustment on the poor and we shall continue to encourage this both at the policy design stage and when new programmes are implemented. It is important to recognise that in many cases adjustment policies are in fact of direct benefit to the very poorest groups in developing countries — the rural poor. One important example of this is increasing the artificially low prices farmers receive for their crops—which often both directly improves income distribution and encourages more domestic food production. Structural adjustment measures such as this are essential in the poorest countries if they are to achieve better economic growth, and thus better living conditions for all, including the poorest.

EMPLOYMENT

MSC (London Docklands)

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what have been the main activities and projects of the Manpower Services Commission in London docklands over the last six years; and what have been the practical results.

Mr. Cope: In London docklands over the last six years, the Manpower Services Commission has made available its full range of programmes, including YTS, adult training schemes and the community programme. Practical results through specific activities have included an integrated recruitment and training package for fire officers at the new airport; provision of literacy-numeracy, language and job preparation courses to help develop basic skills and community programme projects including environmental improvements, house insulation, and work to benefit leisure activities and the development of tourism.

Childcare Payment System

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the latest total amount paid out under the job training service childcare payment system.

Mr. Cope: Child care payments for single parents who participate in the new job training scheme were introduced, on a pilot basis, in 10 areas on 1 September 1987. Up to the end of January 1988, £4,000 had been paid under these arrangements.

ENERGY

British Coal

Mr. Andy Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on British Coal's external financing limit for 1987-88.

Mr. Michael Spicer: British Coal's external financing limit for 1987-88 has been increased from £842 million to £920 million to reflect higher redundancy costs. This reflects a higher rate of colliery closure and manpower rundown than originally envisaged. These costs will increase the corporation's deficit. A Supplementary Estimate to enable the Government to contribute towards the additional deficit and restructuring costs will be submitted to Parliament shortly.

The increase in external financing limit is being charged to the reserve and will not add to the public expenditure planning total.

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he will give the expenditure plans for British Coal for the purchase of mining machinery for each of the next three years;

(2) if he will give the breakdown of mining machinery purchased from *(a)* British and *(b)* foreign companies by British Coal in each of the last three years and in the current year and, where known, planned to be purchased over each of the next three years.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is a management matter for British Coal. I am asking the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

ENVIRONMENT

Nature Reserves

76. **Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many farmers presently farm in national nature reserves.

Mr. Moynihan: No detailed record is kept of the number of farmers within national nature reserves and this information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, I shall shortly be able to let the hon. Member have the details of tenure requested in his question of 19 January at column *602*.

Water Boards (Bonuses)

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will introduce as a criteria for determining bonus payments to water authority boards a measurement of success in improving the quality of the water supply;

(2) what are the criteria used to determine bonus payments to water authority chairmen;

(3) what is his policy on bonus payments to water authority chairmen; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: A performance bonus scheme for water authority chairmen and executive board members was introduced in 1986-87 to provide a financial incentive for the participants to achieve exceptional corporate results in relation to targets agreed with Government. Bonuses from 5 to 15 per cent. were paid for meeting or exceeding the authorities' agreed performance aims. I will be considering what form the scheme should take in 1988-89.

Low-cost Housing

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to improve the supply of low-cost housing in rural and in rural development areas.

Mrs. Roe: The White Paper published last September (Housing: The Government's Proposals, Cm. 214) set out the Government's proposals for housing generally including proposals to expand the housing association programme which provides low-cost homes for rent and other tenure in rural and urban areas.

We are currently considering whether any further measures, designed specifically to help rural areas, are needed.

Water Authority Employees

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what information he has on how many hours per week and days per year water authority chairmen and executives have worked on average, for each of the last 10 years;

(2) what information he has on how many hours per week and days per year on average the chairmen have worked in each water authority in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Moynihan: All executive members of regional water authorities hold full-time appointments. The basis on which chairmen have held office over the last 10 years, as a percentage of full time, is as follows:

Anglian—1979-80: 70 per cent., 1983-88:[1] 80 per cent.
Northumbrian—1979-88: 50 per cent.
North West—1979-88: 80 per cent.
Severn Trent—1979-88: 80 per cent.
Southern—1979-84: 70 per cent., 1985-88: 80 per cent.
South West — 1979-80: 50 per cent., 1981-86: 70 per cent., 1987-88:[2] 100 per cent.
Thames—1979-88: 80 per cent.
Wessex — 1979-82: 50 per cent., 1983-84: 70 per cent., 1985-88: 80 per cent.
Yorkshire—1979-84: 70 per cent., 1985-88: 90 per cent.

[1] Between June 1986 and March 1987, 100 per cent.
[2] Since 1987 also acts as chief executive.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many hours per week a water authority *(a)* employee, *(b)* chairman and *(c)* executive must work to be classified as part-time.

Mr. Moynihan: Water authority board appointments are considered to be part-time when the duties can be discharged satisfactorily for a normal input of less than an average working week. The terms of appointment by water authorities are a matter for the authorities themselves.

Exmoor National Park Committee

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to announce the names of those appointed or reappointed to the Exmoor national park committee.

Mr. Moynihan: I shall be writing to the individuals concerned shortly. I will thereafter, in accordance with normal practice, be announcing the names of those appointed or reappointed and at that stage I will write to my hon. Friend — and other hon. Members with a constituency interest in national parks—with details of the outcome of the appointments round.

Harecastle Tunnel

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about the legality of work proposed to be carried out by the British Waterways Board at Harecastle tunnel, near Stoke-on-Trent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: I have received a letter about the Harecastle tunnel from another hon. Member, to whom I shall be replying shortly. It is for the board to satisfy itself as to the legality of its actions.

Mineral Workings and Derelict Land

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects the next surveys of mineral workings and of derelict land in England to be carried out.

Mr. Trippier: These two surveys will be undertaken in 1988, with a base date of 1 April. The survey forms were sent out early in January. Local authorities will have up to nine months, from January to September, in which to complete the survey tables for their respective areas. We hope the results of the surveys will be published in summer 1989.

Estate Agents

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will implement the proposal made in his Department's consultation paper of July 1986 to limit the maximum permitted size of estate agents' boards to 0·2 sq m; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The consultation paper of July 1986 invited comment on a proposal to limit the maximum permitted area of estate agents' boards on residential property to 0·2 sq m. Subsequently, my right hon. Friend concluded that the maximum permitted area should be 0·5 sq m, for a single board advertising the sale or letting of residential property—a reduction of 75 per cent. in the present maximum permitted area (2 sq m). My right hon. Friend laid amending regulations (The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 1987, SI 1987/2227) on 8 January, subject to the negative resolution procedure. The main provisions relating to estate agents' boards are to take effect on 28 October.

Water Supplies (Disconnections)

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what notice is given to householders when a water supply is disconnected; what authority water authorities have to obtain prior to such disconnection; and what is the average delay in securing reconnections.

Mr. Moynihan: The water industry operates a code of practice designed to ensure that customers in financial difficulties are not cut off if an alternative solution can be found. If disconnection is unavoidable, the general statutory authority (section 38 of the Water Act 1945), empowers water undertakers to cut off supplies if charges have not been paid within seven days of being demanded unless the customer has disputed the bill or the supply is to a tenant whose landlord is in default. Undertakers must notify the local authority within 48 hours of cutting off the supply to an inhabited house. When the householder requests disconnections, he must give the undertaker 24 hours notice. Section 80 of the third schedule to the Water Act 1945 requires undertakers, before they begin works which will interfere with the supply of water (except in emergencies), to give reasonable notice to consumers.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many households in the United Kingdom in each of the last five years have had water supplies disconnected; and how many of those households included *(a)* retirement pensioners, *(b)* the unemployed, *(c)* young children, *(d)* invalidity benefit recipients and *(e)* single parents with young children;

(2) what have been the main reasons causing water to be disconnected from households over the last five years; and what charge is made to householders to reconnect water supplies.

Mr. Moynihan: The numbers of households in England disconnected by water authorities for reasons of non-payment in each of the last five years is as set out:

	Number
1983-84	2,521
1984-85	2,052
1985-86	4,212
1986-87	6,450

Information for 1982-83 or details of the type of household involved is not available centrally. Water authority charges for reconnection in such cases ranges from £24 to £42 in 1987-88. Disconnection in other parts of the United Kingdom are matters for the Secretaries of State for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Crown Suppliers

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received about the future of the Crown Suppliers within the public sector; what his response has been; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: I refer the hon. Member to my statement on 3 February.

Town and Country Planning

Mr. Kirkhope: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the Town and Country Planning General Development Order 1977 and its various amendments are to be consolidated.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have already published consultation papers on the amendment and consolidation of the minerals classes of the general development order on 30 July 1986 and of class I (Householders' development) on 6 January 1987. My right hon. Friend and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales are issuing today a further consultation paper with drafts of provisions amending and consolidating the remaining classes and articles of the order. The new order and planning applications regulations would also incorporate the provisions of the related special development orders which govern development in national parks, areas of outstanding natural beauty, and conservation areas.

Our main objective is to provide a clearer, simpler text which will be more easily understood. The order and regulations would replace 13 existing orders and

amendments. We are also publishing a draft guide which consolidates material in eight extant circulars about the order.

We are also taking the opportunity to make a number of changes to the provisions of the order, including:

—removal of the power enabling local highway authorities to direct local planning authorities how to decide planning applications which would affect classified roads. Instead, the local highway authority would have the right to be consulted by the planning authority before the decision is made.

— introduction of control over the development of livestock units within 400 metres of non-agricultural buildings.

— general permission for certain changes of use, in particular, to allow premises now used for the financial and professional services class of the Use Classes Order 1987 and which have a display window at ground level to be used within the shops class.

—restriction of the requirement to consult the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (or, in Wales, the Welsh Office) to applications involving 20 hectares or more of agricultural land of grades 1, 2 and 3a.

Copies of the consultation paper and annexes have been placed in the Library. There is a two-month period for comment, after which we hope it will be possible to proceed within a short time to lay the new order and regulations.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales will be issuing a similar consultation paper.

Rates (Summonses)

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what figures he has on the numbers of the issue of summonses for the alleged non-payment of rates to households which have already paid their rates in London boroughs over the most recent period for which figures are available, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope *[pursuant to his answer, 28 January 1988, c. 375]:* The figure given for the number of summonses for non-payment of rates issued by Greater London boroughs in 1986-87 was incorrect. The correct figure is 183,962.

Rating Reform

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will reproduce the figures in figure four of his Department's note on the relationship between local taxes and income and the distributional impact of the community charge on the basis that 1986-87 is year one and including the net safety net effect.

Mr. Howard: The figures asked for are set out in the table. For ease of reference, the comparable table for the present system (figure 1 of the published note) is reprinted below.

Figure 1

England 1986-87 prices

	Ranges of net household income (£pw)											
	Under 50	*50–75*	*75–100*	*100–150*	*150–200*	*200–250*	*250–300*	*300–350*	*350–400*	*450–500*	*500+*	*All households*
Relationship of gross and net rates to net household income (£ per week)												
Rate bills												
Gross £ per week	5·50	5·94	6·32	6·58	7·18	7·64	8·18	8·90	9·69	10·24	13·10	7·40
Net £ per week	1·73	2·75	3·97	5·80	6·95	7·54	8·09	8·81	9·64	10·20	13·04	6·37
As a percentage of net income in each range												
Gross	13·1	9·6	7·3	5·3	4·1	3·4	3·0	2·8	2·6	2·3	2·1	3·8
Net	4·1	4·4	4·6	4·7	4·0	3·4	3·0	2·7	2·6	2·3	2·1	3·3
Relationship of gross and net Community Charge (and residual domestic rates) to net household income, with safety nets[1]												
Gross £ per week	4·13	4·86	6·46	6·79	7·58	8·09	8·70	9·40	9·74	10·54	12·00	7·44
Net £ per week	1·39	2·25	3·78	5·82	7·12	7·77	8·34	9·08	9·43	10·15	11·48	6·33
As a percentage of net income in each range												
Gross	9·8	7·8	7·4	5·4	4·3	3·6	3·2	2·9	2·6	2·4	1·9	3·9
Net	3·3	3·6	4·3	4·7	4·1	3·5	3·0	2·8	2·5	2·3	1·8	3·3

[1] The transitional safety net arrangements were announced on 17 November 1987.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment to what factors he attributes the variations in increases in gross and net rates for each income band between 1984-85, as in annex F of "Paying for Local Government", and 1986-87, as in his Department's note on the relationship between local taxes and income and the distributional impact of the community charge.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 3 February 1988]:* In general, the increases in net and gross domestic rate bills are much as expected in the light of the average increases in rates between 1984-85 and 1987-88. Rate increases have not been uniform over the period, however. Outside London rates have increased by nearly 40 per cent. while in inner London, mainly as a result of the successful application of rate capping, rates have reduced by 7 per cent. This variation might explain in part the small differences in rate increases for bands of household income over £250 per week. Average incomes in the Greater London area are about 20 per cent. higher than the national average.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker), *Official Report*, 25 January, columns *37-38*, *(a)* which equivalent income scale was used to derive the tables on the relationship between charges and income *(b)* how many (i) over-18's and (ii) people in total he estimates to be in each income band, *(c)* what margin of error applies to the figures, *(d)* whether the poll-tax figures include the safety net effect and *(e)* if he will reproduce the tables on the decile basis used in his reply to the hon. Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) on 16 December 1987, *Official Report*, column *522*.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 3 February 1988]:* The basis for adjusting household incomes to equivalent incomes is that described in paragraph F14 of the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government," Cmnd. 9714. The estimated total population and numbers of adults in each equivalent income band is shown in the table. The community charge estimates used for the purpose of my answer of 25 January were those for the full implementation of the community charge published on 29 June, and therefore exclude the effect of the transitional safety net proposals. I have repeatedly pointed out that the estimates of the impact of our proposals are based on a sample survey and are subject to sampling errors. The confidence intervals attaching to these estimates will vary with each estimate. The estimates of the relative contributions of those in the top and bottom deciles of household income to local services were not produced from the tax benefit model. The note of 25 January could be produced from the model on a decile basis only at disproportionate cost.

Ranges of Equivalent Net Household Income (£ per week)

Numbers of (million)	*Under 50*	*50 75*	*75 100*	*100 150*	*150 200*	*200 250*	*250 300*	*300 350*	*350 400*	*400 500*	*500 +*
Adults	1·4	6·2	4·6	9·2	6·1	3·6	2·0	1·0	0·5	0·5	0·2
Total	1·8	7·9	6·3	13·3	8·3	4·5	2·3	1·2	0·6	0·5	0·3

DEFENCE

Exercise Bonnie Dundee

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the purpose of Exercise Bonnie Dundee; on what dates and in what locations it is scheduled to take place; what units are involved; and how many troops will participate.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Exercise Bonnie Dundee is a home defence exercise to be held in Scotland between 22 October and 2 November 1988. It is designed to test progress in military home defence planning since Exercise Brave Defender which took place in 1985. It is too early to provide further details of the exercise since plans have not yet been settled.

RAF Stornoway

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) whether any plans exist to alter his Department's commitment to limit the peacetime use of RAF Stornoway for military exercises to six weeks per year; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many weeks of military air exercises it is planned to conduct at RAF Stornoway in 1988.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces on 24 July 1987 at column *595*. There are no plans to alter my Department's commitment to limit the peacetime use of RAF Stornoway for military exercises to six weeks per year.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what use will be made of RAF Stornoway in Exercise JMC 88-1.

Mr. Ian Stewart: None is planned.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if flying operations from RAF Stornoway by Falcon aircraft of Flight Refuelling Ltd. and Hunter aircraft from the fleet requirements and air direction unit will count towards the permitted maximum six weeks of military exercises each year at RAF Stornoway.

Mr. Ian Stewart: No.

Exercise ASWEX 1-88

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what use will be made of RAF Stornoway in Exercise ASWEX 1-88.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Routine use, amounting to a small number of daylight transfers of stores and personnel by military helicopters, will be made of the civil facilities at Stornoway airport during Exercise ASWEX 1-88.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what use will be made of Benbecula airport during Exercise ASWEX 1-88.

Mr. Ian Stewart: During Exercise ASWEX 1-88 Benbecula airport will perform its usual functon as an air traffic control point. In addition, there may be one daylight transfer of personnel, involving military aircraft.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what naval activity will be conducted in the Minch and the waters around the Western Isles during Exercise ASWEX 1-88; and what consultations have taken place with fishermen's organisations.

Mr. Ian Stewart: ASWEX 1-88 is a routine naval exercise involving a small number of units. There will be little activity in the Minches and the waters around the Western Isles during the exercise. It is not our normal practice to consult fishermen's organisations about relatively minor exercises of this nature, and we did not do so on this occasion.

RAF Aird Uig, Lewis

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the function of the ship-to-shore and shore-to-ship communication systems being installed at RAF Aird Uig, Lewis; and what increase in *(a)* Royal Air Force, *(b)* Royal Navy, *(c)* United States and *(d)* civilian personnel working at the station will result from their introduction.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The communications system to be installed at RAF Aird Uig will form part of the improved United Kingdom air defence ground environment system. Up to a maximum of six additional RAF technicians will be required at RAF Stornoway to maintain the facility. No other personnel will be involved.

Air-sea Rescue

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Royal Navy or Royal Air Force air-sea rescue sorties were carried out in 1987 to assist *(a)* foreign merchant ships, *(b)* foreign military vessels including NATO forces, and *(c)* foreign trawlers, sailcraft and other vessels.

Mr. Freeman: The following sorties were flown in 1987 by United Kingdom-based Royal Navy and Royal Air Force search and rescue helicopters to assist:

	Number
(a) Foreign merchant ships	38
(b) Foreign military vessels including NATO forces	4
(c) Foreign fishing vessels	37
(d) Foreign pleasure craft	5

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Royal Navy or Royal Air Force air-sea rescue sorties were flown in 1987 to assist *(a)* Royal Navy ships, *(b)* British merchant ships and ferries and *(c)* British trawlers, sailcraft or other vessels.

Mr. Freeman: The following sorties were flown in 1987 by United Kingdom based Royal Navy and Royal Air Force search and rescue helicopters to assist:

	Number
(a) Royal Navy shipping	11
(b) British merchant shipping, including ferries	57
(c) British fishing vessels	83
(d) British pleasure craft	127

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Royal Navy or Royal Air Force air-sea rescue operations were flown in 1987 to rescue *(a)* British military aircrew, *(b)* NATO aircrew, *(c)* British civilian aircrew and *(d)* other foreign military or civilian aircrew.

Mr. Freeman: Information is not held in the precise form requested. Assistance was provided in 1987 by United Kingdom-based Royal Navy and Royal Air Force search and rescue helicopters as follows:

	Incidents
(a) British military aircraft	97
(b) United States Military aircraft	6
(c) British civilian aircraft	19

There were an additional 49 call-outs to assist aircraft in distress in which the nationality of the aircraft was not recorded.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Royal Navy or Royal Air Force air-sea rescue sorties were carried out to rescue mountaineers or were in support of other domestic civilian emergency operations.

Mr. Freeman: A total of 418 sorties were flown in 1987 by United Kingdom based Royal Navy and Air Force search and rescue helicopters to assist civilian personnel on land.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many rescue sorties were carried out by Royal Navy and Royal Air Force air-sea rescue service outside British territorial waters in 1987.

Mr. Freeman: The United Kingdom's responsibility for search and rescue extends well beyond territorial waters, and separate figures are not held for incidents outside those waters. International co-operation is an important feature of search and rescue and from time to time assistance is given by United Kingdom-based Royal Navy and Royal Air Force search and rescue aircraft in areas which are the responsibility of other nations, but, again, these are not recorded centrally.

A total of 93 search and rescue sorties were flown in 1987 by Royal Air Force search and rescue helicopters based overseas, of which 51 were to military incidents and 42 to civilian incidents. Records are not kept centrally of rescue sorties carried out by aircraft embarked in Royal Navy ships.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many rescue sorties were carried out by the Royal Navy air-sea rescue service in 1987.

Mr. Freeman: In 1987, a total of 349 search and rescue sorties were flown by United Kingdom-based Royal Navy search and rescue helicopters.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many training, rescue or other sorties were carried out by Royal Navy and Royal Air Force air-sea rescue services in 1987.

Mr. Freeman: In 1987 the United Kingdom-based Royal Navy and Royal Air Force search and rescue helicopters flew 1,494 search and rescue sorties. Information on training sorties is not held centrally.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many civilian personnel have been rescued by Royal Navy and Royal Air Force air-sea rescue services in 1987.

Mr. Freeman: In 1987, a total of 903 civilian personnel were rescued by United Kingdom-based Royal Navy and Royal Air Force search and rescue helicopters.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many military personnel have been rescued by Royal Navy and Royal Air Force air-sea rescue services in 1987.

Mr. Freeman: In 1987 a total of 54 military personnel were rescued by United Kingdom-based Royal Navy and Royal Air Force search and rescue helicopters.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many rescue sorties were carried out by the Royal Air Force air-sea rescue service in 1987.

Mr. Freeman: In 1987, a total of 1,145 search and rescue sorties were flown by United Kingdom-based Royal Air Force search and rescue helicopters.

Weather Satellites

Mr. Stott: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to transfer weather satellites to the private sector.

Mr. Sainsbury: No. The Ministry of Defence has no weather satellites of its own. The United Kingdom is one of 19 participating nations in the European Organisation for the Exploitation of Meteorological Satellites (EUMETSAT). Each nation is represented by its national meteorological service. In addition, the Meteorological Office is involved with United States Government agencies in research, development and provision of certain types of sounding instruments for installation on United States polar-orbiting satellites, the data from which are beneficial to Meterological Office forecasting. Private industry is

making some contribution to this instrument development programme in the expectation of industrial benefits from the production of further units. Basic satellite and other global weather observations are collected and exchanged internationally free of charge under the auspices of the World Meteorological Organisation; direct private sector participation would therefore not be appropriate.

Exercise Purple Warrior

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many weapons were lost during Exercise Purple Warrior and remain unaccounted for; and where they were lost.

Mr. Ian Stewart: No weapons were reported as having been lost during Exercise Purple Warrior.

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many ferries used in Exercise Purple Warrior were chartered from *(a)* Denmark and *(b)* West Germany.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Four ferries were chartered from Denmark and two from West Germany.

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the cost of the arrangement to charter ferries from *(a)* Denmark and *(b)* West Germany for use in Exercise Purple Warrior.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) on 16 November 1987 at column *458*.

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many ferries were chartered for Exercise Purple Warrior.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Nine.

Women's Royal Voluntary Service

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Women's Royal Voluntary Service personnel have been assisting the Army for each year since 1979.

Mr. Freeman: The number of Women's Royal Voluntary Service personnel who have been employed in work assisting the Army in each year from 1979 to 1987 is as follows:

	Number
1979	32
1980	35
1981	38
1982	36
1983	34
1984	32
1985	32
1986	26
1987	21

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what funding has been provided by his Department for Women's Royal Voluntary Service personnel attached to Army units for each year since 1979.

Mr. Freeman: The amount of funding provided by the Ministry of Defence to the Women's Royal Voluntary Service in the years from 1979 to 1987 has been as follows:

	£
1979	59,250
1980	67,575
1981	67,200
1982	76,218
1983	85,000
1984	96,000
1985	130,944
1986	92,204
1987	100,717

Army Barracks (Food and Accommodation Costs)

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on how many occasions food and accommodation charges for soldiers living in barracks have risen since 1979.

Mr. Freeman: Eight. Food and accommodation charges are included in the Armed Forces Pay Review Body's annual recommendations on pay and allowances for the services. However, in 1979 the Government imposed a standstill on accommodation charges pending further examination of the basis of the charges by the review body.

Royal Naval Chaplains

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why Royal Naval chaplains do not wear badges of rank.

Mr. Freeman: Naval chaplains are commissioned as such rather than as naval officers, and hence do not wear badges of rank.

DROPS

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why the Scammell (Leyland/DAF) DROPS was chosen by his Department.

Mr. Sainsbury: The vehicle was selected as a result of a competitive exercise from 1982 to 1985 involving detailed engineering and other assessments together with extended troop and associated trials by the Army and the Department's research and development authorities.

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what different tyre sizes were tried on the original DROPS trailer vehicle 18 months ago.

Mr. Sainsbury: None.

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the Scammell (Leyland/DAF) DROPS achieved a lateral stability of 28 degrees plus in trials.

Mr. Sainsbury: No.

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether DROPS is air portable.

Mr. Sainsbury: No.

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he intends to review the decision to procure the Scammell (Leyland/DAF) DROPS.

Mr. Sainsbury: No. Like all major equipment projects, the DROPS programme as a whole will continue to be subject to regular review in the normal way.

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what design changes have been made to the chassis of the original DROPS trailer equipment; and by how much this has raised the vehicle's centre of gravity.

Mr. Sainsbury: None.

Royal Navy Ships

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list by year of construction each ship in the Royal Navy 20 or more years old, giving both name and type of vessel.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The following Royal Naval ships, listed by the year their construction was completed, are 20 or more years old.

1778
First rate ship of the line
Victory

1954
MCMVs
Cuxton
Brereton
Brinton
Bronington
Gavinton
Kirkliston

Royal yacht
Britannia

1955
MCMVs
Hubberston
Iveston
Kedleston
Kellington

1956
MCMVs
Upton
Sheraton

Ice patrol ship
Endurance[1]

1957
MCMVs
Nurton
Maxton
Soberton
Stubbington

1958
MCMV
Walkerton

1960
Rothesay class frigate
Rothesay

1961
Rothesay class frigate
Plymouth

1962
Oberon class submarine
Odin
Olympus
Onslaught
Otter

1963
Oberon class submarine
Oracle
Otus

Leander class frigate
Penelope

1964
Leander class frigate
Euryalus

Oberon class submarines
Ocelot
Opossum
Opportune
Osiris

1965
Assault ship
Fearless

Leander class frigate
Arethusa

Survey ships
Hecate
Hecla

1966
Leander class frigates
Cleopatra
Minerva
Phoebe
Sirius

Fleet submarine
Valiant

1967
Assault ship
Intrepid

Polaris submarine
Resolution

MCM support ship
Abdiel

Leander class frigates
Argonaut
Danae

Navigation training ship
Juno

Fleet submarine
Warspite

Oberon class submarine
Onyx

[1] Endurance was completed as a merchant vessel in 1956 but was not purchased for Royal Navy service until 1967.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Free Food

14. **Mr. Litherland:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the latest situation regarding the operation of the European Community free food scheme.

Mr. Gummer: My right hon. Friend announced on 12 January that butter and beef would be made available, subject to Commission authorisation, in response to applications from charitable or non-profit-making organisations meeting appropriate conditions. Agriculture Departments have invited applications by a closing date of 29 February. These will be considered together, and scaled down if necessary to fit the finance available.

28. **Mr. Sean Hughes:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what consultations he has had with organisations eligible for operating the EC free food scheme.

Mr. Gummer: I and my Department have kept in close touch with the main charitable organisations at every stage in the evolution of the scheme.

When it became clear that organisations other than charities would be eligible to participate in this scheme, although they had been excluded by the European Community from the previous scheme, I made sure that they, too, were informed.

75. **Mr. Ashton:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will make a further statement on the distribution of surplus Common Market food.

Mr. Gummer: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given earlier today to the hon. Member for Manchester, Central (Mr. Litherland).

EC Agricultural Commissioner

15. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the European Economic Community's Agricultural Commissioner; and what was discussed.

Mr. MacGregor: I last met the Commissioner for Agriculture, Mr. Andriessen, at the Agriculture Council on 23-24 January, the outcome of which I reported to the House in reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Wansdyke (Mr. Aspinwall).

Inshore Fishing

16. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations he has received from sea anglers' associations about inshore fishing undertaken by commercial fishing vessels.

Mr. Gummer: I have received no recent representations from sea anglers' associations about inshore fishing undertaken by commercial fishing vessels, although sea anglers' associations have raised other issues such as the management of the bass fishery.

Intervention Stocks

20. **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will estimate the subsequent effect on intervention stocks of the agreement of the Council of Agriculture Ministers in December 1986.

Mr. MacGregor: Largely as a result of the reforms to the EC dairy regime agreed under the United Kingdom presidency in December 1986, and the associated accelerated disposal programme for existing stocks, EC stocks of butter at the end of November 1987 were 974,000 tonnes, 31 per cent. down on their level in December 1986. Stocks of skimmed milk powder at the end of November 1987 were 592,000 tonnes, 34 per cent. down on those in December 1986. United Kingdom intervention stocks of butter were down 36 per cent. and stocks of skimmed milk powder down 88 per cent. over the same period.

In the period from 6 April 1987, when the reforms to the beef regime came into effect, to the end of 1987, EC purchases were 396,500 tonnes, 19 per cent. down on the same period in 1986. Broadly proportionate reductions occurred in the United Kingdom. EC intervention stocks in 1987, however, built up to higher levels than those obtaining in 1986 because of substantially lower sales from intervention for export.

Pesticides

21. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he will take to ensure that there is an increase in the scope of monitoring to test foodstuffs for pesticides residues.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Existing monitoring, consisting of surveys targeted at potential problem areas, and the examination of residues in the average national diet, has been supplemented since last year by regular surveys of the dietary staples — milk, bread and potatoes. Later this year we shall be introducing statutory maximum residue limits for the most important primary food components of the United Kingdom diet in addition to implementing obligatory EC limits in and on cereals and animal products. Financial provision will be sought in the Supply Estimates for 1988-89 to increase resources to allow for extra monitoring arising from this legislation.

29. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make available for public scrutiny the evaluations of pesticides still in use, and those no longer marketed but prepared under the former voluntary pesticides safety and precautions scheme.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The arrangements under the Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986 for making evaluations on pesticides publicly available apply to those evaluations produced for newly approved pesticides and for reviews of existing ones.

My Department responds to specific queries about pesticides registered under the pesticides safety precautions scheme. However a large number of active ingredients were involved over nearly 30 years, and many are of limited current interest. The priority given to this activity depends both on the availability of data and the nature of the concern expressed.

54. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he hopes to respond to the Select Committee on Agriculture's report on the effect of pesticides on health.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The agreed report of the Agriculture Committee dealt, in very brief terms, with the reason why, because of the general election, it had been unable to complete its inquiry. In these circumstances, the Government believe that it would be inappropriate to offer any formal response to the agreed report.

Departments are, however, considering the individual conclusions and recommendations contained in the draft report of my hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body), which, although not agreed by the Agriculture Committee, was published as an appendix to the main report. The independent Advisory Committee on Pesticides (ACP) has already seen the draft report and certain points raised in it will be considered in the first instance by the relevant panels supporting the ACP.

63. **Mr. Moss:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress has been made in controlling the supply and use of pesticides.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) on 28 January as regards the controls on use, introduced under the Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986.

As far as supply is concerned, the following controls have been implemented with effect from 6 October 1986.

only approved pesticides may be sold or supplied;

suppliers must take all reasonable precautions to protect human health, animals, plants and the environment;

suppliers must be competent for the duties they are to perform;

pesticides may only be supplied to the end user in approved containers and under approved labels.

As from I January 1988, anyone selling or supplying a pesticide approved for use in agriculture, horticulture or forestry must hold a recognised certificate of competence or be supervised by a certificate holder.

72. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures he has taken to ensure that there is increased public awareness of the legal controls on the use of pesticides and of individuals' responsibilities.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Since the introduction of the Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986, a series of press releases have been issued drawing attention to particular aspects of the new controls. In addition, my Department has to date distributed some 200,000 copies of the leaflet "Pesticides — Guide to the new controls" which will continue to be made available.

The Ministry's publicity efforts have not been carried out in isolation. Many sections of the industry are helping to get the message across.

Water Quality (Intensive Farming)

22. **Ms. Walley:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what initiatives he proposes to ensure water quality is not harmed in areas of intensive farming.

Mr. Gummer: As well as a wide range of other activities through which my Department aims to reduce farm pollution, I have this week launched a campaign to increase awareness among farmers of the problem of nitrate pollution and how they can help to reduce it.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions he has held recently with farmers' representatives concerning water quality in areas of intensive farming.

Mr. Gummer: I am in frequent contact with farmers' representatives to discuss a wide range of issues, including the possible effect of intensive farming on water quality.

Eastern Bloc Klondykers

23. **Mr. Graham:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions his Department has held regarding the location of eastern bloc Klondykers in, or close to, United Kingdom fishing ports in the current year.

Mr. Gummer: Other Departments, relevant sections of the fishing industry and other local interests have been consulted where appropriate.

Nutrition Labelling

24. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether there have been any developments in the European Commission's plan for a Community system of voluntary nutrition labelling.

Mr. Donald Thompson: We still await the Commission's proposals on nutrition labelling of foods, which were due to be issued by the end of 1987. In the meantime we have issued our own guidelines and we are pressing for widespread adoption as a result of the revise circulated on 21 January.

46. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he expects to introduce further proposals for the declaration of nutritional information on food products.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Revised guidelines for a standard approach to voluntary nutrition declarations were issued on 21 January, *Official Report*, column *836*. I am pressing for widespread adoption by food manufacturers and retailers. Proposals for legislation to set out the form in which voluntary declarations must be given will be considered once we have experience of the operation of the system and European Community intentions on nutrition labelling are clearer. We are looking at the need for simple graphical or representational systems to supplement numerical declarations, and at the need for controls to prevent misleading claims for nutrient content undermining the value of nutrition declarations provided in accordance with the guidelines.

Monetary Compensatory Amounts

25. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he is satisfied with the current method of calculation of monetary compensatory amounts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: MCAs generally are calculated in an objective manner in order to avoid trade distortions. However, technical improvements which can usefully be made are discussed with the Commission and other member states from time to time.

40. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will seek the phasing out of monetary compensatory amounts in the pigmeat industry.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I would refer my hon. Friend to the answer which I gave to the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) on 28 January.

Cereals Surplus

26. **Mr. Marland:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the current level of the cereals surplus in the United Kingdom and the European Community.

Mr. MacGregor: For the current cereals marketing year, Community consumption of home-produced-grain is provisionally estimated at 133 million tonnes and production at 153 million tonnes. Intervention stocks at the beginning of the year stood at 14·3 million tonnes.

For the same period United Kingdom consumption of home-produced grain is estimated at 16·7 million tonnes and production at 21·5 million tonnes. Intervention stocks at the beginning of the marketing year stood at 2·3 million tonnes.

44. Mr. Curry: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will estimate the size of the cereals surplus in the United Kingdom and the European Community in five years' time.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Consumption in the Community of home-produced grain is around 130 million tonnes and forecast to remain stable.

The latest estimates of production trends produced by European Statistical Office are as follows:

	Million tonnes
1988	168
1989	171
1990	174
1991	178

These figures are based on an extrapolation of current trends. Intervention stocks of grain in the Community at the beginning of the current marketing year stood at 14·3 million tonnes.

No such forecasts are available separately for the United Kingdom.

Milk Marketing Board

27. Mr. Knox: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he next intends to have discussions about the dairy industry with the chairman of the Milk Marketing Board.

Mr. MacGregor: My colleagues and I have regular contacts with the chairman of the Milk Marketing Board to discuss various issues affecting the dairy industry.

Less-favoured Areas

30. Mr. Stevens: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the current value of the support provided by the Government for farmers in the less-favoured areas.

Mr. MacGregor: The current forecast of additional support in the less-favoured areas for 1987-88 is £143·9 million comprising

	£ million
Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances:	
Sheep	64·5
Cattle	50·3
Additional benefits under Agricultural Capital Grants, including the Northern Ireland Agricultural Development Programme	25·3
Other grants including forage groups, special assistance to the Scottish Island and crofters	3·8

Set-aside Scheme

31. Mr. Hardy: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the adequacy of present or proposed arrangements for the setting aside of arable land to be used for forestry to secure a sufficiently positive response.

Mr. MacGregor: In November we announced significant increases in the rates proposed for the annual payments under the farm woodland scheme which will now focus primarily on arable and improved land. The new rates were generally welcomed by interested parties.

I expect there to be provision for the planting of woodland in the Community set-aside scheme, on which discussions are continuing in the Council of Ministers. I and my colleagues will be considering the appropriate United Kingdom arrangements in the light of the Community's final decisions and of responses to the consultation document issued on 8 December.

59. Mr. Livsey: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received concerning the European Community cereal set-aside policy.

Mr. MacGregor: I have received a large number of representations, most of them in response to the consultation document on extensification issued on 8 December.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether agreement has been reached on the level of premium to compensate for the European Community scheme of setting land aside.

Mr. MacGregor: The consultation document issued by the Agricultural Departments on 8 December suggested a rate in the range of £150-£200 per hectare of cereals land set-aside. No decisions will be taken until current discussions on a wider set-aside scheme in the Council of Agriculture Ministers reach a conclusion and I have considered with my colleagues the views expressed to us on this and other features of the scheme.

Severe Weather Damage

32. Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has received any requests from coastal authorities for grant aid towards the cost of repairing damage caused by gales in early January.

Mr. Gummer: Bournemouth borough council has advised me of the need for emergency coast protection work following the January gales. This will be considered for grant aid in the normal way. No other coastal authority has made such an approach.

Carry-Over Premium Scheme

33. Mr. Wilson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations he has received about the incorporation of herring and mackerel in the carry-over premium scheme.

Mr. Gummer: I received a number of representations about the incorporation of herring and mackerel in the carry-over premium scheme during 1987. They were mainly from fish producer organisations in Scotland who felt that the change would provide additional flexibility in marketing the species.

Food Research

34. Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received regarding the Government's review of funding for public sector basic food research.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The review is an internal exercise which does not involve formal consultation outside Government. But we are receiving views from a number of interested parties which are bing taken into account.

Cereal Policy

35. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the paper entitled, "Cereal — A Positive Policy", recently published by the Grasshoppers Club, a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I have read this paper with interest. For cereals I continue to believe that a tough price policy should be accompanied by a voluntary set-aside scheme designed to encourage producers to reduce levels of production and to cushion the impact of lower prices on those least able to cope.

Conservation

36. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures have been undertaken since 1979 to improve the balance between farming and conservation.

Mr. Gummer: The Government have introduced a wide range of measures since 1979 in order to improve the balance between farming and conservation. In particular, the agricultural improvements scheme has since 1985 encouraged farmers to invest in environmentally beneficial projects, 10 areas of England have been designated environmentally-sensitive areas following agreement in the Agriculture Council of Ministers to proposals first put forward by the United Kingdom, and the farm and countryside initiative provides work of benefit to the rural environment for the long-term unemployed under the community programme of the Manpower Services Commission.

Farm Incomes

37. **Mr. MacDonald:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how farm incomes presently compare with figures for 1986 and 1987, respectively.

Mr. MacGregor: United Kingdom income in 1987 is forecast at £1,404 million, about 1¼ per cent. lower than the 1986 total of £1,427 million. More detailed data on farm incomes is given in the "Annual Review of Agriculture 1988" (Cm 299).

Food Intolerance

39. **Mr. Shersby:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement regarding his Department's support for research into the prevalence of food intolerance.

Mr. Donald Thompson: If I consider "food" to include "food additives" then between 1984 and 1987 my Department funded a multicentre study of food additive intolerance at three major clinical centres. The principal project assessed the prevalence of food additive intolerance in a large population by rigorous (double-blind) challenge.

The prevalence estimated from the clinical data, using two methods of calculation, was 0·01 to 0·23 per cent. suggesting that the problem of food additive intolerance in the large population group studied was small.

Other complementary work my Department funded during this same period has indicated that food additive intolerance in many children is mainly a transient phenomenon, and it has thrown some light on the mechanisms of intolerance reactions in the human body.

My Department is continuing to fund further research in this area and during 1987-90 a project designed to examine the prevalence of food intolerance per se for comparison purposes and to extend our knowledge of the mechanisms by which intolerance is mediated, has been commissioned at the same clinical centres.

Tree Planting

41. **Mr. Chapman:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received concerning his proposals to encourage tree planting on surplus agricultural land.

Mr. MacGregor: I announced the revised proposals for the farm woodland scheme in November following a consultation exercise earlier last year. Since then, the revised scheme has been discussed with representatives of the main interested organisations. Most of the changes I made have been welcomed on all sides.

Rural Economy

42. **Mr. David Porter:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what policies he is promoting to diversify and strengthen the economy in rural areas.

68. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he is taking to help sustain the rural economy.

Mr. MacGregor: We are introducing a variety of measures designed to encourage changes in land use and contribute to the vitality of the rural economy.

The farm diversification grant scheme was introduced on 1 January. This offers 25 per cent. grants on on-farm investments worth up to £35,000 in a wide range of non-agricultural profit-making activities. These include farm tourism and crafts, farm shops, the value-added processing of food, agricultural products and timber, sports facilities, livery and, in less-favoured areas, pony trekking.

The Farm Land and Rural Development Bill, which is now before the House, contains the powers under which the farm woodland scheme, providing incentives for the planting of woodlands on farms, will be introduced. It also provides enabling powers for the introduction later this year of complementary grants for feasibility studies and marketing costs for diversification enterprises.

In addition, 14 environmentally sensitive areas have now been designated in the United Kingdom and four more are being designated. In these areas farmers will receive payment for following farming practices designed to conserve their landscape and wildlife value.

Finally, my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Environment and for Wales have issued revised guidance on development involving agricultural land which emphasises the need to foster the diversification of the rural economy.

Rating Reform

43. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what meetings he has had with the National Farmers Union to discuss the proposed community charge.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I have had no formal meeting with the National Farmers' Union on the proposed community charge.

EC-Israel Protocol

45. **Mr. Ashby:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will provide details on the progress of the EEC-Israel protocol; and what concessions have been granted to Israel concerning food and drink products.

Mr. Gummer: The protocols to the EC-Israel agreement were signed by the Community and Israel on 13 December 1987. They await the assent of the European Parliament which is required before they can enter into force.

The protocols provide in particular for duties to be removed progressively from a range of food and drink products, and for tariff quotas to be opened for certain products, most notably cut flowers. Whilst the United Kingdom has shown itself supportive of freer trade in Mediterranean products, we have insisted upon proper access to the European market being provided for Arab producers from the occupied territories. Details are contained in EC document 4280/87 (explanatory memorandum submitted by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on 10 April 1987) a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

Council of Fisheries Ministers

47. **Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met members of the European Community's Council of Fisheries Ministers; and what subjects they discussed.

Mr. Gummer: The last meeting of the Council of Fisheries Ministers was on 14 to 16 December 1987; my right hon. Friend the Minister reported on discussion at this meeting in a written reply of 16 December to my hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell), *Official Report* column *585*.

Potato Imports (Hungary)

48. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received expressing concern at the possible lifting of all embargos and related quantitative restrictions regarding potato products from Hungary.

Mr. Donald Thompson: One, from the Potato Processors' Association.

Breeding Ewes

49. **Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his estimate of the present number of breeding ewes in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Provisional figures from the June 1987 agricultural census show 18·056 million ewes and shearlings in the United Kingdom (Source: "Annual Review of Agriculture 1988" (Cmnd. 299)).

Pig Producers

50. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he has taken to ensure that British pig producers are not subject to unfair competition from imported meat.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Denmark and Holland are the major exporters of pigmeat to our market. A major study carried out by the food and drink manufacturing economic development council in 1986 concluded that there was no proof that the pig industries in those countries gained any substantial advantage over United Kingdom producers as a result of state subsidies. I am always ready to consider referring to the European Commission for action any firm evidence that national Governments are paying illegal aid to their producers.

Food Surpluses

51. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his latest estimate of the amount which the EEC is spending per week on the storage, destruction and dumping of food surpluses; what was the comparable sum actually spent per week, five and 10 years previously, respectively; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: Weekly community expenditure on technical and financing costs of public intervention and on export refunds and internal disposal subsidies (including loss on sale out of intervention) for commodities now in structural surplus (cereals, sugar, olive oil, wine, beef, milk and milk products) was £28 million in 1977, £80 million in 1982 and £233 million in 1987. In some circumstances withdrawn produce finds no end use and may be assumed to be spoiled or wasted, but the relevant expenditure is not separately identifiable.

Fishing Industry (Support)

52. **Mr. Doran:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he intends to change his policy on financial support for the fishing industry, in the light of the report by the Comptroller and Auditor General, entitled "Financial Support for the Fishing Industry in Great Britain"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Fisheries Ministers thoroughly reviewed their objectives and policies with regard to both financial support for the United Kingdom fishing fleet and the restrictive licensing arrangements as recently as the winter of 1986-87 and one of the results of that review was our decision to withdraw the decommissioning grants which attracted particular attention in the report by the Comptroller and Auditor General. I announced our conclusions on 30 April, 1987, *Official Report*, columns *217-19*. We continue to keep our policies for the fishing industry under regular review.

Milk Quotas

53. **Mr. Strang:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received

about the loss of cheese-making capacity in the United Kingdom as a result of the European Commission milk quotas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I have received no such representations. The shortage of milk for cheese production last autumn was in large part the result of a greater than usual seasonal reduction in milk production. The answer to this problem is not to increase milk quotas, since the Community is not short of milk, but rather to encourage a more even supply of milk throughout the year.

Fishing Industry

55. **Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the present state of the fishing industry.

Mr. Gummer: Thanks to this Government's policies, including the negotiation in January 1983 of a satisfactory common fisheries policy, the United Kingdom fishing industry is in better heart than for many years. Although figures for 1987 are not yet complete, it is clear that landings were up over the previous year both in volume and in value terms, implying a significant increase in real earnings.

Common Agricultural Policy

56. **Mr. Patrick McLoughlin** (West Derbyshire): To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, what progress was made towards reforming the common agricultural policy at the recent meeting of Ministers in Brussels.

Mr. MacGregor: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply which I gave today to the hon. Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans).

Chernobyl

57. **Mr. Rogers:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions he has had with the Country Landowners Association about his Department's handling of the Chernobyl accident in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Chernobyl was one of a number of topics discussed when I met representatives of the Country Landowners Association on 28 September 1987. My officials have, of course, been in frequent contact with the associaton on action taken following the Chernobyl accident.

Agriculture Industry

58. **Mr. Geraint Howells:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he is satisfied with the present state of the agriculture industry.

Mr. MacGregor: Although overall farming income as a whole in England is forecast to have fallen somewhat, largely because of the effects of adverse weather on the arable sector, there have been increases in England in the dairy and less-favoured areas livestock sectors, and there was a good recovery in forecast farming income for 1987 for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

British Sherry

60. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on his response to recent representations by the British Wine Producers' spokesmen on product description usage for British sherry and related matters.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Article 129 of the Act of Accession of Spain and Portugal to the European Communities authorises the use of the description "British Sherry" until 1995 when the matter will be reviewed by the Council of Ministers. This is a clear provision, welcomed by the British wine industry and one which the Government continue fully to support.

Grain Surpluses

61. **Mr. Coombs:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the current stabiliser regulations for grain surpluses.

Mr. MacGregor: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Wansdyke (Mr. Aspinwall) on 25 January, columns *52-3*.

Extensification (Report)

62. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what research has been carried out by his Department on the effects of the proposals outlined in the consultation document "An Extensification Scheme on Employment".

Mr. Donald Thompson: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given on 18 December to his hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies).

Agricultural Tenancies

64. **Dr. Marek:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received concerning the effects of Government legislation on agricultural tenancies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: From time to time, I receive comments from individuals and interested organisations about the current arrangements. The existing agricultural holdings legislation, revised in 1984 after lengthy consultation, represents a careful balance of interest between landlord and tenant and any proposals for change must have the support of the industry.

I am always, of course, ready to consider any ideas the industry puts to me on an agreed basis.

Sheepmeat

65. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps his Department has taken to promote exports of British sheepmeat.

Mr. Gummer: We set up Food From Britain in 1983 with the aim of encouraging and developing the marketing of British food and drink. British lamb and mutton is one of the many products which FFB actively promotes in overseas markets, in close collaboration with the extensive export services of the Meat and Livestock Commission. The Government have fought to maintain free and fair terms of trade under the EC sheepmeat regime. Since the regime was negotiated in 1980, our exports to the

Community have risen from 36,829 tonnes to 63,611 tonnes in 1986 with a further increase expected in the final figures for 1987. In 1986 our total exports of sheepmeat, to all destinations were worth some £134 million.

Farming Methods

66. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what research his Department is conducting into the extent to which less intensive farming methods will reduce food production.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My Department is conducting and funding a wide range of research and developments on less intensive farming methods which may help farmers maintain a reasonable income whilst reducing their output of crops in surplus.

Nature Reserves

67. **Mr. Pendry:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions he has had recently with farmers' representatives concerning the problems of farming in national nature reserves.

Mr. Gummer: I have received no representations suggesting that problems exist relating specifically to farming in national nature reserves.

Value Added Tax

69. **Sir Michael Shaw:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received concerning the imposition of value added tax on confectionery products and chocolate biscuits.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I have seen a copy of the submission which the Biscuit, Cake, Chocolate and Confectionery Alliance sent on 18 December to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. This was among the matters discussed when my noble Friend the Parliamentary Secretary met the president of the alliance on 13 January.

Research and Development

70. **Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects to make an announcement about the future of research and development in agriculture, fisheries and food.

Mr. MacGregor: The Government are looking at the issues of better targeting of Government expenditure on science and technology R and D and the reappraisal of priorities to achieve the most effective exploitation of results. In MAFF we are currently reviewing the balance of our own programmes against this background and the Government's general view that industry should fund more of the work of benefit to it. I will inform the House of any developments.

Woodland Scheme

71. **Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he is satisfied with the take-up of the woodland scheme announced in the ALURE package.

Mr. Gummer: As we made clear at the time, legislation is required before the farm woodland scheme can be introduced.

The Farm Land and Rural Development Bill, which has been considered in another place and received its Second Reading in this House on 1 February, will provide the enabling powers. Subordinate legislation will be introduced following the passage of the Bill and we hope that the scheme will come into operation this autumn, in time for the main tree planting season.

Clyde Herring

73. **Mr. Galbraith:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he is in a position to give the approximate date at which an increase could be considered to the total allowable catch for the current year of Clyde herring.

Mr. Gummer: As I explained to the House during the debate on 9 December last, the reduction in the total allowable catch (TAC) for Clyde herring for 1988 is based on firm scientific advice from the advisory committee on fisheries management of the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea. This committee is due to hold its next meeting to review the state of stocks from 16-26 May. I have, however, no reason to believe that the report of this meeting will provide any basis for increasing the current year's TAC for Clyde herring, which would of course be a decision for the Council of Fisheries Ministers of the European Community.

Fishing Vessels (Decommissioning)

74. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any plans to reactivate the scheme for the decommissioning of fishing vessels in the current year.

Mr. Gummer: No.

Weil's Disease

Mr. Burns: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) how many rivers in the Chelmsford constituency are contaminated with Weil's disease;

(2) what action his Department is taking to minimise the dangers to human life caused by Weil's disease; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 18 January 1988]:* I have been asked to reply.

The organism which causes Weil's disease (leptospirosis) is carried in the kidneys of wild rodents and can, therefore, be passed by those animals into rivers and inland waters.

As the organism can enter the human body when cuts and abrasions or the membrane of nose, mouth or eye come into contact with contaminated water, members of inland sailing and canoeing clubs are issued with warning leaflets. Early diagnosis and treatment of Weil's disease are important, but it responds readily to antibiotics.

Arable land

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the European Community's proposals for taking arable land out of production and the implications for United Kingdom farming of such a scheme.

Mr. MacGregor: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies).

Green Pound

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received concerning the devaluation of the green pound; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo) earlier today.

Potato Marketing Board

Mr. Butler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he is satisfied with the operations of the Potato Marketing Board; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: The Potato Marketing Board is a producers' organisation and it is for them to decide whether or not they are satisfied with its operations. The board administers the Government's potato guarantee arrangements and it has performed this task satisfactorily.

Agricultural Support

Mr. Cash: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the total level of support provided to the British agricultural industry *(a)* in 1979 and *(b)* in the latest year for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: The public expenditure on agriculture grants and subsidies in 1979-80 was £677 million. The "Annual Review of Agriculture" just published gives the figure for 1986-87 as £1,444 million. The Government also support the industry in a number of other ways, such as research and development, advisory, veterinary and administrative services.

Agriculture Council Meeting

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the discussions at the Agriculture Council meeting held in January.

Mr. MacGregor: The Agriculture Council met on 18-19 and 23-24 January. Proposals for stabiliser mechanisms for agricultural commodities and for a set-aside were the main issues discussed. I emphasised the essential need for effective stabilisation of agricultural expenditure if there is to be agreement at the next European Council.

Blue-marked Sheep

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what instructions were issued following the Chernobyl accident to environmental health officers and meat inspectors relating to blue-marked sheep presented for slaughter; and if he will place copies of these instructions in the Library.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 2 February 1988]:* Throughout the period of the operation of the "mark and release" scheme for sheep, including the periods when blue-marking was used, my officials have been in communication with the appropriate personnel in local authorities to advise on the nature of the restrictions and enforcement action. The advice has had to take account of the differing organisation for enforcement that exists within the various local authorities. Copies of all the communications could be obtained only with disproportionate effort and cost.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Spending Power

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will publish tables, similar to those in his Department's tax/benefit model table, showing net weekly spending power for each of a single wage married couple (i) with two children aged four and six years and (ii) with three children aged three, eight and 11 years; earning (1) £60, (2) £70, (3) £80, (4) £90, (5) £100, (6) £110, (7) £120, (8) £130, (9) £140, (10) £150, (11) £160 and (12) £170 *(a)* under the existing tax and benefit systems and *(b)* under the benefit system which will be implemented in April 1988;

(2) if he will publish figures, similar to those in his Department's tax/benefit model tables, comparing net weekly spending power for a lone mother with two children aged four and six years, under the existing tax and benefit systems and under the benefit system which will be implemented in April 1988 and in each of following circumstances *(a)* not working, after one year on benefits, *(b)* earning £20 a week from part-time work, *(c)* earning £40 a week from part-time working and *(d)* working full-time and earning (i) £60, (ii) £70, (iii) £80, (iv) £90, (v) £100, (vi) £110 and (vii) £120 per week.

Mr. Nicholas Scott: The information requested is set out in the tables. It should be noted that the results are hypothetical in two senses. First, the results are based on average local authority housing charges and do not reflect the wide variety of rents and domestic rates that people actually pay. Secondly, the other assumptions used are those set out in "Impact of the Reformed Structure of Income-Related Benefits," October 1987.

A. Existing tax and benefit system—assuming average local authority rent and rates and a simple rescaling of April 1987 benefits to April 1988

Earnings head	*Tax*	*NI*	*FIS*	*CHB*	*Rent*	*Rent rebate*	*Water rates (£1·78) rates*	*Rate rebate*	*Fares to work*	*FSM/FWM*		*Net weekly spending power*
Married couple with two children aged 4 and 6												
60	0·00	3·00	28·70	14·50	19·12	16·88	9·80	6·54	5·85	2·55	1·83	93·23
70	0·00	4·90	23·70	14·50	19·12	15·63	9·80	6·14	5·85	2·55	1·83	94·68
80	1·22	5·60	18·70	14·50	19·12	14·38	9·80	5·74	5·85	2·55	1·83	96·11
90	3·92	6·30	13·70	14·50	19·12	13·13	9·80	5·34	5·85	2·55	1·83	96·06
100	6·62	7·00	8·70	14·50	19·12	11·88	9·80	4·94	5·85	2·55	1·83	96·01
110	9·32	9·90	3·70	14·50	19·12	10·37	9·80	4·38	5·85	2·55	1·83	93·34
120	12·02	10·80	0·00	14·50	19·12	8·29	9·80	3·56	5·85	2·55	1·83	91·31
130	14·72	11·70	0·00	14·50	19·12	4·99	9·80	2·26	5·85	2·55	1·83	93·11
140	17·42	12·60	0·00	14·50	19·12	1·69	9·80	0·96	5·85	2·55	1·83	94·91
150	20·12	13·50	0·00	14·50	19·12	0·00	9·80	0·00	5·85	2·55	1·83	96·11
160	22·82	14·40	0·00	14·50	19·12	0·00	9·80	0·00	5·85	2·55	1·83	102·51
170	25·52	15·30	0·00	14·50	19·12	0·00	9·80	0·00	5·85	2·55	1·83	108·91
Married couple with three children aged 3, 8 and 11												
60	0·00	3·00	32·90	21·75	19·12	17·92	9·80	6·89	5·85	5·10	1·83	108·59
70	0·00	4·90	30·50	21·75	19·12	16·02	9·80	6·29	5·85	5·10	1·83	111·79
80	1·22	5·60	25·50	21·75	19·12	14·77	9·80	5·89	5·85	5·10	1·83	113·22
90	3·92	6·30	20·50	21·75	19·12	13·52	9·80	5·49	5·85	5·10	1·83	113·17
100	6·62	7·00	15·50	21·75	19·12	12·27	9·80	5·09	5·85	5·10	1·83	113·12
110	9·32	9·90	10·50	21·75	19·12	10·88	9·80	4·60	5·85	5·10	1·83	110·64
120	12·02	10·80	5·50	21·75	19·12	9·23	9·80	3·95	5·85	5·10	1·83	109·74
130	14·72	11·70	0·50	21·75	19·12	7·58	9·80	3·30	5·85	5·10	1·83	108·84
140	17·42	12·60	0·00	21·75	19·12	4·44	9·80	2·06	5·85	5·10	1·83	108·53
150	20·12	13·50	0·00	21·75	19·12	1·14	9·80	0·76	5·85	5·10	1·83	110·33
160	22·82	14·40	0·00	21·75	19·12	0·00	9·80	0·00	5·85	5·10	1·83	112·28
170	25·52	15·30	0·00	21·75	19·12	0·00	9·80	0·00	5·85	5·10	1·83	116·13

Existing tax and benefit system—assuming average local authority rent and rates and a simple rescaling of April 1987 benefits to April 1988. Lone mother with two children aged 4 and 6

Supplementary benefit	*Earnings*	*Tax*	*NI*	*Fares work*	*Rent*	*Rates*	*Housing benefit*	*CHB*	*FSM*	*FWM*	*Net weekly spending power*
a. Not working—after one year on benefit											
45·93	—	—	—	—	19·12	9·80	27·14	19·40	2·55	1·83	67·93
b. Working part-time—earning £20											
30·89[1]	20·00	0·00	0·00	2·92	19·12	9·80	27·14	19·40	2·55	1·83	69·97
c. Working part-time—earning £40											
14·35[1]	40·00	0·00	2·00	2·92	19·12	9·80	27·14	19·40	2·55	1·83	71·43

[1] Assumes benefit in payment for less than one year.

(d) Working full time

Earnings Head	Tax	NI	FIS	CHB	Rent	Rent rebate	(Water rate £1·78) Rates	Rate rebate	Fares to work	FSM	FWM	Net Weekly spending power
60	0·00	3·00	28·70	19·40	19·12	15·66	9·80	6·15	5·85	2·55	1·83	96·52
70	0·00	4·90	23·70	19·40	19·12	14·41	9·80	5·75	5·85	2·55	1·83	97·97
80	1·22	5·60	18·70	19·40	19·12	13·16	9·80	5·35	5·85	2·55	1·83	99·40
90	3·92	6·30	13·70	19·40	19·12	11·91	9·80	4·95	5·85	2·55	1·83	99·35
100	6·62	7·00	8·70	19·40	19·12	10·40	9·80	4·39	5·85	2·55	1·83	98·88
110	9·32	9·90	3·70	19·70	19·12	8·75	9·80	3·74	5·85	2·55	1·83	95·98
120	12·02	10·80	0·00	19·40	19·12	6·67	9·80	2·92	5·85	2·55	1·83	93·95

B. Benefit system from April 1988: Assumptions as in "Impact of reformed structure of income related benefits", October 1987. Average local authority rent and rates

Earnings head	Tax	NI	Family credit	Child benefit	Rent	Rent rebate	Water rates (£1·78) rates	Rate rebate	Fares to work	Net weekly spending power
Married couple with two children aged 4 and 6										
60·00	0·00	3·00	40·32	14·50	19·12	4·36	9·80	1·87	5·85	83·28
70·00	0·00	4·90	34·65	14·50	19·12	2·78	9·80	1·39	5·85	83·65
80·00	1·22	5·60	28·99	14·50	19·12	1·20	9·80	0·90	5·85	84·00
90·00	3·92	6·30	24·37	14·50	19·12	0·00	9·80	0·51	5·85	84·39
100·00	6·62	7·00	19·75	14·50	19·12	0·00	9·80	0·00	5·85	85·86
110·00	9·32	9·90	16·67	14·50	19·12	0·00	9·80	0·00	5·85	87·18
120·00	12·02	10·80	12·19	14·50	19·12	0·00	9·80	0·00	5·85	89·10
130·00	14·72	11·70	7·71	14·50	19·12	0·00	9·80	0·00	5·85	91·02
140·00	17·42	12·60	3·23	14·50	19·12	0·00	9·80	0·00	5·85	92·94
150·00	20·12	13·50	0·00	14·50	19·12	0·00	9·80	0·00	5·85	96·11
160·00	22·82	14·40	0·00	14·50	19·12	0·00	9·80	0·00	5·85	102·51
170·00	25·52	15·30	0·00	14·50	19·12	0·00	9·80	0·00	5·85	108·91
Married couple with three children aged 3, 8 and 11										
60·00	0·00	3·00	51·72	21·75	19·12	2·70	9·80	1·36	5·85	99·76
70·00	0·00	4·90	46·05	21·75	19·12	1·12	9·80	0·88	5·85	100·13
80·00	1·22	5·60	40·39	21·75	19·12	0·00	9·80	0·00	5·85	100·55
90·00	3·92	6·30	35·77	21·75	19·12	0·00	9·80	0·00	5·85	102·53
100·00	6·62	7·00	31·15	21·75	19·12	0·00	9·80	0·00	5·85	104·51
110·00	9·32	9·90	28·07	21·75	19·12	0·00	9·80	0·00	5·85	105·83
120·00	12·02	10·80	23·59	21·75	19·12	0·00	9·80	0·00	5·85	107·75
130·00	14·72	11·70	19·11	21·75	19·12	0·00	9·80	0·00	5·85	109·67
140·00	17·42	12·60	14·63	21·75	19·12	0·00	9·80	0·00	5·85	111·59
150·00	20·12	13·50	10·15	21·75	19·12	0·00	9·80	0·00	5·85	113·51
160·00	22·82	14·40	5·67	21·75	19·12	0·00	9·80	0·00	5·85	115·43
170·00	25·52	15·30	1·19	21·75	19·12	0·00	9·80	0·00	5·85	117·35

Benefit system from April 1988:
Assumptions as in "Impact of Reformed Structure of Income Related Benefits", October 1987
Average local authority rent and rates

Lone mother with two children aged 4 and 6

Income support	Rent	Rates	Housing benefit	CHB	FSM	FWM	Net weekly spending power
(a.) Not working—after one year on benefit							
45·35	19·12	9·80	25·54	19·40	2·55	1·83	65·75

Income support	Earnings	Tax	NI	Fares to work	Rent	Rates	Housing benefit	CHB	FSM	FWM	Net weekly spending power
(b.) Working part-time—earning £20											
40·35	20·00	0·00	0·00	2·92	19·12	9·80	25·54	19·40	2·55	1·83	77·83
(c.) Working part-time—earning £40											
20·35	40·00	0·00	0·00	2·92	19·12	9·80	25·54	19·40	2·55	1·83	77·83

D. Working full-time

Earnings head	Tax	NI	Family credit	Child benefit	Rent	Rent rebate	Water rates (£1·78) rates	Rate rebate	Fares to work	Net weekly spending power
60·00	0·00	3·00	40·32	19·40	19·12	1·46	9·80	0·98	5·85	84·39
70·00	0·00	4·90	34·65	19·40	19·12	0·00	9·80	0·00	5·85	84·38
80·00	1·22	5·60	28·99	19·40	19·12	0·00	9·80	0·00	5·85	86·80
90·00	3·92	6·30	24·37	19·40	19·12	0·00	9·80	0·00	5·85	88·78
100·00	6·62	7·00	19·75	19·40	19·12	0·00	9·80	0·00	5·85	90·76
110·00	9·32	9·90	16·67	19·40	19·12	0·00	9·80	0·00	5·85	92·08
120·00	12·02	10·80	12·19	19·40	19·12	0·00	9·80	0·00	5·85	94·00

X-ray Apparatus

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans and resources exist to phase out old X-ray apparatus in National Health Service hospitals in *(a)* Waltham Forest and *(b)* nationally; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that this information is not held centrally. It is for health authorities individually to take account of radiological equipment needs when determining their priorities for capital expenditure. The safety of such equipment is governed by the Ionising Radiations Regulations 1985, and the Heath and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 empowers health and safety inspectors to order that defective equipment is taken out of service or dismantled and removed from the installation entirely. Records show that no particular category or age group of X-ray equipment has a high incidence of safety problems.

There is considerable investment in new X-ray facilities. Information is available centrally only on capital schemes costing over £1 million, but between 1980 and 1987 more than 260 such schemes were completed that included new X-ray rooms; 82 in 1987. In addition there have been many smaller schemes which included X-ray facilities. We estimate, for example, that in 1987 between £30 million and £35 million was spent on X-ray equipment by health authorities.

Health Authorities (Outer London)

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the total expenditure of each of the district health authorities in outer London; and if he will express this in per capita terms, based upon the number of persons resident in each district.

Mrs. Currie: Following is the information requested for 1986-87 (the latest year available):

District Health Authority	Total Expenditure £000	Total Expenditure per capita £
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	82,474	180
Barnet	78,081	256
Bexley	40,203	183
Brent	58,585	229
Bromley	58,649	197
Croydon	66,741	209
Ealing	49,268	167
Enfield	41,011	154
Haringey	54,599	278
Harrow	42,506	211
Hillingdon	63,586	274
Hounslow and Spelthorne	58,174	205
Kingston and Esher	43,642	244
Merton and Sutton	73,486	22
Redbridge	41,663	183
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	40,438	176
Waltham Forest	59,968	278

Sources:

(a) Annual accounts of district health authorities in outer London and those of the four Thames regional health authorities.

(b) Mid-year estimates of population, 1986 — (Office of Population Censuses and Surveys).

Voluntary Organisations (Grants)

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list in the *Official Report* those organisations in the current financial year in receipt of grants under section 64 of the Health Services and Public Health Act 1968, including the amount of the grant in each case and the work for which the grant has been made available.

Mrs. Currie: Our general scheme of grants to voluntary organisations under section 64 falls into two parts—core grants, to assist national organisations with their administration costs, and project grants, to support projects which are experimental or innovative for a specific period. The scheme also provides a small number of capital grants.

Listed are those organisations for which a grant award in 1987-88 has been approved. The total picture will not be available until 31 March 1988.

Voluntary Organisation	Purpose of grant	1987-88 grant
Access Committee for England	Core	91,000
Action on Smoking and Health	Core	200,000
ADFAM	Core	15,000
Advance	Core	33,500
Advocacy Alliance	Core	15,000
Age Concern (England)	Core	252,000

Voluntary Organisation	Purpose of grant	1987-88 grant
Age Exchange Theatre Company	Reminiscence Project	2,000
Aid for Children with Tracheastomies	Core	5,000
Alcohol Concern	Core	500,000
Alcohol Concern	Drinkwise	20,000
Alzheimer's Disease Society	Core	110,000
Anorexic Family Aid	Core	27,000
Anthony Nolan Bone Appeal (The)	Core	11,000
Association of Breast Feeding Mothers	Library and Publications	4,500
Association of Carers	Core	31,667
Association of Professionals for the Mentally Handicapped	Core	5,000
Association of Residential Communities	Core	4,000
Asthma Society	Core	10,000
BACUP	Core	10,000
Breakthrough Trust	Core	35,000
Breast Care and Mastectomy Association of GB	Core	15,000
British Association for Adoption and Fostering	Core	276,000
British Association for Service to the Elderly	Core	12,000
British Association of Immediate Care	Core	12,500
British Association of the Hard of Hearing (The)	Core	30,000
British Deaf Association (The)	BSL Project	20,000
British Fluoridation Society (The)	Core	20,000
British Institute of Industrial Therapy	Core	17,000
British Institute of Mental Handicap	Core	36,000
British Kidney Patients Association	Core	35,000
British Organ Donor Society	Core	5,000
British Red Cross	Core	10,000
Brook Advisory Centre	Core	45,000
Campaign for Mentally Handicapped People	Core	16,800
Campaign for Mentally Handicapped People (The)	Work on Community Acceptance	10,000
Campaign for Single Homeless	Core	33,300
Cancerlink	Core	10,000
Catholic Child Welfare Council	Core	1,875
Catholic Marriage Advisory Council	Core	40,000
Centre for Policy on Aging	Day Care	24,300
Centre on Environment for the Handicapped	Core	40,000
Chest, Heart and Stroke Association	Core	13,000
Child Accident Prevention Trust	Core	71,325
Child Care	Adolescents Project	29,000
Child Care	Core	26,000
Child Care	Development Project	62,000
Child Care	Ethnic Minority Seminars	1,200
Child Poverty Action Group	Citizens Rights Office	17,000
Childrens Legal Centre	Core	38,000
Childrens Society	Adolescent Training Scheme	15,000
Childrens Society	The Bridge	60,000
Childrens Society	Western Corner Project, Oxen	10,000
Childrens Society	Central London Project	20,000
Chinese Health Information Centre	Capital	14,500
Chinese Health Information Centre	Core	15,000
Coeliac Society	Core	14,000
Community Service Volunteers	Core	2,500
Community Service Volunteers	Health Service Programme	37,650
Compassionate Friends Society (The)	Core	4,500
Contact a Family	Core	28,000
Contact a Family	Link Line Project	10,000
Cope	Core	104,500
Coronary Prevention Group	Core	40,000
Council for Advancement with the Deaf	Core	40,000
Crossroads Care Attendant Schemes Ltd	Core	75,000
Cruse (National Organisation for the Widowed and their Children)	Core	114,000
Cry-Sis	Core	1,500
Cry-Sis	Information Packs	2,000
Debra	Core	8,000
Demand	Core	10,500
Dial United Kingdom	Core	40,000
Disability Alliance	Core	20,000
Disabled Living Foundation	Core	297,800
Disabled Living Foundation	Dress for MH People Project	3,800
Disablement Income Group	Core	17,000
Downs Syndrome Association	Core	9,000
Dr. Barnardo's	Harrogate Kitchen	15,000
Dr. Barnardo's	Liverpool ISU	230,000
East Community Centre	Tact Sunderland	17,476
Ethnic Study Group	Capital	11,000
Ethnic Study Group	Core	16,000

Voluntary Organisation	Purpose of grant	1987-88 grant
Exploring Parenthood	Parents Workshops	9,000
Extend	Core	20,000
Family Forum	Core	32,400
Family Holiday Association	Core	7,000
Family Planning Association	Core	130,000
Family Planning Association	Training of Staff	7,960
Family Policy Studies Centre	Core	108,000
Family Rights Group	Core	24,000
Family Service Units	Core	160,000
Family Welfare Association	Core	96,450
First Key	Leaving Care Project	86,000
Forward	Core	20,000
Foundation for Study of Infant Death	Towards costs of welfare etc.	10,000
Friends for the Young Deaf	Core	7,500
Gingerbread	Core	78,000
Good Practices in Mental Health	Core	65,000
Greater Manchester and Lancs Council on Alcohol	Service provision in Lanc	4,792
Headway	Core	30,000
Herpes Association	Core	5,000
Holiday Care Service	Holiday Helpers	10,000
Home Farm Trust	Core	10,000
Home Start Consultancy	Core	30,000
Homes for Homeless People	Core	45,800
Horticultural Therapy	Core	50,000
Hyde Park Community Action	Core	5,146
In Touch	Core	2,500
Incest Crisis Line	Core	6,000
Institute for the Study of Drug Dependence	Core	240,000
International Social Service of Great Britain	Core	47,500
Iris Fund	Core	2,500
John Hunt Award Scheme	Core	1,500
La Leche League (Great Britain)	Production of leaflets	6,500
London Lighthouse	Capital	500,000
London Lighthouse	Core	100,000
L'Arche	Core	10,500
Marie Curie Memorial Foundation	Core	10,000
Marriage Research Centre	Core	5,000
Marriage Research Centre	Evaluation	800
Maternity Alliance	Towards publications	37,000
McIntyre Schools Ltd. (Shipton)	Tall Trees project	12,000
Medical Commission on Accident Prevention	Core	6,000
MENCAP (Royal Society for Mentally Handicapped Children and Adults)	Core	220,000
MENCAP (Royal Society for Mentally Handicapped Children and Adults)	Study and survey on attitudes	138
Mental After-Care Association	Core	40,000
Mental Health Film Council	Core	26,000
Mental Health Foundation (The)	Core	27,000
Miscarriage Association	Core	2,000
Mobility Information Service	Core	5,000
Motability	Core	632,687
Motor Neurone Disease Association	Core	10,000
Muscular Dystrophy Group	Patients welfare service	10,000
NACRO	Juvenile crime section	298,135
NAFSIYAT (International Cultural Therapy Centre)	Core	5,000
National Association for Limbless Disabled	Core	15,000
National Association for Maternal and Child Welfare	Core	10,000
National Association for Mental Health (MIND)	Core	415,000
National Association for Patient Participation	Core	7,100
National Association for the Childless	Core	31,000
National Association for the Welfare of Children in Hospital	CO	90,000
National Association of Leagues of Hospital Friends	Core	13,500
National Association of Voluntary Hostels	Core	5,250
National Association of Young People in Care	Towards development project	48,000
National Autistic Society	Core	10,000
National Backpain Trust	Core	20,000
National Childbirth Trust	Core	20,000
National Childbirth Trust	Breast feeding publications	11,000
National Childminding Association	Core	105,000
National Childminding Association	Dissemination of training material	22,500
National Childrens Bureau	Core	111,000
National Childrens Bureau	Loan Servicing	27,066
National Childrens Bureau	Participation in Planning	1,800

Voluntary Organisation	Purpose of grant	1987-88 grant
National Childrens Bureau	Prevention	11,350
National Childrens Bureau	'Who Cares' Magazine	25,750
National Childrens Bureau	Participation in Decisions	20,000
National Childrens Bureau	Solvent Abuse Post-Development	13,333
National Childrens Bureau	Under Fives Project	80,000
National Childrens Home (Leeds)	Advice Service (Sexual Abuse)	19,542
National Council for Carers and their Elderly Dependants	Core	27,000
National Council for one Parent Families	CO	150,000
National Council for Voluntary Organisations	Community Care Dessemination	92,500
National Council for Voluntary Organisations	Community Care Project	23,783
National Council for Voluntary Organisations	Community Health Initiatives	90,000
National Council for Voluntary Organisations	Wiltshire Fund	8,183
National Counselling and Welfare Service for Sick Doctors	Core	2,625
National Deaf Children's Society (The)	Information Service	25,000
National Exzema Society	Core	10,000
National Federation of Kidney Patients Association	Core	6,300
National Foster Care Association	Core	91,000
National Institute for Social Work	Community Social Work Project	60,000
National Institute for Social Work	Race Equality Unit	73,400
National Out of School Alliance	Core	60,000
National Out of School Alliance	Development Project	8,500
National Playbus Association	Core	35,000
National Playbus Association	Family and Information Projects	15,000
National Schizophrenia Fellowship (The)	Core	91,000
National Stepfamily Association	Core	8,000
National Tape Magazine for the Blind	Core	500
National Toy Library Association/Playmatters	Core	45,000
National Youth Bureau	Youth Social Work Unit	74,000
National Voluntary Organisations Anti-Racism Consortium	Core	20,000
North Lambeth Day Centre Ltd.	Core	16,000
North Regional Asssociation for the Blind	Core	52,007
North West Fellowship	Core	20,000
Northern Schizophrenia Fellowship	Core	20,000
Ockendon Venture	Vietnamese Refugess Project[2]	[3]40,000
One to One	Core	6,300
Opus (Organisation for Parents under Stress)	Core	30,000
Organisation for Sickle Cell Anaemia Research	Core	15,000
Overseas Doctor's Association in the United Kingdom	Core	15,000
Pain Relief Foundation	Core	8,000
Parent to Parent Information Service and Adoption Service	Core	[2,3]3,100
Parents Against Injustice (Pain)	Core	10,000
Parents for Children	Core	48,500
Parkinsons Disease Society	Core	15,000
Partially Sighted Society	Core	10,000
Patients Association	Core	7,500
Phobic Action	Core	5,000
Phobics Society (The)	Core	5,000
Physically Handicapped and Abled Bodied	Core	23,000
Pre-School Playgroups Association	Core	385,000
Prince of Wales Advisory Group on Disability	Core	15,000
Queen Elizabeth Foundation—Banstead Place Mobility Centre	Core	32,500
Rape Counselling and Research Project	Core	25,000
Rathbone Society	Core	16,000
Raynauds Association	Core	3,500
Research Council for Complementary Medicine	Core	5,000
Research Trust of Metabolic Disease	Core	5,000
Richmond Fellowship (The)	Core	97,000
Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation (RADA)	Core	[2,3]100,000
Royal National Institute for the Blind	Embossed literature service	250,000
Royal National Institute for the Deaf	Rubella Consortium	35,000
Samaritans (The)	Core	125,000
Save the Children Fund	Hospital playschemes advice	10,000
Save the Childrens Fund	Vietnamese refugees	[2,3]131,000
Scoliosis Association United Kingdom	Core	1,000
Sense (National Deaf-Blind Rubella Association)	Core	30,000
Sense (National Deaf-Blind Rubella Association)	Ushers syndrome project	15,000
Sequal	Core	35,200
Sequal	Equipment for terminally ill	5,800
Sexual and personal relationships of the Disabled	Core	33,500
Sickle Cell Society	Core	15,000

Voluntary Organisation	Purpose of grant	1987-88 grant
Social Work Training Grants	Core	2,400
Society for Mucopolysaccharide Diseases	Core	1,250
Society of Voluntary Associates	Training IT volunteers	25,000
Society of Voluntary Associations	PT training resources officer	3,700
South Regional Association for the Blind	Commission on Multi Handicapped Blind	2,500
South Regional Association for the Blind	Core	73,405
St. John Ambulance	Core	10,000
St. Katherine Housing Trust	Core	18,000
Standing Committee on Sexually Abuse of Children	Core	2,500
Standing Conference on Drug Abuse (SCODA)	AIDS information project	28,000
Standing Conference on Drug Abuse (SCODA)	Core	173,000
Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Society	Core	22,000
Terrence Higgins Trust	AIDS information project	300,000
Thalassaemia Society	Core	5,000
Tibble Trust	Core	1,000
Tuberous Sclerosis Association	Core	1,000
Turning Point	Core	99,000
Twins and Multiple Birth Association	Core	3,000
VOLCUF (Voluntary Organisation Liaison Council for Under Fives)	Core	27,000
Voluntary Council for Handicapped Children	Core	40,000
Volunteer Centre	Training Voluntary Service Co-ordinator	12,500
VORTEX (Voluntary Organisations Register of Training Exercise)	Core	11,600
Walsingham Community Homes	Core	10,000
West Yorkshire Youth Association	Pre-court Diversion Project	25,000
Westminster Pastoral Foundation	Core	66,000
Widows Advisory Trust	Core	18,000
Winged Fellowship Trust	Core	15,000
Womens Aid Federation (England)	Core	98,000
Womens Health Concern	Core	7,000
Womens National Cancer Control Campaign	Core	74,500
Womens Therapy Centre (The)	Core	5,000
Working Mothers Association	Core	12,000
£ for £ Dr. Barnardos	Darlington Project	32,865
£ for £ National Childrens Home	Core	100,000
Total		12,162,610

[1] Position on 22 January 1988.
[2] Interim payments; grant not yet settled.
[3] Interim.

Mentally Ill People

Mr. Irving: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will commission research into the provision and funding of private residential care for the mentally ill financed by supplementary benefit.

Mr. Scott: The following research projects on supplementary benefit and residential care, including residential care for mentally ill people, are already under way:

(a.) Kent university's personal social services research unit and York university's centre for health economic—a national survey of private and voluntary residential care and nursing homes.

(b.) The Office of Population Censuses and Surveys—a survey of small unregistered residential care homes and other establishments such as supported lodgings.

(c.) The Office of Population Censuses and Surveys—a study of the characteristics of residential care and nursing homes.

(d.) York university's social policy research unit—a study on the impact of charges in supplementary benefit legislation on private and voluntary residential care and nursing homes.

In addition, information on costs and charges in homes, including homes for mentally ill people, has been collected from a wide range of sources for our reviews of the supplementary benefit limits. In particular, in 1985 we commissioned Ernst and Whinney, a firm of independent management consultants, to examine the operation of the market in voluntary and private provision of residential care and nursing homes.

Any further research will need to be considered in the light of Sir Roy Griffiths' report on the funding of community care.

Single Payments

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will provide details for the last four years for which figures are available of the number of single payments made by his Department's Blyth and Cramlington office for *(a)* household furniture, *(b)* clothing, *(c)* bedding, *(d)* replacement household equipment and *(e)* as a result of urgent payments made to replace domestic and household goods affected by natural disasters.

Mr. Scott: I regret that the information requested is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Cancer Screening

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to introduce a comprehensive scheme of screening for breast cancer among women aged below 50 years in Northumberland.

Mrs. Currie: No. The nationwide breast cancer screening service which we are introducing over the next three years is based on the conclusions in the report of a Government-appointed working group, chaired by Professor Sir Patrick Forrest. The report concluded that the effectiveness of screening by mammography has so far been demonstrated only for women aged 50 and over and recommended that the priority for any screening programme should be to offer an initial screen to as many women as possible aged 50 to 64 years.

Hospital Developments

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many hospital beds in new hospital developments in England and in each of the National Health Service regions are currently empty because there was insufficient money for the whole development of parts or it to be opened on the planned date; and if he will relate the figures to the population of each region.

(2) how many new hospital developments in England and in each of the National Health Service regions are currently either unopened or partially open because there was insufficient money for the full opening on the planned date or for their continued operation.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that this information is not collected centrally. The right hon. Member may wish to inquire of regional health authorities for this information.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the estimated wasted cost to the National Health Service, in terms of the interest on the capital expenditure, of leaving completed hospital developments unopened or partially open.

Mrs. Currie: The information on completed hospital developments that are unopened or only partially open is not collected centrally. It is not therefore possible to estimate the cost to the National Health Service in terms of the interest on capital expenditure incurred on these schemes. The right hon. Member may wish to inquire of regional health authorities for this information.

Surgical Beds (West Midlands)

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list for the west midlands region the number of current acute surgical beds per hundred thousand population in each of the region's districts.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested is given in the table.

Surgical acute beds per 100,000 population, West Midlands Region, 1986

Health authority	*Average daily available beds*	*Resident population (100,000s)*	*Beds per 100,000 resident population*
Bromsgrove and Redditch	138·1	1·64	84·2
Herefordshire	239·8	1·53	156·7
Kidderminster and District	120·5	1·01	119·3
Worcester and District	279·3	2·36	118·3
Shropshire	610·4	3·92	155·7
Mid Staffordshire	260·7	3·08	84·6
North Staffordshire	694·1	4·61	150·6
South East Staffordshire	239·6	2·52	95·1
Rugby	119·7	0·85	140·8
North Warwickshire	161·3	1·73	93·2
South Warwickshire	302·9	2·23	135·8
Central Birmingham	618·2	1·81	341·5
East Birmingham	311·3	2·00	155·7
North Birmingham	167·9	1·64	102·4
South Birmingham	663·8	2·48	267·7
West Birmingham	400·0	2·11	189·6
Coventry	603·3	3·10	194·6
Dudley	512·7	3·01	170·3
Sandwell	297·6	3·01	98·9
Solihull	175·0	2·02	86·6
Walsall	259·4	2·62	99·0
Wolverhampton	462·6	2·52	183·6
West Midlands RHA	7,638·2	51·80	147·5

RAWP Ratings

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the current resource allocation working party ratings for each of the National Health Service regions and for each of the districts in the west midlands region.

Mr. Newton: The allocations which I announced on 16 December 1987 for the financial year 1988-89 result in the distances from RAWP target set out in the following table.

Regional Health Authority	*1988-89 percentage distance from RAWP target allocation*
Northern	−1·6
Yorkshire	−1·4
Trent	−2·7
East Anglian	−4·0
North West Thames	+4·5
North East Thames	+7·3
South East Thames	+1·7

Regional Health Authority	1988-89 percentage distance from RAWP target allocation
South West Thames	+1·0
Wessex	−1·8
Oxford	−2·6
South Western	−1·4
West Midlands	−1·3
Mersey	+1·5
North Western	−1·4

The distribution of resources to districts, including the assessment of distances from target, is a matter for regions. The process reflects the same aims as national RAWP, but at this level annual allocations need to be closely related to service plans and to allow for a manageable pace of change.

Health Districts (Resources)

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if, when considering invitations to visit health districts, he will make it his policy to give priority to those that are the most deprived on the resources allocation working party criteria.

Mrs. Currie: No, that would not be a sensible criterion on which to decide. Invitations are made and accepted for a variety of reasons.

Special Payments

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how much money the Government estimate will be saved by only making one special payment per benefit book rather than making one payment per eligible benefit; and how many people will lose money as a result.

Mr. Scott: There will be no resultant benefit savings, because that amount of the social security underspend caused by the error in the retail prices index which is not disbursed in the form of special payments is to be donated to charities. The additional administrative complexities and costs of attempting to make one payment per eligible benefit would have been considerable. About 1·75 million people whose benefits are combined will receive a special payment; of these about 175,000 will be undercompensated.

Health Screening

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to require district health authorities to request quotations for health screening from private hospitals before investing in their own capital equipment.

Mrs. Currie: Health authorities are encouraged to give careful consideration to all means of securing greater cost-effectiveness in the provision of services to maximise resources available for patient care. In particular, when planning and implementing their breast cancer screening services, regional health authorities have been advised to consider the scope for collaboration with private sector providers and voluntary organisations.

Retail Prices Index (Error)

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if each appropriate category of social security benefits will be separately accorded the £8 ex gratia payment made by his Department as a result of an error in calculation of the retail prices index.

Mr. Scott: In the interests of combining as far as possible fairness with speed of payment, an £8 ex gratia payment (or £5 in the case of mobility allowance) will be made in respect of each instrument of payment which contains payment of qualifying benefit for the week commencing 1 February. This means that we have been able to ensure that 12 million people will receive special payments from this week. The additional administrative complexities and costs of attempting to make one payment per eligible benefit would have been considerable.

Elderly People (Care)

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to alter the responsibility for the care of the elderly.

Mrs. Currie: We shall be considering any relevant recommendations made by Sir Roy Griffiths in his report on community care, which we expect to receive shortly.

Health Authorities (Efficiency)

Mr. Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the CIPFA TARI index in measuring the comparative efficiency of district health authorities; and how he plans to ensure that performance indicators are used more reliably by health authorities.

Mrs. Currie: The total acute revenue indicator, quoted in the CIPFA report on health trends, shows approximately how much money is spent per head on providing acute care for a district's resident population wherever the residents are treated. It is an indicator of the extent to which people in different parts of the country have access to acute hospital care and on this basis is included in the performance indicator package. It is not an indicator of efficiency nor is there any one indicator of efficiency.

This package has been sent direct to every health authority annually for the last three years and the latest indicators will be issued this month. District health authorities are expected to identify areas where improvements in services to patients and in overall efficiency might be possible as a matter of good management. The indicators are developed for use with other information as an aid to this process. Regional health authorities will be expected to examine differences in performance between their districts as suggested by the indicators and other information.

Social Fund Applicants

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how adjudication officers will ascertain the amount of income or capital that would become available to a claimant on application to the social fund, for the purposes of regulations 42(2) and 51(2) of the Income Support (General) Regulations 1987.

Mr. Scott: Payments from the social fund are disregarded when calculating a claimant's weekly entitlement to income support. Therefore, adjudication officers need not consider the provisions of regulations 42(2) and 51(2) of the Income Support (General) Regulations 1987 in relation to such payments. Repayments of social fund payments, however, may be made by deductions from the claimant's weekly income support entitlement.

Retirement (Earnings Rule)

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the latest estimates of *(a)* the number of people deferring retirement and earning increments to their retirement pensions, *(b)* the number of people whose pensions are reduced by the earnings rule and *(c)* the cost of abolishing (i) the retirement condition and (ii) the earnings rule.

Mr. Scott: It is estimated that about 125,000 people over minimum pension age are currently deferring retirement and earning increments to their pensions. There are just over 2,000 people whose pensions are reduced by the earnings rule. This figure does not include adult dependants for whom the dependency addition is reduced on account of their earnings. The latest estimates show that it would cost about £250 million gross to abolish the earnings rule. It is not possible to provide separate costings for the abolition of the retirement condition and the earnings rule.

Retford Hospital

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) whether he will receive a deputation from the Retford hospital action committee to discuss keeping open Retford hospital;

(2) whether he will issue a directive to the Trent regional health authority to keep open Retford hospital;

(3) whether he will provide additional funds to the Trent regional health authority for the retention of Retford hospital;

(4) what steps he is taking to save Retford hospital from closure; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: The management of local services is the responsibility of the district health authority concerned (in this case Bassetlaw). I understand that Bassetlaw DHA has temporarily closed two units within Retford hospital. This is a matter for local decision. Any proposal for permanent closure would need to be the subject of formal consultation and, if opposed by the community health council, would need to be submitted to Ministers for a final decision. My colleagues and I are always prepared to meet local deputations at that stage.

Trent regional health authority was allocated an additional £5·8 million in December for the financial year 1987-88. For 1988-89, the region's revenue allocation will be £1,050 million, an increase of 6·3 per cent. The hon. Member may wish to contact the regional chairman for details of the RHA's allocation to Bassetlaw.

Meningitis

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many *(a)* cases of and *(b)* deaths attributable to meningitis have been notified in each of the last 24 months.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that the data are not available in exactly the form requested: notification data for infectious diseases are compiled on a weekly basis; the table shows totals by weekly group for 1986 and 1987.

Number of notifications of all forms of acute meningitis and meningococcal meningitis; and death registrations of meningococcal infection (ICD 9 036) by approximate monthly period, England and Wales 1986-87

Period	Notifications		Deaths[1]
	Acute	Meningococcal	Meningococcal infection
4 January 1986—31 January 1986	160	76	13
1 February 1986—28 February 1986	160	71	8
1 March 1986—28 March 1986	151	83	15
29 March 1986—2 May 1986	178	100	13
3 May 1986—30 May 1986	123	61	11
31 May 1986—27 June 1986	130	63	6
28 June 1986—1 August 1986	200	69	13
2 August 1986—29 August 1986	172	44	7
30 August 1986—3 October 1986	255	93	5
4 October 1986—31 October 1986	194	66	10
1 November 1986—28 November 1986	184	51	7
29 November 1986—2 January 1987	165	80	24
3 January 1987—30 January 1987	258	142	18
31 January 1987—27 February 1987	244	132	15
28 February 1987—27 March 1987	240	117	19
28 March 1987—1 May 1987	251	120	12
2 May 1987—29 May 1987	166	68	9
30 May 1987—26 June 1987	176	65	6
27 June 1987—31 July 1987	231	76	8
1 August 1987—28 August 1987	229	69	12
29 August 1987—2 October 1987	174	67	10
3 October 1987—30 October 1987	174	61	5
31 October 1987—27 November 1987	207	75	16
28 November 1987—1 January 1988	217	98	27

[1] Provisional.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the regional incidence of meningitis in the past five years.

Mrs. Currie: The number of notifications of all forms of meningitis and meningococcal meningitis for the years requested is shown in the table.

Notifications of acute meningitis: (a) all, (b) meningococcal, 1983-87
England and Wales, standard regions rates per 100,000 population

Standard region	1983		1984		1985		1986		1987		1983-87	
	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate
England and Wales												
Acute	1,226	2·47	1,230	2·46	1,533	3·06	2,172	4·34	2,565	5·12	8,726	3·50
Meningococcal	428	·86	401	[illegible]	550	1·10	870	1·74	1,090	2·18	3,339	1·34
North												
Acute	53	1·71	44	1·43	56	1·82	127	4·12	153	4·97	433	2·80
Meningococcal	11	·35	17	·55	20	·65	59	1·92	73	2·37	180	1·17
Yorkshire and Humberside												
Acute	210	4·28	208	4·24	242	4·94	368	7·51	376	7·67	1,404	5·73
Meningococcal	48	·98	32	·65	52	1·06	117	2·39	125	2·55	374	1·53
East Midlands												
Acute	78	2·02	70	1·80	88	2·24	129	3·29	132	3·37	497	2·55
Meningococcal	39	1·01	25	·64	37	·94	53	1·35	64	1·63	218	1·12
East Anglia												
Acute	28	1·45	38	1·93	61	3·06	49	2·46	58	2·91	234	2·38
Meningococcal	11	·57	16	·81	20	1·00	15	·75	19	·95	81	·83
South East												
Acute	322	1·89	379	2·20	453	2·62	576	3·34	846	4·90	2,576	3·00
Meningococcal	121	·71	135	·79	191	1·11	225	1·30	332	1·92	1,004	1·17
South West												
Acute	101	2·28	92	2·04	137	3·02	169	3·72	191	4·20	690	3·07
Meningococcal	61	1·38	29	·64	44	·97	82	1·80	84	1·85	300	1·33
West Midlands												
Acute	97	1·87	98	1·89	125	2·41	237	4·57	280	5·40	837	3·23
Meningococcal	27	·52	37	·71	49	·95	93	1·79	105	2·03	311	1·20
North West												
Acute	266	4·15	223	3·49	285	4·47	370	5·80	390	6·12	1,534	4·80
Meningococcal	78	1·22	76	1·19	97	1·52	159	2·49	215	3·37	625	1·96
Wales												
Acute	71	2·53	78	2·77	84	2·98	147	5·21	139	4·93	519	3·69
Meningococcal	32	1·14	34	1·21	39	1·38	67	2·38	73	2·59	245	1·74

Ministerial Speech

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether the speech of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) on the National Health Service, made on Friday 29 January, represents the policies of Her Majesty's Government; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: Yes. In particular I welcome my hon. Friend's comments on the rise in living standards under this Government and the increased consumer choice this offers families including, if they wish, the purchase of private health care.

Dartford and Gravesham District Health Authority

Mr. Jacques Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has received adequate and acceptable assurances from the Dartford and Gravesham district health authority concerning the standard of medical care to be provided in support of the in-patient and casualty services at Gravesend and North Kent hospital under the recently approved rationalisation plan; and if he will give details of that supporting medical care.

Mrs. Currie: The Gravesend and North Kent hospital presently accommodates obstetric and gynaecology patients, a special care baby unit, general surgical and orthopaedic patients. A daytime casualty service is also provided.

The health authority has informed me that the medical cover provided is as follows:

Obstetrics and Gynaecology
Constant resident cover
General Surgery
Constant resident cover
Orthopaedics
Constant resident cover
Paediatrics
Constant resident cover

Anaesthetics
Constant resident cover
General Medicine
There are no general medical beds remaining but if an in-patient requires to be seen by a physician then a consultant attending a general medical out-patients' clinic at the hospital could attend or a doctor would attend from Joyce Green or West Hill Hospital.
Casualty
A 9 am to 9 pm casualty service is provided for 'walk-in' cases.

Emergency ambulance cases are taken direct to West Hill hospital. The casualty doctor at Gravesend and North Kent hospital provides initial treatment and has the support of other specialist doctors on site if required.

Should a patient with a medical condition attend, advice is available, if required, from physicians at West Hill or Joyce Green hospital.

If admission to a medical bed is considered appropriate arrangements have been made with the ambulance service for rapid transport of patients to Joyce Green hospital, with a nurse escort if necessary.

District Health Authorities (Staff)

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list in respect of each district health authority *(a)* the total number of full-time equivalent employees and *(b)* the total number of full-time equivalent management employees above the level of department head or ward sister.

Mrs. Currie: I shall let my hon. Friend have such information as can be obtained without incurring disproportionate cost as soon as possible.

Residential Care Allowances

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the present level of, and what are the criteria for, allocation of Department of Health and Social Security residential care allowances for community care in Scotland.

Mr. Scott: I assume the hon. Member is referring to supplementary benefit allowances for people in private and voluntary residential care and nursing homes. People in these homes can claim supplementary benefit to help meet their fees but there are limits to the levels of fees with which help can be given. A list of the current limits is given in the table. The limits apply nationally, other than for a special provision for London.

The purpose of the supplementary benefits scheme is to provide help for people who are not in full-time work, whose capital is not more than £3,000 and whose income, from all sources, is below a minimum level. The terms and conditions of entitlement are set out in the supplementary benefit Acts and regulations.

Supplementary Benefit: Residential Care and Nursing Home Limits

Category	*Residential care homes* £	*Nursing homes* £
Elderly	130	175
Very Dependent or Blind Elderly	145	—
Mentally Ill	130	180
Drug/Alcohol	130	180
Mentally Handicapped	150	200
Physically Disabled under Pension Age	190	230
Terminal Illness	—	230
Other	130	175

Note: The limits for all homes in the Greater London area can be extended by up to £17·50.

Cash Limits

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether any changes will be made to the cash limits and gross running costs for his Department.

Mr. Scott: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimates, the cash limit for Class XIV, Vote 1 (Hospital and Community Health Services) will be increased by £109,461,000 (from £10,339,619,000 to £10,449,080,000) following the announcements on 23 October 1987 and 16 December 1987, and including £44 million to reflect a change in health authoritis' carry forward arrangements. The cash limit for Class XIV, Vote 3 (Miscellaneous Health Services and and Personal Social Services, England) will be increased by £13,803,000 (from £403,152,000 to £416,955,000). This increase comprises an increased allocation of £2,500,000 to maintain services following the rising number of AIDS cases as announced on 23 October 1987; an additional £10 million for a grant to the Haemophilia Society of Great Britain as announced on 16 November 1987; and the transfer of £2,223,000 from Class XV, Vote 5, for DHSS staff made available to the Disablement Services Authority with effect from the authority's creation on 1 July 1987. These increases are partly offset by a reduction of £920,000 in respect of the repayment of a grant which had been made to a voluntary organisation in respect of a community home. The provision for running costs on Class XIV, Vote 3, is increased by £3,318,000. This increase will not result in an increase in the overall DHSS running costs limit.

The cash limit for Class XV, Vote 5, (Administration and Miscellaneous Services) has been increased by £2.777 million from £1,339.919 million to £1,342.696 million. The revision takes account of the additional administrative costs associated with the special payment exercise to compensate for the error in the RPI, namely £5 million, and the transfer of £2.223 million, provision for the Disablement Services Authority, to the Vote for miscellaneous health services and personal social services, Class XIV, Vote 3.

As a result of the above-mentioned transfer to health and personal social services and the additional requirement, the gross running costs limit of the Department of Health and Social Security is increased by £5 million from £1,700.678 million to £1,705.678.

The additional £5 million costs are not being met from the "savings" that accrued because of the RPI error. The

public expenditure costs of these changes have been charged to the reserve and do not add to the public expenditure planning total.

Diabetic Blindness

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement about his policy towards charges for eyesight tests for the monitoring of diabetic blindness.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 17 December 1987]:* The proposal in the White Paper on primary health care is that free NHS sight tests should in future be confined to children, students under 19, those on low incomes, and the registered blind and partially sighted.

The Government's action last year to make disposable syringes and needles available free to insulin-dependent diabetics on general practitioner prescription, and the decision announced in the White Paper to make blood-glucose testing strips available in the same way as soon as the necessary arrangements can be made, are intended to assist in enhancing the role of GPs in the regular care of diabetics. GPs will be aware of the need to look for symptoms of eye disease in diabetics, and where such disease is suspected the patient would be referred to the hospital eye service for the necessary tests.

My hon. Friend may like to know that we are currently funding a research project at Exeter, Oxford and Sheffield into methods of screening for diabetic retinopathy; and are making available a further £100,000 for the continuation of this work in 1988-89. We shall carefully consider the results, which are due next year.

Income Support

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his estimate of the number of claimants of *(a)* income support, *(b)* housing benefit and *(c)* family credit who will be liable for a rates contribution which (i) exceeds or (ii) is less than the amount of compensation allowed for in the income support personal allowances.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 21 January 1988]:* Using the assumptions set out in the "Impact of the Reformed Structure of Income Related Benefits", October 1987, 1·7 million income support recipients would be liable for rates contributions smaller than the compensation in their benefit entitlement. For 1·8 million recipients their rates liability would exceed it. These figures assume that non-dependant deductions are not made.

For the balance of those on housing benefit (that is, those not also on income support) and for those on family credit these calculations are of limited importance and precise figures are not available. The operation of the rate taper under housing benefit means that liability for a contribution to rates increases above the minimum 20 per cent. as income rises. Family credit is treated as income for housing benefit purposes and the contribution to rates made by family credit recipients will reflect this.

Advisory Committee on Irradiated and Novel Foods

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to publish the second report of the Advisory Committee on Irradiated and Novel Foods; and if he will make a statement.

77. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to make an announcement about the future of irradiation of foodstuffs.

78. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to be able to make an announcement concerning Government proposals for the irradiation of food; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to make his response to the consultative report from the Advisory Committee on Irradiated and Novel Foods: and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 22 January 1988]:* In April 1986 the Government published the report of the Advisory Committee on Irradiated and Novel Foods (ACINF) on the safety and wholesomeness of irradiated foods and sought comments on it. Some 6,000 letters have been received from members of the public, interested organisations and hon. Members. In the light of these, further advice was sought from the ACINF which reaffirmed its earlier advice that, under the conditions prescribed, irradiated food is safe and wholesome. Having carefully considered the arguments, Ministers for Health and Agriculture have accepted this advice. Copies of ACINF's further advice to Ministers have been placed in the Library and it is our intention to make copies publicly available.

The committee drew attention to certain practical issues relating to the monitoring and control of irradiated foods and enforcement. The Government have therefore decided to maintain the present general prohibition on irradiated foods until they are satisfied that effective regulatory controls can be drawn up for the irradiation of specific foods in order to bring about good industrial and marketing practices and ensure informed consumer choice. Such controls should include assurances on the quality of the particular foods to be irradiated, requirements as to the maintenance of documentary records, the licensing of premises and inspection of operations. The availability of detection tests will be one of the factors to be taken into consideration and there would also be statutory provision for the labelling of irradiated foods and food ingredients.

My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food will now arrange for further work to be carried out to examine the scope and format of any controls. Consultations under the Food Acts will not be initiated until Ministers are satisfied that there is adequate provision to ensure the prevention of abuse and the protection of consumer choice. At the same time, working with our European partners we will endeavour to achieve a common approach to the irradiation of food throughout the European Community.

Social Fund

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the expected amount to be spent in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* England, *(c)* Wales and *(d)* Northern Ireland on (i) loans and (ii) grants from the social fund in each year to 1991; and what is his estimate of (1) the number of payments and (2) the number of claimants in each year.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 1 February 1988]:* Social fund budget allocations for 1988/89 are shown in the table. Allocations for future years have not yet been decided.

The number of payments that will be made from the loans and grants budgets will depend upon the size of individual payments. This will be determined by the amounts applied for, and the decisions of individual social fund officers in accordance with the law and directions and in the light of guidance. The number of applicants will depend upon a number of factors, including any take-up campaigns. No firm estimates can therefore be given until the new scheme is in operation.

Social fund budgets 1988-89 (£)

	Grants	*Loans*
England	45,248,177	106,224,026
Scotland	11,506,069	27,143,347
Wales	3,462,240	8,136,641
Northern Ireland	7,200,092	13,700,140

Social fund contingency funds 1988-89

	£
Great Britain	2,000,000
Northern Ireland	199,768

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 5 February 1988

WALES

Rents

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the average time taken in each county in Wales from the day of application for a fair rent to the actual registration of rent, in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Grist: The following table contains information on the median interval between date of application to registration by the rent officer. The intervals include a period of not less than seven and not more than 14 days in which both landlord and tenant have the right to request a consultation. Where a consultation is requested at least seven days' notice must be given by the rent officer, except where a landlord application involves service charges in which case 14 days notice must be given.

Rent Act 1977: Time Taken to Deal with Applications by the Rent Officer, Wales 1986

Rent Registration Area	*Median Time Taken in Weeks*
Clwyd	3·6
Dyfed	7·6
Gwent	6·5
Gwynedd	3·4
Mid Glamorgan	9·4
Powys	4·3
South Glamorgan	11·1
West Glamorgan	6·5

Modern Languages

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list *(a)* those secondary schools in each local education authority in Wales in which a second modern language, besides Welsh, is taught between the ages of 11 and 16 years and *(b)* those schools and other educational institutions catering for 16 to 18-year-olds, in which two, or more, modern languages are taught, other than the Welsh language, post 16 years old.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Information from the 1984 secondary school staffing survey indicates that a modern langage other than Welsh and English was undertaken within year groups I to V in virtually all maintained secondary schools in Wales. Comparable information for schools in which two or more modern languages other than Welsh and English were taught to pupils aged 16 and over is not available.

The colleges of further and higher education offering identifiable examinable courses in two or more modern langages other than Welsh and English in 1987-88 are as follows:

North East Wales Institute of Higher Education, Clwyd
Llandrillo Techincal College, Clwyd
Newport College of Further Education, Gwent
Crosskeys College, Gwent
Pontypool College, Gwent
Gwynedd Technical College, Gwynedd
Merthyr Tydfil Technical College, Mid Glamorgan
The Polytechnic of Wales, Mid Glamorgan
Bredgend Technical College, Mid Glamorgan
South Glamorgan Institute, South Glamorgan
Rumney College, South Glamorgan
West Glamorgan Institute, West Glamorgan
Swansea College of Further Education, West Glamorgan
Gorseinon College of Further Education, West Glamorgan
Neath College, West Glamorgan
Afan College, West Glamorgan

Consultant Rheumatologists

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many consultant rheumatologists there are in Gwent; what is the size of the population served; what is the ratio recommended by the Royal College of Physicians; and what action he intends to take to remedy the situation in Gwent.

Mr. Peter Walker: There is currently one whole-time equivalent consultant rheumatologist employed by Gwent district health authority, although patients with rheumatic conditions are also treated by consultants in other specialties.

Precise estimates of the population served are not available. The population of the area covered by the Gwent district health authority is 441,800. The majority of Gwent and some residents of other districts requiring rheumatological treatment are treated within Gwent. Likewise, some Gwent residents are treated in other health authorities.

I understand that the Royal College of Physicians/ regional advisers' guidelines refer to a recommended ratio of one whole-time equivalent consultant rheumatologist per 150,000 population.

The level of staff and resources for rheumatology services in Gwent is an operational matter for the Gwent health authority to determine.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people were *(a)* employed and *(b)* unemployed in (i) Wales and (ii) Clwyd for each year since 1979.

Mr. Peter Walker *[holding answer 3 February 1988]:* The information available is given in the following table:

000s

Year	*Total in civil employment* [1]*Clwyd*	[2]*Wales*	*Unemployed claimants* [3]*Clwyd*	[4]*Wales*
June 1979	..	1,157	..	70·3
June 1980	..	1,125	..	84·2
June 1981	113	1,054	..	132·4
June 1982	..	1,027	..	146·8
June 1983	..	1,014	22·4	158·7
June 1984	118	1,030	21·9	162·7
June 1985	..	1,023	23·0	172·2
June 1986	..	1,016	23·1	175·0
June 1987	..	1,027	20·4	154·1

[1] For Clwyd, the figures exclude self-employed—the only available figure, from the April 1981 Census of Population, which shows 17,800. Employees in Employment Statistics come from Censuses of Employment and relate to September.

[3] Department of Employment quarterly estimate series and Labour Force Survey estimates of self-employed.
[3] Unadjusted figures (including school leavers); Figures for June 1983 are affected by the 1983 Budget measures whereby some men, mainly aged 60 or over, were no longer required to sign on at unemployment offices to receive benefit. There is discontinuity in data from March 1986, owning to a change in the compilation of unemployment statistics.
[4] Consistent seasonally-adjusted series.

ENERGY

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Sumberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what has been the total value of goods and services provided to increase energy efficiency in each of the last 15 years, expressed as constant prices.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Energy efficiency goods and services are provided by a large number of bodies including central and local government, industry and professional organisations. Assessment of their value could only be undertaken at disproportionate cost.

Pin-ups

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he will issue instructions for the removal of all offensive pin-ups in all his departmental premises.

Mr. Parkinson: Item 69 of the programme of action to achieve equality of opportunity for women states that no form of sexual harassment at work will be tolerated in the Civil Service. The programme of action was published by the Cabinet Office (MPO) in 1984.

Guidance has already been issued to all Department of Energy staff that the display of sexually offensive material in the office amounts to sexual harassment, and that such behaviour is not acceptable.

Plutonium

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his reply of 15 January, *Official Report*, column *421*, in what form the figures for plutonium production are recorded.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have nothing to add to the answers I gave the hon. Member on 15 January 1988 at column *421* and 2 February 1988 at column *532*.

Oil

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what share of current oil production from the United Kingdom North sea is accounted for by *(a)* BP and *(b)* Britoil;

(2) what share of proven and probable oil reserves in the United Kingdom North sea is owned by *(a)* BP and *(b)* Britoil.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My annual report to Parliament on the development of the oil and gas resources of the United Kingdom, available in the Library of the House, contains tables showing operating companies' oil reserve estimates, company shares in oil fields, and output levels from those fields.

PRIME MINISTER

Sexual Harassment

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Prime Minister what is the Cabinet Office policy on sexual harassment at work; whether guidance has been issued to staff on reporting complaints; what is the number of complaints which have been reported in the past five years; and what disciplinary action has been taken.

The Prime Minister: The Cabinet Office is totally opposed to sexual harassment at work. No specific guidance has been issued on reporting these matters. Complaints should go to the personnel manager or welfare officer. None has been reported in the past five years.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister (1) if, during her recent discussions with Chancellor Kohl, she raised questions of the modernisation programme for NATO nuclear weapons, in terms of the re-deployment of the nuclear warheads of Pershings I and II and cruise missiles within the context of the Montebello agreement of 1983;

(2) if, during her recent meeting with Chancellor Kohl, the issue of possible United Kingdom-France joint nuclear weapons development and deployment was raised, in the context of the responsibilities discharged by Her Majesty's Government under the nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

The Prime Minister: No.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister if, in her recent meetings with President Mitterrand and Ministers in the French Government, she discussed the implications of article I of the non-proliferation treaty of 1968 in future Anglo-French nuclear weapons collaboration.

The Prime Minister: No.

Mr. John Stalker

Mr. Rees: To ask the Prime Minister which of her Ministers has the duty of asking the Attorney-General to consider whether the former deputy chief constable of Greater Manchester is to be prosecuted under the Official Secrets Act or, in view of the income derived from the publication, to be proceeded against under the civil law.

The Prime Minister: As to the question of possible criminal proceedings, I refer the right hon. Gentleman to the answer given by my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) on 4 February, at column *681*. The question whether to institute civil proceedings against Mr. Stalker is a matter for Ministers collectively.

Civil Nuclear Installations

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister if she will make it her policy at the next European Council of Ministers meeting to raise the matter of the bribery and corruption allegations involving European Economic Community civil nuclear installations; and what initiatives she expects to take to strengthen Euratom safeguards provisions in the European Economic Community.

The Prime Minister: No. The allegations surrounding the transfer of nuclear material between Belgium and the

Federal Republic of Germany are matters for those Governments. Judicial inquiries into them have been set up in both countries and the question is also to be considered by a committee of inquiry of the Federal Germany Parliament. Investigations by the European Commission and the International Atomic Energy Agency have found no evidence of any breach of Euratom safeguards provisions.

Northern Ireland

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister what assessment she has made of the implications for security in Northern Ireland, with particular reference to the safety of British troops, of the recently announced decision not to prosecute officers of the Royal Ulster Constabulary for alleged offences of conspiracy to pervert the course of justice; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on 28 January 1988, at column *465*.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

European Commission Documents

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many documents published by the Commission of the European Economic Community have been reclassified from the COM series, following representation from Ministers or officials of the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: None. Decisions about the classification of documents are for the Commission. We have not sought to have documents reclassified.

East Timor

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the British delegation to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights will support a move to have the human rights situation investigated in East Timor at their meeting in Geneva in February.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply I gave on 19 January to the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) at column *639*.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Councillor Mrs. Angela Pink

Mr. Allen: To ask the Attorney-General if he will call for a copy of the report to the Director of Public Prosecutions from the Nottinghamshire police regarding Councillor Mrs. Angela Pink; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: Reports of alleged offences are submitted to me by the Director of Public Prosecutions only if my consent to a prosecution is required or if for some other reason it is considered appropriate to do so.

Public Records Office

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Attorney-General if he will review the current cost of obtaining photocopied pages or microfilm copies of documents released under the 30-year rule and kept at the Public Records Office; if he will seek to institute a reduction in unit costs charged to researchers seeking such Public Records Office information; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The fees and charges payable in respect of photocopies and microfilm of public records open to inspection in the Public Records Office are currently prescribed by the Public Records Office (Fees) Regulations 1987 (SI 1987/444). They are calculated to recover the full cost of the service in respect of each particular reprographic process and are kept under continual review.

Crown Prosecutors

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Attorney-General if he will place in the Library a copy of the code for Crown prosecutors.

The Attorney-General: The code for Crown prosecutors is set out in the annual report made by the Director of Public Prosecutions to the Attorney-General. Copies of the Director's first report were placed in the Libraries of both Houses on 13 August 1987. This was announced in the *Official Report* on 21 October 1987 at column *743*.

Sampson and Stalker Reports

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Attorney-General whether the reports of either Mr. Colin Sampson or Mr. John Stalker to the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland recommended prosecution of any members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary with regard to the illegal killings of any persons; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: As is the usual practice with police reports covering criminal investigations, neither the report by Mr. John Stalker nor the report by Mr. Colin Sampson will be published. I remind the hon. Member, however, of the following passage in the statement I made to the House on 25 January 1988:

"In regard to the shooting incidents to which I have referred, the Director has considered all the facts and information ascertained and reported by Mr. Stalker and Mr. Sampson, and he has re-examined the original RUC investigation files. He has concluded that the evidence does not warrant any further prosecution in respect of the shootings which occurred on 11 November 1982 and 12 December 1982 and which have already been the subject of prosecutions. He has further concluded that the evidence does not warrant any prosecution in respect of either the fatal shooting or the wounding that occurred on 24 November 1982. I have considered the Director's conclusions and I agree with them. He has given directions accordingly."—[*Official Report*, 25 January 1988; Vol. 126, c. 22.]

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Attorney-General whether his statement in relation to the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland's decision not to prosecute Royal Ulster Constabulary officers for allegedly perverting the course of justice was based on the findings of inquiries prior to, as well as during, the course of the Stalker–Sampson investigations; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: I refer the hon. Member to my statement to the House on 25 January. The Director considered all the facts and information ascertained and reported by Mr. Stalker and Mr. Sampson, he re-examined

the original RUC investigation files and his conclusions were reached in the light of all the facts and information brought to his notice.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Attorney-General whether forensic evidence discovered during the course of inquiries by Mr. John Stalker and Mr. Colin Sampson was made available to the courts during any prosecution of persons for unlawful killing; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: Trials of members of the RUC took place in March 1984 and May 1984. Mr. Stalker was appointed to conduct his investigation on 24 May 1984 and Mr. Stalker's interim report was furnished to the chief constable on 18 September 1985. Accordingly any evidence elicited by the investigation team headed by Mr. Stalker and Mr. Sampson was not available to the courts during the prosecutions referred to.

Michael Tighe

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Attorney-General (1) whether tapes in connection with the killing of Michael Tighe at Ballynerry Road North, Lurgon, are still in existence; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether *(a)* the tape made by the security forces and *(b)* a transcript of the tape were made available to Mr. Colin Sampson before his final report was made to the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland in respect of the killing of Micheel Tighe; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: As is the usual practice with police reports covering criminal investigations, neither the report by Mr. John Stalker nor the report by Mr. Colin Sampson will be published. Accordingly I do not intend to make any statement on detailed matters of evidence.

Police Officers (Possible Prosecutions)

Mr. Campbell-Savours To ask the Attorney-General if he will specify the precise considerations which led him to inform the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland about the nature of the public interest in relation to the possible prosecutions of Superintendent Thomas George Anderson, Superintendent Samuel George Flanagan and Chief Superintendent Desmond Brown for seeking to pervert the course of justice in respect of the alleged suppression of information on an unlawful killing; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: I refer the hon. Member to the full statement which I made to the House on 27 January 1988. I have nothing to add to it either generally or with particular reference to the considerations of public interest (and in particular considerations of national security) which were taken into account, or as to the identity of any person whose conduct was the subject of investigation.

Mr. Martin Macauley

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Attorney-General whether the tapes in connection with the killing of Michael Tighe were made available to the court at the time of the trial of Mr. Martin Macauley; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The evidence before the court at the time of the trial of Mr. Martin Macauley is a matter of public record. The court received no evidence of or from any tape.

Legal Aid

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Attorney-General why information is not available in respect of the amount of legal aid moneys recovered in 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986 and 1987 and paid in respect of a solicitor who at the relevant time did not hold a current practising certificate; and whether he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The information is not available because recoveries of legal aid moneys in the circumstances described are not separately recorded.

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Attorney-General whether he will introduce new procedures designed to ensure that a declaration of certification is made before a legal aid payment is made to a solicitor and that anyone making a false declaration is prosecuted.

The Attorney-General: The Lord Chancellor has asked the legal aid head office to give further details of its procedures and if necessary to review them. I will write to the hon. Member when that review is complete.

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Attorney-General under which heading in the legal aid accounts for 1985-86 are to be found sums recovered from solicitors who at the relevant time did not hold a current practising certificate.

The Attorney-General: Sums are recovered by deduction from subsequent payments to the solicitors concerned. Recoupments thus lead to the amount recorded in the legal aid accounts as "solicitors" charges and counsel's fees being lower than would otherwise have been the case.

Uncertificated Solicitors

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Attorney-General whether he will seek to strengthen the criminal law with the intention of reducing the number of uncertificated solicitors who are acting improperly.

The Attorney-General: I see no reason to do so. Criminal sanctions for an offence under section 20 of the Solicitors Act 1974 are already severe; penalties of imprisonment for not more than two years, a fine, or both may be imposed. Specific offences relating to the commission of certain prohibited acts attract other penalties under the Solicitors Act 1974.

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Attorney-General why he will not take steps to establish a method of complaints against uncertificated solicitors which is more open to scrutiny than the Solicitors Complaints Bureau.

The Attorney-General: I have not seen any reason to do so.

Solicitors Complaints Bureau

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Attorney-General why he will not set up an inquiry into the way in which the Solicitors Complaints Bureau conducts investigations, with respect to its standards of impartiality.

The Attorney-General: I have not seen any reason to do so.

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Attorney-General whether he has ever met Mr. Stringer of the Solicitors Complaints Bureau; and whether he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: I have not met Mr. Stringer.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Education Act 1980

Mr. Rost: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he is willing to consider representations from right hon. Members and hon. Members in respect of proposals made under sections 12 and 13 of the Education Act 1980 at any time up to the date of his formal decision on that proposal being published.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend would encourage hon. and right hon. Members to make representations to him about proposals made under sections 12 and 13 of the Education Act 1980 whenever possible within three months of the date of publication of those proposals. He is, nevertheless, willing to listen to representations after that time. Once proposals have been approved or rejected under those sections, my right hon. Friend has no power to rescind that decision.

Mr. Rost: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether the procedures taken by himself, his Ministers and officials within his Department in arriving at a decision for approval or rejection of a proposal under sections 12 and 13 of the Education Act 1980 are treated as strictly confidential, and do not constitute any decision until he publicly announces such a decision.

Mr. Dunn: Advice from officials to Ministers is normally regarded as confidential. My right hon. Friend is advised that, where a decision in respect of particular proposals under sections 12 or 13 of the Education Act 1980 is communicated to the proposers, the proposals are approved or rejected for the purposes of those sections, irrespective of whether any public announcement has been made.

Mr. Rost: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the procedure he adopts *(a)* to publish decisions taken under sections 12 and 13 of the Education Act 1980 and *(b)* to inform all interested parties of such a decision.

Mr. Dunn: Approval or rejection by my right hon. Friend of proposals published under sections 12 and 13 of the Education Act 1980 is conveyed to the proposers concerned. The authority is required to inform local objectors of the decision. Where an hon. or right hon. Member has expressed an interest in the proposal, it is the usual practice of my right hon. Friend to inform the hon. Member of the decision at the same time as it is conveyed to the proposers.

Schools (Opting-out)

Mr. John Browne: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received seeking the insertion of a clause in the Education Reform Bill which would require that, where a school had voted under the opt out provisions to remain under local authority control, a minimum time period should elapse before a further ballot may be held on the same subject; what response he has made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: No such representations have been received. However, in the interests of minimising disruption to schools, the Government have brought forward an amendment to the Bill in Committee to ensure that no governing body may resolve to hold a ballot if one has been held within the previous 12 months, unless the Secretary of State gives his written consent.

Lancashire County Council (Grants)

Mr. Hind: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what grants he has allocated to Lancashire county council for 1988-89; what were the allocations for 1987-88; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: Lancashire LEA's allocation for prescribed capital expenditure on schools and further and higher education in 1988-89 is £12·809 million; its allocation in 1987-88 was £5·994 million. Next year's allocation is 113 per cent. higher than this year's, and represents 50 per cent. of its planned expenditure compared with the national average of 39 per cent. In addition, the authority has been allocated £3·298 million for expenditure by governors of voluntary aided and special agreement schools in 1988-89 compared with £0·793 million in 1987-88, which represents an increase of 316 per cent. and is the second highest allocation made.

ENVIRONMENT

Environmental Protection (Funding)

Mr. Allan Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those applications made by agencies in the United Kingdom for funding under the European Commission ACE fund to protect the environment; and if he will give the outcome of those applications.

Mr. Moynihan: In the information in the table, successful applications for funding udner the European Community ACE—Action by the Community on the Environment—regulations are marked with an asterisk. Decisions on some projects have had to be deferred pending clarifications of technical points or through lack of funds at the time of consideration.

Applications under article 1.1(a)—Demonstration projects aimed at developing new "clean" technologies

Project	*Applicant*
1. Proposed effluent plant	Charles Paisley and Sons
2. Control of lead emissions	Choloride Metals Ltd.
3. Reduction of chrome effluent levels	Alumina Company Ltd.
4. New process for manufacturing cellophane	BCL ltd.

Applications under article 1.1(b)—Demonstration projects aimed at developing new techniques and methods for measuring monitoring the quality of the natural environment

Project	*Applicant*
1. Windpowered aerogenerator	J. Roger White
2. Techniques of resonant ionisation mass spectroscopy	University of Glasgow

Project	Applicant
3. Quantitative assessment of suspended sediments and associated metals	Hunting Geology and Geophysics Ltd.
4. Screening tests for mutagen contamination	Thames Polytechnic
5. Isolation and indentification of free-living amoebae	Royal United Hospital, Bath
6. Improved methods for monitoring quality of the North Sea	Water Research Centre
*7. Use of bacterial electrodes for monitoring effluent in surface water	Water Research Centre
8. Assessment of environmental pathways of polychlorinated organic materials	Warren Spring Laboratory
9. Monitoring heavy metal pollution	University of Glasgow
*10. Determination of pollutional load on water	University of Glasgow
*11. Measuring wet deposition of SO_2, NOx and their derivatives	Warren Spring Laboratory
12. Assess effectiveness of reducing phosphorus input to water	Dept. of Agriculture for Northern Ireland
13. Comparability tests on uptake of organic substances by plants	Water Research Centre
*14. Measurement of NOx and derivatives	Heriot-Watt University
15. Developing a rapid method of measuring BOD5	University of Glasgow

Applications under article 1.1(c)—Projects providing an incentive and aimed at contributing towards the maintenance or re-establishing of seriously threatened biotopes

Project	Application
*1. Protection of Frampton Marshes	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
2. Protection of Leighton Moss	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
*3. Management and re-instatement Old Hall Marshes	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
4. Conservation of Crex crex in the Wester Isles of Scotland	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
5. Wheldrake—Wressle	Yorkshire Wildlife Trust
6. Contribution to the management of Special Protection Areas	International Waterfowl Research Bureau
7. Re-establishment and maintenance of Doffcocker Lodge	Metropolitan Borough of Bolton
*8. Round off the boundaries to Welney Wildfowl Refuge	Wildfowl Trust
*9. Lease of Rockcliffe Marsh	Nature Conservancy Council
10. Reinstatement of land adjoining Holkam Natinal Nature Reserve	Nature Conservancy Council
*11. Purchase of Tore Hill	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
*12. Swale National Reserve Bunding Scheme	Nature Conservancy Council
13. Protection of Ben Macdui	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
14. Protection of Halvergate Marshes	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
15. Protection of Cliffe and Cooling Marshes	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
16. Radio communication network for North Norfolk Coast	National Trust
17. Monitoring the effects of wildfowling	Wildfowl Trust
18. Purchase of Salthouse Marshes	Norfolk Naturalists Trust
*19. Restoration of Duich Moss	Nature Conservancy Council
20. Relief of recreational pressure on Ythan Estuary	Grampian Regional Council
21. A Quantitative Atlas of Breeding Birds	British Trust for Ornithology
22. Protection of Campfield Marsh	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

Planning Applications

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Chelmsford, *Official Report*, 1 February, column *432*, how many of the planning appeals received by his Department from applicants in the Chelmsford area involved planning applications in green belt land, in each of the last three available years.

Mr. Waldegrave: The information is not available exactly in the form requested. The number of planning appeals from Chelmsford borough involving land in the designated green belt recorded as having been decided by inspectors in 1984, 1985 and 1986 was:

Year	Appeals Decided
1984	18
1985	32
1986	35

Disabled People

Mrs. Rosie Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what additional measures he intends to undertake to ensure equal employment opportunities for persons with disabilities to allow for the fact that local authorities will no longer be able to exercise contract compliance on their behalf if the terms of the Local Government Bill remain unchanged; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: None. The provisions of the Local Government Bill do not affect employers' duties under the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944.

River Calder (Pollution)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action is being taken to reduce the pollution of the River Calder in west Yorkshire.

Mr. Moynihan: Most of the River Calder from Huddersfield to its confluence with the River Aire is classified as poor quality (class 3). The Yorkshire water authority is working towards upgrading the river to fair quality (class 2) by the early 1990s. The improvement will largely come about through the completion of major schemes at sewage treatment works in the Huddersfield area on which the authority is planning to spend around £17 million over the next two to three years.

Lancashire

Mr. Hind: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what grants he has agreed to make to Lancashire county council in 1988-89; what grants were made by his Department to Lancashire in 1987-88; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: On the basis of its estimated spending, Lancashire county council will receive in 1987-88 £317.568 million in rate support grant. For spending at the 1988-89 RSG settlement spending assumption of £644.309 million, the council would receive £337.336 million

The council will also receive in respect of this financial year and 1988-89 payments of gipsy site grant and derelict land grant and small sums under part III of scheduel 15

to the Housing Act 1985. It is not yet possible to say how much the council will receive in these grants in respect of the two years, as payments are made on the basis of claims made to my Department after expenditure is incurred.

Supplementary Report

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the third supplementary report for 1986-87 and the fourth supplementary reports for 1983-84 and 1984-85 for England will be published.

Mr. Ridley: I have laid these supplementary reports —SRs—before the House today. The main purpose of these SRs is to adjust grant to reflect the latest information on each authority's expenditure. The fourth SRs for 1983-84 and 1984-85 make new estimates of the totals of relevant expenditure, and specific grants, and adjust aggregate Exchequer grant, individual authorites grant, grant-related expenditure—GRE—assessments and their liability to grant abatement in the light of audited outturn expenditure in these years. The third SR for 1986-87 makes similar changes in the light of provisional outturn expenditure. However, there was no expenditure guidance issued in 1986-87, so there was no grant abatement in that year. All three SRs make certain other changes to correct errors, reflect boundary changes, and so on.

The SRs have to be approved by the House of Commons. Subject to that, I plan to make the revisions to grants payments to reflect the reports early in April. Copies of the reports and tables showing revised grant entitlement are being sent today to local authoriy associations and to each authority.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

EC (Trade Barriers)

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement about current progress towards removing internal barriers to trade within the European Economic Community.

Mr. Alan Clark: We and our Community partners are making encouraging progress towards the completion of the single market by the target date of 31 December 1992. Over 100 individual measures aimed at removing barriers have been agreed in the last 18 months, 48 of them during the United Kingdom presidency in the second half of 1986. Following implementation of the Single European Act, the increased use of qualified majority voting is likely to speed up the process of decision taking.

Network Services Licences

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) if he will list in the *Official Report* the names of all the companies and individuals holding general value added network services licences and the dates of issue for each;

(2) if he will indicate the circumstances in which a general value added network services licence can be revoked.

Mr. Butcher: The provision of value added and data services, other than by the public telecommunications operators and their associates, is authorised under a class licence granted to all persons on 30 April 1987. Public telecommunications operators provide services under their main PTO licences. PTO associates are authorised to provide VADS under a separate but similar class licence also granted on 30 April 1987.

The precise circumstances in which the class licence can be revoked are set out in schedule 2 to the licence. In brief the licence may only be revoked in respect of an individual and then only:

(i) if the licensee agrees; or

(ii) if the Licensee has breached the conditions of the licence and refuses to comply with an enforcement order from the Director General of Telecommunications or if the licensee is running an unauthorised telecommunications system; or

(iii) if the licensee becomes insolvent.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Mr. John Bainbridge

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he will take regarding John Bainbridge, who petitioned the House on 9 December 1987.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The matter raised by John Bainbridge in his petition to the House on 9 December 1987 has been considered in accordance with the normal procedures and a decision will be given to him shortly. I shall then write to the hon. Member.

North Yorkshire Constabulary

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has reached a conclusion about his response to the requests from the North Yorkshire constabulary for an increase in their police establishment of 50 officers.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The application by North Yorkshire police authority for an increase in their force establishment is being considered along with applications from other authorities and in the light of advice from Her Majesty's inspectors of constabulary. No decisions have yet been taken.

Fixed Penalty Fines

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Deaprtment (1) how many fixed penalty fines were issued on foreign-registered vehicles for each of the last five years; if he will give a breakdown of the figures between *(a)* private vehicles and *(b)* business vehicles; and if he will express the figures as a percentage of the total number of fines;

(2) if he will list, by country of origin, the total number and value of fixed penalty fines for road traffic offences unrecovered, for each of the last five years;

(3) how many of the fixed penalty fines issued on foreign-registered vehicles for each of the last five years were paid; and if he will estimate the cost of recovering such fines that remained unpaid in the first instance;

(4) if he will list, by country of origin, the number of fixed penalty fines issued on foreign-registered vehicles for the last year for which figures are available;

(5) if he will list, by country of origin, the number of convictions for road traffic offences, other than fixed penalty fines, against drivers of foreign-registered vehicles,

for the last year for which figures are available; and if he will give a breakdown between *(a)* private vehicles and *(b)* business vehicles.

Mr. John Patten: Information on fixed penalty notices issued, the proportion paid, and so on, and findings of guilt at all courts is published annually in the Home Office statistical bulletin "Offences Relating to Motor Vehicles, England and Wales" (tables 3, 6 and 7 of the issue for 1986, number 36/87, a copy of which is in the Library. Information is not collected centrally on the cost of recovering unpaid fines, the country of registration or the type of vehicle involved.

Road Traffic Offences

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will list the total number of foreign offenders imprisoned for each of the last five years; and if he will express the figures as a percentage of *(a)* the total number of prisoners and *(b)* the total number of foreign prisoners imprisoned for road traffic offences;

(2) if he will list, by country of origin, the total number of offenders imprisoned for road traffic offences for each of the last five years, who were using foreign-registered vehicles.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The readily available information, which is only for 1986, is given in the table, excluding citizens of Commonwealth countries, Pakistan and the Republic of Ireland the recording of whom is not sufficiently reliable for separate estimates of their numbers to be given. No details of the registration of any vehicles involved are held centrally.

Receptions under sentence[1] into Prison Department establishments in England and Wales: by type of offence and citizenship, 1986
Number of persons

Citizenship	*Motoring offences*	*Other offences*	*All offences*
British, British Overseas, British Dependent Territories, Commonwealth countries, Pakistan and the Republic of Ireland	12,270	71,900	84,160
Other Foreign nationalities of which	160	1,170	1,330
Belgium/Luxembourg	3	..	..
France	2	..	..
German Federal Republic	52	..	..
Greece	2	..	..
Holland	4	..	..
Hungary	3	..	..
Italy	9	..	..
Poland	5	..	..
Spain	3	..	..
Other Europe	12	..	..
United States of America	16	..	..
Other Americas	3	..	..
South Africa	11	..	..
Bangladesh	2	..	..
Burma	1	..	..
Peoples' Republic of China	1	..	..
Iran	4	..	..
Turkey	7	..	..
USSR	1	..	..
Rest of the World	17	..	..
Not recorded	100	560	660
All	12,530	73,630	86,150

[1] Including fine defaulters. Based on records held centrally, which are approximate.

Rating Reform

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will introduce legislation to strengthen the provisions of the Data Protection Act in relation to the first and third data protection principles, in the light of the Data Protection Registrar's comments on the community charge; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: No.

Refugees

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State of the Home Department how many refugees are currently seeking political asylum in the United Kingdom; from which countries they originate; how many are in detenion; and what information he has as to which political movements they are members.

Mr. Renton: The latest available information on outstanding applications for asylum relates to 1 October 1987 and is shown in the following table. Delays in the input of data to the computer system means that some applications made before this date do not appear in the table and some applications on which a decision has been taken are included.

There are at present some 53 persons seeking asylum in the United Kingdom who have been detained for more than 14 days. Information regarding the membership of political movements of asylum-seekers is not readily available in the form requested and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Refugee Applications Outstanding as at 1 October 1987

Nationality	*Number*
Afghanistan	103
Albania	1
Algeria	6
Angola	17
Bahrain	7
Bangladesh	9
Bolivia	7
Botswana	1
Bulgaria	3
Burkina Faso	1
Burma	8
Cameroon	1
Chad	1
Chile	22
China	4
Colombia	13
Congo	1
Cyprus	8
Czechoslovakia	9
Djibouti	3
Egypt	10
El Salvador	4
Ethiopia	373
Gambia	2
Ghana	367
Grenada	1
Guatamala	1
Guyana	4
Hungary	10
India	198
Iran	1,390
Iraq	435
Israel	1
Jamaica	1
Jordan	8
Kenya	11
Laos	1
Lebanon	70
Lesotho	3
Liberia	9
Libya	136
Malaysia	1
Mali	1
Mauritius	2
Morocco	6
Mozambique	1
Netherlands	1
Nicaragua	1
Niger	24
Nigeria	37
Pakistan	712
Peru	1
Philippines	4
Poland	114
Romania	7
Seychelles	192
Sierra Leone	11
Somalia	470
South Africa	95
Spain	2
Sri Lanka	1,038
Sudan	80
Surinam	1
Syria	32
Tanzania	7
Tunisia	1
Turkey	177
Uganda	469
USA	4
USSR	2
Yemen (AR)	5
Yemen (PDR)	19
Yugoslavia	6
Zaire	63
Zambia	11
Zimbabwe	47
BOC	2
Nationality uncertain	112
All Nationalities	7,042

Radio Authority

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the new radio authority will have powers to restrict the networking of programmes between local radio stations.

Mr. Renton: The extent to which programmes of interest to a wider audience are distributed between individual stations will be governed principally by the requirement on stations licensed by the radio authority to honour their promises of performance.

Amusement Arcades (Report)

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has received the report on amusement arcades and similar activities from the Gaming Board of Great Britain.

Mr. John Patten: Yes.

Immigration

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people are currently being held in detention under the Immigration Act 1987 *(a)* pending the outcome of an immigration appeal and *(b)* under detention for other reasons, at (i) Welford road prison, Leicester, and (ii) all other prisons in Britain.

Mr. Renton: There are currently seven people detained at Leicester prison, under the Immigration Act 1971. Of these one is detained pending the outcome of an immigration appeal.

The main prison service establishment used for immigration cases is Latchmere house where, on 4 February, 94 people were detained under the Immigration Act 1971. Similar information for other establishments, and details of those detained pending the outcome of an appeal is not kept centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

DNA Testing

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to publish the feasibility study on DNA testing; what arrangements he is making to assist those in financial hardship to obtain DNA tests; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: Officials are preparing a report on the pilot trial of the use of DNA profiling in immigration cases. A copy will be placed in the Library as soon as possible. We shall address the related policy issue, including the availability of financial assistance, when the report is available.

Shotgun Licences and Firearms Certificates

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many duplicate *(a)* shotgun

licences and *(b)* firearms certificates were issued by each police force area in the last year for which figures are available and in the preceding year.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Central Guns Register

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate he has made of the cost of establishing and maintaining a central guns register.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The recently published White Paper on the review of firearms controls drew attention to the possibility of establishing a national guns register, if on further examination, this seems desirable. I do not now have estimates of the costs which would be incurred in establishing and maintaining such a register.

Stolen Property Index

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the stolen property index is maintained on a sub-division, division or whole-force police area; and whether it is *(a)* circulated to other police forces and *(b)* available on request.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand that the stolen property index is maintained on a national basis. Some forces maintain their own index. Details from the index are available to police forces on request but are not available to the public.

Telephone Interceptions

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many wire taps were authorised in 1987 for the purpose of investigating nuisance callers to *(a)* British Telecom Talkabout and *(b)* other premium services operating with general value added network services licences.

Mr. Hurd: Any arrangements British Telecom may make for routine monitoring of calls to such services as British Telecom Talkabout are not made under section 2 of the Interception of Communications Act 1985.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Expenditure

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish the proportion of the Overseas Development Administration budget spent on emergency relief, project aid, programme aid, multilateral aid and technical assistance for each year for the last 10 years.

Mr. Chris Patten: Percentages of gross public expenditure on aid spent on these programmes were as follows:

	Multilateral aid	*Bilateral aid*				
		Project aid	*Programme aid*	*Technical cooperation*	*Disaster relief*	*Food aid*
1977	33·7	22·4	11·7	20·7	0·2	1·2
1978	25·0	25·1	17·4	20·4	0·4	2·0
1979	27·3	28·7	16·3	19·8	0·2	0·8
1980	27·3	29·9	7·1	23·1	0·3	0·9
1981	29·3	35·9	5·8	18·3	0·1	1·2
1982	37·9	28·4	6·6	19·5	0·2	1·1
1983	40·9	27·7	4·3	19·7	0·2	1·1
1984	40·3	30·3	2·8	18·2	0·7	1·1
1985	37·7	27·3	3·5	21·1	2·5	2·1
1986	37·6	29·5	4·2	21·4	1·4	0·6

Source: British Aid Statistics.

Some multilateral aid and food aid was for disaster relief.

THE ARTS

Pin-ups

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he will issue instructions for the removal of all offensive pin-ups in all his departmental premises.

Mr. Luce: No form of sexual harassment at work is tolerated by my Department.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Borrowing Requirement

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate for the public sector borrowing requirement for 1987-88.

Mr. Major: The Autumn Statement forecast was for a PSBR in 1987-88 of £1 billion. A revised estimate will be published next month in the Financial Statement and Budget Report.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest indication of Her Majesty's Government's borrowing requirement at the end of the 1987-88 financial year, on present spending plans.

Mr. Major: The Autumn Statement forecast was for a public sector borrowing requirement in 1987-88 of £1 billion. A revised estimate for 1987-88, together with a forecast for 1988-89, will be published next month in the Financial Statement and Budget Report.

NHS Funding

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if, in view of recent representations, he will increase the resources available to *(a)* the National Health Service and *(b)* education and training from the totals proposed in his White Paper.

Mr. Major: The White Paper plans show large increases in provision for both health and education. They will be reviewed again in the normal way in this year's public expenditure survey.

National Economic Development Council

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next plans to meet the National Economic Development Council to discuss economic matters.

Mr. Major: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor plans to meet the National Economic Development Council next year.

Economic Growth

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer to what extent growth in the economy has been reflected in falling unemployment over the past year.

Mr. Major: Strong growth in the economy accounts for the greater part of the fall in unemployment of over half a million over the past year, the largest fall since similar records began in 1948.

Avgas

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last met representatives of the General Aviation Manufacturers and Trade Association to discuss the duty on Avgas.

Mr. Lilley: My right hon. Friend has not met representatives of GAMTA and nor have I.

BP Sale

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a further statement on the costs of the BP sale.

Mr. Norman Lamont: It is provisionally estimated that the cost of the sale of BP shares in the financial year 1987-88 will be some £114 million. This represented about 2 per cent. of the total proceeds raised for the Government of £5,503 million.

The main categories of expenditure are estimated to comprise:

	£ million
United Kingdom sale	
—advisers fees	3
—marketing costs	39
—receiving bank registration	5
—underwriting and selling commissions	36
Overseas sales	31
	114

In addition, the administrative costs of the Bank of England purchase arrangements borne by the Treasury are provisionally estimated to amount to some £1·4 million.

The corresponding spring supplementary estimate for these costs, which is for a token £1,000 and which will be presented shortly, provides for expenditure on expenses of £161,860,000. The difference represents transfers of funds within Government, principally stamp duty and VAT, which are not a cost to the Exchequer.

Gross Domestic Product

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the latest figures for the growth of gross domestic product over the past year.

Mr. Major: Real gross domestic product is provisionally estimated to have grown by 5¼ per cent. in the year to the third quarter of 1987.

Customs and Excise (Aberdeen)

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the total revenue collected by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise in Aberdeen over each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 3 February 1988]:* I regret that this information is not available.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what discussions he has held about proposals that Her Majesty's Customs and Excise office in Aberdeen, covering the north and north-east of Scotland, should be closed and its work transferred to Edinburgh or Glasgow.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 3 February 1988]:* The office will not be closed. Although overall administrative responsibility for Customs and Excise matters in the north and north-east of Scotland will be transferred to Edinburgh and Glasgow (and Clyde) collections, senior managers will remain in Aberdeen to manage Customs and Excise matters and full services to local commercial and industrial organisations will be maintained.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many civil servants, by grade, are employed at Her Majesty's Customs and Excise office in Aberdeen.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 3 February 1988]:* The Aberdeen regional collection of Customs and Excise has a total of 471½ staff, of whom the following grades are located in the town of Aberdeen:

Grade	*Number of staff*
5	1
6	1
7	4
SEO	14
HEO	51
EO	104
AO	71
AA	23
Personal Secretary	1
Typist	6
Messenger	2
	278

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to meet staff at Her Majesty's Customs and Excise in Aberdeen to discuss proposals to close that office.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 3 February 1988]:* The Customs and Excise office in Aberdeen is not to close. The administrative section will, however, be transferred to Edinburgh or Glasgow as part of a necessary restructuring

of the Scottish collections. Staff trade union representatives have been kept advised of the proposals and full discussions are taking place.

SCOTLAND

Parole

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland why prisoners in Scotland are not informed of the reasons for refusal of parole; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The practice of not giving reasons for refusal to grant early release on parole licence has operated since the parole scheme was introduced. The decision on whether an individual should be granted the privilége of parole is taken by my right hon. and learned Friend in the light of confidential advice from the Parole Board for Scotland.

Sheep (Radiation)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what dispensation was given in August 1986 to farmers in the restricted areas, following the Chernobyl accident, to leave their sheep unmarked.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There was no dispensation to allow unmarked sheep to be moved from the restricted areas except in the case of movement of breeding stock to recognised breeding sales.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many sheep without markings were authorised by his Department to be recalled from auction marts in or around the restricted areas following the Chernobyl accident in August and September 1986.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: None.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland on what date marking paint was made available to satisfy the needs of all sheep farmers in the restricted areas of Scotland following the Chernobyl accident in 1986.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Marking paint was available from 13 August 1986.

Prisoners (Solitary Confinement)

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many prisoners are in solitary confinement for disciplinary measures and how many prisoners are in solitary confinement for their own safety, in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Under rule 43 of the Prison (Scotland) Rules 1952, a prisoner may, as a punishment, be confined to his cell for a limited period on the authority of the governor or the visiting committee. This punishment is awarded very rarely and no prisoner is subject to it at present. Under rule 36 of the prison rules, a prisoner may be removed from association, with the authority of the visiting committee or the Secretary of State, in the interests of good order or discipline, or in his own interests. This is not a punishment, and the prisoner has access to normal privileges other than association. At 31 January 1988, 68 adult inmates were being held under this rule.

Assisted Places Scheme

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has decided the amount of fee remission grant to allocate to schools participating in the assisted places scheme in respect of session 1988-89.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The allocations of fee remission grant for 1988-89 are shown in the table. As in 1987-88, 41 schools will participate.

School	£
Albyn School for Girls, Aberdeen	29,000
Belmont House School, Newton Mearns	31,000
Craigholme School for Girls, Glasgow	45,000
Dollar Academy	108,000
Edinburgh Academy	106,000
Fernhill School, Glasgow	69,000
Fettes College, Edinburgh	97,000
Fort Augustus Abbey School	120,000
George Heriot's School, Edinburgh	419,000
Glasgow Academy	81,000
Glenalmond College, Perthshire	140,000
Gordonstoun School, Morayshire	84,000
The High School of Dundee	322,000
The High School of Glasgow	105,000
Hutchesons' Grammar School, Glasgow	219,000
Keil School, Dumbarton	125,000
Kelvinside Academy, Glasgow	118,000
Kilgraston (Convent of the Sacred Heart)	98,000
Kilquhanity House School, Castle Douglas	31,000
Lomond School, Helensburgh	97,000
Loretto School, Musselburgh	87,000
Merchant Company Schools	1,144,000
Merchiston Castle School, Edinburgh	175,000
Morrison's Academy, Crieff	283,000
Rannoch School, Perthshire	75,000
Robert Gordon's College, Aberdeen	88,000
Rudolf Steiner School of Edinburgh	104,000
St. Aloysius' College, Glasgow	230,000
St. Denis & Cranley School, Edinburgh	48,000
St. George's School for Girls, Edinburgh	34,000
St. Leonard's School, St. Andrews	58,000
St. Margaret's School for Girls, Aberdeen	26,000
St. Margaret's School for Girls, Edinburgh	116,000
Strathallan School, Forgandenny, Perthshire	133,000
Wellington School, Ayr	79,000
West of Scotland School Company	506,000
Total	5,630,000

EMPLOYMENT

YTS

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many places on YTS he plans for the Peterlee and Seaham areas of his Department in the year 1988-89.

Mr. Cope: For 1988-89, a total of 1,105 YTS places are provisionally planned in the local authority district of Easington, which includes Easington, Peterlee and Seaham.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people in the Peterlee and Seaham area of his Department have obtained jobs during or following their period on a YTS scheme.

Mr. Cope: Between April 1986 and July 1987, a total of 41 per cent. of young people who left YTS schemes in

the Easington local authority district (which includes Easington, Peterlee and Seaham) were in jobs three months after leaving. Two-year YTS started in April 1986 and so most of those leaving schemes since that date did not complete their training. Results for those completing the two-year course will not be available until the end of this year.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people were employed in manfacturing industry *(a)* in May 1979 and *(b)* at the latest date for which figures are available; and if he will express each figure as a percentage of the total of those in employment.

Mr. Lee: The figures for June 1979 (there are no comparable estimates for May) and September 1987, the latest date for which figures are available are given in the following table:

The Civilian Employed Labour Force in Great Britain

	Number
(a) Manufacturing industries	
June 1979	7,247,000
September 1987	5,328,000
(b) All industries and services	
June 1979	22,480,000
September 1987	24,187,000
(c) (a) expressed as a percentage of *(b)*	
June 1979	32·2
September 1987	22·0

The Civilian Employed Labour Force is the sum of employees in employment and the self employed. The figures are unadjusted for the effects of seasonal variations.

Equal Opportunities

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many of his Department's management training courses include sessions on equal opportunities for women; and what proportion of managers at grade 6 level and above working outside headquarters have received training on equal opportunities for women.

Mr. Nicholls: Most introductory line management training courses include sessions on all aspects of equal opportunities; these cover equal opportunities for women. There are plans to include such sessions in the remaining courses. Other line management courses contain where appropriate either a specific equal opportunities session or a discussion on equal opportunities issues. Overall, 23 courses contain general equal opportunities sessions and there are plans to include such sessions in a further four courses. In addition, three courses contain separate sessions on equal opportunities for women.

Because of their different entry methods and the variety of courses they have attended, it is not possible to identify what proportion of managers at grade 6 level working outside headquarters have received equal opportunities training.

Benefit Claimants

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give, for 1984, 1985, 1986 and 1987, the total number of unemployment benefit claimants allowed to sign quarterly; and if he will give the totals on a similar basis for each unemployment benefit office in Blyth and Cramlington.

Mr. Lee: The numbers of unemployed claimants in Great Britain included in the monthly unemployment count who were allowed to sign quarterly in December 1984, 1985, 1986 and 1987 were 261,466, 291,788, 294,169 and 261,189 respectively. The comparable figures for the Blyth and Cramlington unemployment benefit offices at 10 December 1987 were 418 and 200 respectively. Figures of quarterly attenders are not available below national level for earlier years.

Job Creation

Mr. Yeo: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many more jobs have been created since 1983.

Mr. Lee: There are no figures for job gains and job losses. Between March 1983 and September 1987, the latest date for which figures are available, there was a net increase of 1,449,000 in the size of the employed labour force in Great Britain. The figure has been adjusted for the effects of seasonal variations. The employed labour force is the sum of employees in employment, the self employed and Her Majesty's forces.

Japan (Overseas Visitors)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what initiatives have been taken by his Department to attract overseas visitors from Japan to visit the countries of Britain.

Mr. Lee: Japan is an increasingly important market and determined efforts are directed by the British tourist authiority towards encouraging Japanese people to undertake longer stays in Britain to enable them to visit as much of the country as possible. The 267,000 visitors to the United Kingdom from Japan in 1987 showed a 30 per cent. increase on 1986.

Regional Unemployment

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will outline the measures his Department is undertaking to reduce the regional variations in levels of unemployment in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lee: My Department co-operates closely with regional policy initiatives to bring help where it is most needed. In particular, our wide range of enterprise, employment and training programmes plays an important part in efforts to encourage local job creation, and give unemployed people the skills and experience they need to get back to work. It is most encouraging that over the past 18 months unemployment rates have been falling fastest in regions such as Wales, the north, and north-west, where unemployment was highest.

Job Training Scheme

Mr. Allen McKay: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the number of places available under the present job training scheme; what is the number of places not filled; and how many individuals have obtained credits or qualifications as a direct result of their time on the scheme.

Mr. Cope: The Government have indicated that they were willing to provide resources for up to 110,000 people to be in training on the new job training scheme at any one time.

At the end of December 1987, the latest date for which figures are available there were 24,418 formerly unemployed people participating in the new job training scheme.

Information on credits or qualifications is not yet available. The Manpower Services Commission has commissioned a follow-up survey which will give some information on qualifications. The results should be known in the spring.

Mr. Allen McKay: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, when the new job training scheme becomes part of a larger programme, how many places will be available; what is his estimate of take-up, based upon experience of previous schemes; and how many individuals he expects to acquire vocational or certified credits towards qualifications.

Mr. Cope: The new job training scheme will become a part of the new training programme for unemployed adults from September. Details of the new programme are currently under consideration.

Lancashire County Council (Grants)

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what grants have been allocated by the Manpower Services Commission to Lancashire county council for 1988-89; what grants were made in 1987-88; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: The estimated level of payments is provided in the table.

Programme/Scheme	*1987-88 £000s*	*1988-89 £000s*
Technical and Vocational Education Initiative	288	[1]280
YTS	1,920	1,759
Work Related Non-Advanced Further Education	3,820	3,845
Old Job Training Scheme	387	[2]260
Community Programme	3,700	[2]1,637
Training Linked to the Community Programme	17	[2]5
Wider Opportunities Training Programme	132	[2]42
Access to Information Technology	3	—
Industrial Language Training Service	99	[2]41

[1] Payment for 1988-89 is still subject to contract.
[2] Estimates for 1988-89 relate to the period April to August only.

We are currently considering proposals from the Manpower Services Commission for the operation of the new adult training programme which will replace the community programme, training linked to the community programme, the old job training scheme, the wider opportunities training programme (and some other programmes) from September 1988.

Estimates for the level of payments for these existing programmes have therefore been made for the period up to the end of August 1988.

DEFENCE

Low-flying Aircraft (Benbecula)

Mr. MacDonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Western Isles on 14 December 1987, *Official Report*, column *414*, he will make a statement on *(a)* the cause of the incident involving a low-flying United States air force F-111 over Benbecula on 12 September 1983, *(b)* the height and speed at which the aircraft was flying, *(c)* information available to him on what disciplinary measures were taken against the aircrew and *(d)* what revisions were made to instructions to aircrew concerning mock attacks on RAF Benbecula; and if he will place in the Library a copy of the report of the official investigation into the incident.

Mr. Freeman: The incident involving an F-111 aircraft of the United States air force engaged in routine training over RAF Benbecula on 12 September 1983 was investigated fully by the Royal Air Force with the complete co-operation of the United States air force. It is not the practice to make public the findings of such investigations, since their efficient conduct relies heavily upon evidence volunteered in confidence. Appropriate steps have been taken to regulate military flying activity in the vicinity of RAF Benbecula.

Nuclear Warheads

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many nuclear warheads and their delivery vehicles have been withdrawn from Europe as a result of multilateral or bilateral agreements by the United States and Soviet Union since 1958.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I have nothing to add to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas), on 23 November 1987, at column *36*.

Security Services

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the statement by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary, the hon. Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman) on 26 January, *Official Report*, column *259*, when the hon. Member for Linlithgow may expect to receive a formal and substantive reply to the points raised during the debate on the Army, concerning the legal status of the security services, relations between British intelligence and Australian intelligence in respect of the Whitlam Government, and responsibility for the La Belle discotheque outrage.

Mr. Freeman: A reply will be sent soon.

Lynx Helicopter

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received from Westland plc concerning the announcement of the award of a contract for the new 360 deg. radar to be fitted to the Lynx helicopter.

Mr. Sainsbury: No contract has been placed. However, we are considering representations from a number of propective suppliers including Westland plc.

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects the modernisation programme for the Royal Navy's Lynx helicopter fleet to be completed.

Mr. Sainsbury: The modernisation programme for the Royal Navy's Lynx helicopter will be carried out by a phased conversion programme which it is planned to complete by the mid-1990s.

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total value of contracts so far awarded as part of the modernisation of the Royal Navy's Lynx helicopter fleet.

Mr. Sainsbury: The value of total commitment to date is £83 million.

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what reasons have led to the delay in the announcement of the award of the contract for the new 360 deg radar to be fitted to the Lynx helicopter;

(2) what issues he is considering in deciding on the award of the contract for the new 360 deg radar to be fitted to the Lynx helicopter;

(3) when he expects to announce the award of the contract for the new 360 deg radar to be fitted to the Lynx helicopter;

(4) what assessment he has made of the defence implications of any delays in announcing the award of the contract for the new 360 deg radar to be fitted to the Lynx helicopter.

Mr. Sainsbury: I have nothing yet to add to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Ashford (Mr. Speed) on 16 November 1987 at column *455*.

Graduate Engineer Officers

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many engineer officers graduated from training in *(a)* 1985, *(b)* 1986 and *(c)* 1987.

Mr. Freeman: The number of Royal Air Force engineer officers who entered productive service in each year is as follows:

	Number
1985	166
1986	121
1987	189

Pilots

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the present ratio of pilots to aircraft in the Royal Air Force.

Mr. Freeman: Including pilots in all roles, approximately 2·3:1.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Royal Air Force pilots graduated to fly *(a)* fast jets, *(b)* multi-engined aircraft and *(c)* helicopters in 1987.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is as follows: *(a)* 67; *(b)* 75; *(c)* 33.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the present ratio of fast-jet pilots to frontline fast-jet aircraft.

Mr. Freeman: It is not our practice to disclose such details relating to operational aircraft.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many pilots who took premature voluntary retirement in 1987 or who have requested premature voluntary retirement were trained fast-jet pilots.

Mr. Freeman: The numbers of trained fast-jet pilots who in 1987 took, or requested, premature voluntary retirement were 35 and 33 respectively.

RAF Personnel

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Royal Air Force airmen currently serve in each of the following categories: *(a)* armaments engineering branch, *(b)* mechanical engineering branch, *(c)* electrical engineering branch and *(d)* electronics branch.

Mr. Freeman: As at 1 January 1988, the numbers of trained airmen currently serving in the specified groupings of trades, covering both aircraft and ground support engineering, are as follows:

	Numbers
a. Armament Engineering	3,285
b. Mechanical Engineering	15,880
c. Electrical Engineering	4,436
d. Electronic Engineering	11,554

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Royal Air Force airmen became qualified in 1987 to serve in each of the following branches: *(a)* armaments engineering branch, *(b)* mechanical engineering branch, *(c)* electrical engineering branch and *(d)* electronics branch.

Mr. Freeman: The numbers of RAF airmen who entered the trained strength in 1987 were:

	Numbers
a. Armaments Engineering	152
b. Mechanical Engineering	632
c. Electrical Engineering	224
d. Electronic Engineering	739

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many Royal Air Force airmen in the armament engineer branch left the Royal Air Force in *(a)* 1985, *(b)* 1986 and *(c)* 1987; and how many of these failed to complete their engagement;

(2) how many Royal Air Force airmen in the electronic engineer branch left the Royal Air Force in *(a)* 1985, *(b)* 1986 and *(c)* 1987; and how many of these failed to complete their engagement;

(3) how many Royal Air Force airmen in the electrical engineer branch left the Royal Air Force in *(a)* 1985, *(b)* 1986 and *(c)* 1987; and how many of these failed to complete their engagement;

(4) how many Royal Air Force airmen in the mechanical engineer branch left the Royal Air Force in *(a)* 1985, *(b)* 1986 and *(c)* 1987; and how many of these failed to complete their engagements.

Mr. Freeman: The numbers of airmen in each of the specified groupings of trades who left the RAF in each of the last three years, together with the numbers of those who failed to complete their engagements, are as follows:

Grouping of Trades	1985 Total Outflow	1985 Failed to Complete Engagement	1986 Total Outflow	1986 Failed to Complete Engagement	1987 Total Outflow	1987 Failed to Complete Engagement
Armaments	161	92	147	85	122	63
Mechanical	858	394	921	436	850	380
Electrical	247	98	258	110	208	103
Electronic	676	303	702	333	571	246

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many engineer officers left the Royal Air Force in *(a)* 1985, *(b)* 1986 and *(c)* 1987; and how many of these failed to complete their engagement.

Mr. Freeman: The numbers of engineer officers who left the Royal Air Force in each year were as follows:

	Total Outflow	Failed to Complete/ Engagement
(a) 1985	110	84
(b) 1986	132	95
(c) 1987	139	93

INF Treaty

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) whether Her Majesty's Government were consulted before the inclusion in the intermediate nuclear forces treaty of the clause permitting the re-use and repackaging of fissile material and components from the warheads of Pershing II and ground-launched cruise missiles;

(2) whether he had been consulted or has any knowledge of the United States Government's intention to use fissile material and components from the warheads of Pershing II and ground-launched cruise missiles withdrawn under the terms of the intermediate nuclear forces treaty for use in other nuclear weapons intended for European deployment.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The Government were fully consulted by the United States Government throughout the negotiation of the INF treaty, which is specific to the elimination of missiles, launchers, support equipment and facilities. It contains no express provision governing the future use of fissile materials. The warheads for the Pershing II and GLCM missiles to be withdrawn under the INF agreement are, like the missiles themselves, wholly the property of the United States Government and the use of the nuclear material they contain will be entirely a matter for the United States Government.

Stinger Missiles

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the threat to Royal Navy Lynx helicopters on the Armila patrol from Iranian gunboats equipped with Stinger missiles.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The range of threats to our naval forces in the Gulf is kept under constant review, but it would not be in the interests of their security to reveal our assessment of such threats.

Helicopters (Gulf Duty)

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) whether all Royal Naval helicopters currently on deployment in the Gulf are equipped with passive decoys against Stinger missiles; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether all Royal Naval helicopters currently on deployment in the Gulf have armaments capable of destroying Boghammer raiding craft; and if he will make a statement;

(3) whether Sea Skua is capable of destroying Boghammer raiding craft; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Royal Navy helicopters serving with the patrol are provided with equipment relevant to the range of threats they face in carrying out their operational tasks. It would not be in the interests of the safety of our helicopters and their crews to define the specific capabilities of individual aircraft.

Pensions

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will estimate the cost of bringing the pensions of those who retired from the armed services between 1976 and 1978 into line with those who have retired since; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Pensions currently in issue to retired members of the armed forces vary with each year of retirement as a result of periodic changes in rates of pay and annual adjustments under index-linking arrangements. There is, therefore, no satisfactory basis for making the estimate requested.

Trident

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) pursuant to his answer of 1 February, *Official Report*, column *444*, whether United Kingdom Trident warheads will be reattached to missiles by United Kingdom personnel at the United States Trident facility in King's bay, Georgia; and if he will make a statement;

(2) pursuant to his answer of 1 February, *Official Report*, column *444*, whether any British warheads will be stored at the United States Trident facility at King's bay Georgia; and if he will make a statement;

(3) pursuant to his answer of 1 February, *Official Report*, column *444*, if he will estimate how many British military and civilian personnel will be employed at the United States Trident facility at King's bay, Georgia.

Mr. Sainsbury: As has been stated previously, the United Kingdom-designed and built Trident warhead will at all times remain in United Kingdom hands. These warheads will be mated to and demated from United Kingdom Trident missiles at RNAD Coulport exclusively. No United Kingdom Trident warheads will therefore be transported to, or stored or handled at the United States

facility at King's bay, Georgia by any personnel. It is not planned that any United Kingdom staff will be permanently employed at King's bay.

TRANSPORT

Road Haulage Permits

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many of the applications for European Community multilateral road haulage permits to be submitted by 31 December 1987 were successful; and how many successful applications originated in *(a)* England, *(b)* Scotland, *(c)* Wales and *(d)* Northern Ireland.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There were 189 applicants for the extra 125 multilateral permits. Hauliers based in England obtained 107, in Scotland three, in Wales four and in Northern Ireland eleven. These were additional to the United Kingdom's 1987 quota of 902 permits.

Carlton PSV

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will undertake an urgent inquiry into the financial standings of Carlton PSV before he allows further sales of National Bus Company holdings to proceed, especially in relation to Crewe and Nantwich.

Mr. David Mitchell: I have received no proposals from the National Bus Company for further sales to Carlton PSV; I have no reason to think that any inquiry is necessary.

Horne Report

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement concerning the current position of his Department in relation to recommendation 67 of the report of Professor Horne and his committee on the liaison between highway authorities and public utilities.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Government's response to the Horne report called for negotiations between local authority associations and the National Joint Utilities Group on reommendation 67 which relates to diversions of services made necessary by highway authorities' works. Negotiations started late. Good progress has since been made in working out a code of practice; related financial issues are also currently under discussion.

I hope that the negotiations will be completed within the next four to five months. We shall take the results into account in preparing the legislation required to implement the Horne report.

Public Transport Policies

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how his Department seeks to develop public transport policies within given travel-to-work areas, concomitant with population changes within those areas.

Mr. David Mitchell: In London it is the responsibility of London Regional Transport and the British Railways Board to provide a secure public transport service in response to changes in demographic and other relevant factors and in accordance with principles approved by the Secretary of State. Outside London, responsibility rests with the local authorities concerned to supplement local commercial services in accordance with their general public transport policies.

Herald of Free Enterprise

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if his Department has had any communication with the International Maritime Organisation secretariat concerning possible breaches of *(a)* the international maritime dangerous goods code and *(b)* the 1974 international convention for the safety of life at sea in regard to the known cargo inventory of the Herald of Free Enterprise when it sank at Zeebrugge.

Mr. David Mitchell: No. It is not a requirement under either the code or the convention for breaches of regulations to be reported to the International Maritime Organisation's secretariat.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has concerning the exact cargo inventory carried on the Herald of Free Enterprise ferry when it sank at Zeebrugge in March 1987.

Mr. David Mitchell: The Department has a copy of the manifest for the last voyage of the Herald of Free Enterprise which indentifies all the goods-carrying vehicles on board and details the contents of their loads. None of the goods disclosed on the manifest were of a type prohibited from carriage on passenger vessels.

Lancashire County Council (Grants)

Mr. Hind: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what grants he has allocated to Lancashire county council for 1988-89; what allocations were made in 1987-88; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Transport supplementary grant allocated to Lancashire county council is £4,683,000 for 1988-89 and £6,375,000 for 1987-88.

Grant is paid at 50 per cent. of accepted expenditure. The lower grant in 1988-89 results primarily from the fact that expenditure on some important major schemes accepted for grant is coming to an end. One new major scheme was accepted for 1988-89 with expenditure in the year of £1·4 million. Adjustments of £1·5 million were made to reflect lower than expected expenditure on some aspects of the county's programme in previous years.

A grant of around £7,000 in 1987-88 has been approved under section 272 of the Highways Act 1980.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Social Security Reform

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish a table showing the levels of gross earnings in April at which *(a)* a single householder, *(b)* a married couple, *(c)* a married couple with two children aged four and six years and *(d)* a single parent with one child, aged three years, will lose housing benefit, assuming full take-up of family credit, average rent and rates and other assumptions, as in his reply to the hon. Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay) *Official Report*, 1 December 1987, column *566*.

Mr. Scott: On the basis of illustrative assumptions about the level of rents, rates and tax allowances from

April 1988, informaion about the levels of gross income at which entitlement to housing benefit will cease is set out in the table.

	(1) Assumed tax allowance per year £	(2) Assumed rent per week £	(3) Assumed rates per week £	(4) Total gross weekly income at which housing benefit runs out £	(5) Gross income in Column 4 made up of Gross wages £	Child benefit £	Family credit £
Single Householder (aged 25-59)	2,505·00	15·94	6·67	75·20	75·20	—	—
Married Couple (one over 18, both under 60)	3,925·00	17·82	7·50	107·20	107·20	—	—
Married Couple (one over 18, both under 60) with two children aged 4 and 6	3,925·00	19·12	8·02	129·41	91·00	14·50	23·91
Single Parent (over 18) one child aged 3	3,925·00	17·82	7·50	104·30	54·00	12·15	38·15

Notes:
1. The tax rate is assumed to be 27 per cent.
2. The tax allowance for the Single Parent consists of the single person's tax allowance and the additional personal allowance.

Thames Health Regions

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the revenue derived from services to private patients by hospitals in each of the four Thames health regions in the last year for which figures are available; and how this compares with *(a)* five and *(b)* 10 years ago.

Mrs. Currie: Following is the information requested:

Income from charges to private patients[1]

	Per annual accounts £000	At 1986-87 prices £000
North West Thames Region		
1976-77	4,250	10,425
1981-82	7,946	10,161
1986-87	5,965	5,965
North East Thames Region		
1976-77	3,270	8,021
1981-82	6,395	8,178
1986-87	8,837	8,837
South East Thames Region		
1976-77	3,138	7,697
1981-82	6,906	8,831
1986-87	6,592	6,592
South West Thames Region		
1976-77	1,454	3,567
1981-82	2,889	3,694
1986-87	2,621	2,691

[1] Charges for accommodation and treatment under sections 65 and 66 of the National Health Service Act 1977 and previous legislation (ie. in-patients and out-patients).

Source:
Annual accounts of regional and district (formerly area) health authorities comprising the four Thames regions.

Note:
The figures for the earlier years have been expressed at 1986-87 prices by the use of the Gross Domestic Product deflator.

NHS Patients (Statistics)

Mr. Redwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what proportion of in-patients in National Health Service hospitals develop infections or other medical conditions after they have entered hospital as a patient.

Mrs. Currie: The only such condition for which statistics are currently centrally available is for the post-operative infection. In 1984 the estimated percentage of in-patient cases with a diagnosis of post operative infection, for all RHAs, was 0·7 per cent. A figure for 1985 will be available shortly and I will write to my hon. Friend when it is to hand.

Invalid Care Allowance

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when Mrs. Ingrid Joan Gorman of 14 Allerton Grove, Birkenhead, will receive the invalid care allowance which she applied for in December 1986 under reference No. 071904.

Mr. Scott: Mrs. Gorman's claim was decided on 28 January and she should receive payment within the next seven days. I regret that processing of the claim took much longer than is usual and I am writing to the hon. Member.

Benefits

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will set out in tabular form the number of *(a)* claimants and *(b)* dependants claiming housing benefit; and if he will give comparable data on the numbers claiming at the introduction of the scheme.

Mr. Scott: Housing benefit was fully introduced in April 1983. The number of people receiving housing benefit in the autumn of 1983 was 6,970,000, and in the autumn of 1986 was 7,180,000. We do not collect centrally the number of dependants.

Mentally Ill People

Mr. Irving: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services which regional health authorities have assigned funds to bridge the transition to community-based services for the mentally ill from their own resources; and when these funds were first established.

Mrs. Currie: The following regional health authorities operate bridging funds for achieving the tansition to community based services for mentally ill people.

Regional Health Authority	Financial year of starting
Trent	1985-86
Yorkshire	1984-85
South-East Thames	1985-86
North-East Thames	1985-86
North-West Thames	1987-88
South-West Thames	1984-85
West Midlands	1987-88
East Anglian	1983-84
North Western	1984-85
Mersey	1987-88

Bridging funds are not the only financing mechanism for achieving such a change. Other regions have adopted different arrangements.

"A Child in Mind"

Mr. Higgins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will arrange for hon. Members to be able to obtain copies of the Louis Blom-Cooper report, entitled "A Child in Mind," on a Green Card from the Vote Office.

Mr. Newton: I regret that I am unable to do so, as this is not a departmental or Her Majesty's Stationery Office publication. However, I have arranged for copies to be placed in the Library.

District Health Authorities

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will consider addressing a meeting of chairmen of district health authorities in England and Wales to discuss current problems affecting the National Health Service.

Mrs. Currie: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State regular meets the chairmen of regional health authorities. They, in turn, are in close contact with their district health authority chairmen, whose views can thereby be conveyed to Ministers. In addition, I and my ministerial colleagues attend meetings of district chairmen with their regional chairman in the regions whenever possible.

Income Support

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services to what extent the introduction of income support will affect families with children whose breadwinner is not in work.

Mr. Scott: The information is set out in the "Impact of the Reformed Structure of Income-Related Benefits" which was published at the time of the uprating statement on 27 October 1987. Table 2A shows that 880,000 claimants under pension age who have children will have an increased entitlement and 270,000 will be unaffected by the change. Because of transitional protection no one in this group will experience a drop in total benefit income at the point of change. A copy of this document is in the Library.

Family Income Supplement

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what effects he expects the abolition of family income supplement to have on the income of families with children whose breadwinner is in work.

Mr. Scott: Family income supplement will be replaced by family credit, and we estimate that this new benefit should help more than twice as many families as family income supplement does at present. Almost all will receive more from family credit than from family income supplement, had it continued. Further details appear in tables 3A and 3B of "Impact of the reformed structure of income related benefits", October 1987, copies of which are available in the Library.

Departmental Offices (Staffing)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he intends to change the levels of staffing at his Department's offices in view of the changes in the social security regime in April; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The results of the annual local office recomplementing exercise for the 1988-89 year are expected to be announced in March 1988. These will take account of a number of factors including procedural changes arising from the implementation of income support and social fund.

Correspondence

Sir Geoffey Finsberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate will receive a substantive response to the letter sent on 23 November 1987 to the Minister for Social Security and the Disabled about his constituent Mr. Duff and the attendance allowance requested for his wife.

Mr. Scott: I replied to my hon. Friend yesterday.

Compensation Payments

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if the arrangements with regard to the £8 compensation payments being made to pensioners with respect to the miscalculations of the retail prices index will provide that those pensioners who receive their benefits in the form of two concurrent books will receive two £8 payments, and those who have only one book will receive only one payment.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if claimants receiving more than one allowance will be eligible to receive the £8 payment in respect of each allowance being received; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member and my hon. Friend to my reply to the hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) on 4 February 1988.

Drivers (Eye Tests)

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his estimate of the level of charges for compulsory eye tests for motor vehicle drivers required to raise a sum equivalent to the sum expected to be raised by charging for eye tests under the Health and Medicines Bill, and if he will provide figures for tests at one year, two years and three year intervals, respectively.

Mr. Newton: The Health and Medicines Bill does not provide for revenue to be raised by charging for National Health Service sight tests. It proposes to limit the free NHS

test to certain groups. Any charge for tests for those in other groups will be for those providing them to determine.

Coventry (Doctors Deputising Service)

Mr. John Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what information he has on the Coventry doctors deputising service's extra availability for heavily deprived areas;

(2) what information he has for each of the last five years for the spending on the Coventry doctors deputising service and the deputising usage rates for each family practitioner committee;

(3) what information he has as to the proposed 30 per cent. cut in the Coventry doctors deputising service; and on whose instructions the decision was taken.

Mr. Newton: Within the framework of the Department's guidance issued to family practitioner committees, policy on consent to use is a matter for individual FPCs to determine taking into account local conditions which may be modified for different parts of their area. I regret, therefore, that information on levels of usage is not readily available centrally. Nor is information held centrally on GPs' expenses specifically incurred for deputising services.

As far as Coventry is concerned, I understand that the FPC has no plans to cut levels of consent by 30 per cent. and that the needs of deprived areas are taken into account in deciding permitted levels of use by individual practices.

Medical Negligence

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has any plans, in the light of the Opren case, to propose amendments to the law relating to medical negligence.

Mr. Newton: We have no plans to amend the law in the light of the Opren case, still before the court, where allegations of negligence and liability have been neither admitted by the defendants nor determined by the court. Under the relevant provisions of the Consumer Protection Act 1987, which come into force on 1 March 1988, it will no longer be necessary for an individual to prove negligence in order to establish liability in a case where a court is satisfied that a defect in a medicinal product caused personal injury.

Private Nursing Homes

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will introduce legislation to empower community health councils to inspect private nursing homes to which National Health Service patients are discharged; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: Community health councils were set up to advise on the operation of the National Health Service in their districts. Community health councils have a statutory right to visit NHS hospital premises. Private nursing homes are outside the NHS and a statutory right to visit these does not exist. However it has been agreed with representations of the private health sector that CHCs should have access to appropriate parts of premises where NHS patients receive services under contractual arrangements. We have no plans to introduce legislation.

Medicines (Information)

Mr. Burt: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what proposals he has to improve information about medicines.

Mr. Newton: I have placed in the Library a copy of a consultation package which has been issued on information about medicines, and which is being made widely available to professional, consumer, and industrial organisations.

The aim is promoting the safer use of medicines by improving information available to the public, doctors and pharmacists. In particular, it is proposed to require clearer label warnings and instructions, more information about composition, and manufacturer site identification. As required by S129(6) of the Medicines Act 1968, the next step is to have the views of representative organisations before making regulations.

Psychogeriatric Patients

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the numbers of psychogeriatric patients in the central Nottinghamshire health authority area for each year from 1979 to 1987 inclusive.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 15 January 1988]:* Patients being treated for the psychiatry of old age (psychogeriatrics) may be seen in mental illness or psychiatric wards. Local practice varies and central data may therefore be misleading. The hon. Member may wish to write to the chairman of Central Nottinghamshire health authority for the information.

National Health Service (Funding)

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what extra revenue would be raised for the National Health Service if the weekly contribution from those in work were raised to its 1962-63 level of 17·2 per cent. of the National Health Service budget; and to what level weekly national insurance contributions would have to rise to meet this level of funding.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 21 January 1988]:* An increase to 17·2 per cent. in the proportion of National Health Service net spending in Great Britain funded by the NHS contribution would have involved an extra £715 million being met from this source in 1987-88. The proportion of net spending funded by general taxation would have fallen correspondingly to 79 per cent. of the total. Such a change, if applied equally to employees and employers, would have required class 1 contribution rates in each case to be 0·2 per cent. higher.

Hospital Building

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if there are any plans for new hospital developments in the Nottingham, central Nottingham and Bassetlaw district health authority areas.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 1 February 1988]:* The table gives details of major schemes over £1 million in total cost included in Trent regional health authority's larger schemes building programme over the strategic plan period to 1993-94. Individual district health authorities are responsible for capital development below this sum and

the hon. Member may wish to approach the chairman of the DHAs concerned for information about these. The following schemes are currently in progress:

	Estimated total cost £ million	Currently estimated completion date
Bassetlaw Health Authority		
Bassetlaw DGH phase 2	6·69	April 1990
Central Nottinghamshire Health Authority		
Ashfield local hospital phase 1	[1]0·61	August 1988
Mansfield Victoria local hospital phase 1	[1]0·78	August 1988
Newark local hospital phase 1	[1]0·47	May 1988
Nottingham Health Authority		
Sherwood hospital phase 4	1·13	January 1989
Nottingham general hospital—conversion of Trent wing	1·05	October 1988

The following schemes are at the detailed planning stage:

	Estimated total cost £ million	Currently estimated completion date
Bassetlaw Health Authority		
Bassetlaw DGH phase 2A	4·8	1992
(The funding of this scheme remains subject to formal RHA approval).		
Central Nottinghamshire Health Authority		
Dukeries local hospital phase 1	[1]0·30	1988-89
Kings Mill hospital, Mansfield, phase 3	20·6	1991
Ashfield local hospital, phase 2	6·15	1992
Mansfield Victoria local hospital, phase 2	2·16	1992
Nottingham Health Authority		
Nottingham city hospital, extension to X-ray department	5·0	1991
Nottingham city hospital, ESMI assessment unit	1·5	1991
Nottingham city hospital renal unit, and Nottingham city hospital, radiotherapy centre	8·0	1992
Rushcliffe local hospital	4·26	1992

The following schemes are also included in outline in the Regional Strategic Plan and remain subject to detailed planning:

	Estimated total cost £ million	Currently estimated completion date
Bassetlaw Health Authority		
Bassetlaw DGH phase 3	12·0	1996
Central Nottinghamshire Health Authority		
Newark local hospital development, phase 2	5·52	1993
Dukeries local hospital development, phase 2	[2]	—
Kings Mill hospital, Mansfield, phase 4	[2]	1996
Nottingham Health Authority		
Nottingham city hospital, Extension to operating theatres	2·0	1992-93
Nottingham city hospital, medical unit	3·5	1993-94
District psychiatric centre	4·0	1993
Nottingham city hospital, catering department	1·4	1993
Gedling local hospital	3·27	1993-94
Highbury—new local hospital for the elderly	2·5	1994

[1] Completed schemes will cost over £1 million.
[2] Not yet known.

Infant Mortality

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the six health authorities with the highest percentage of post-neonatal deaths for each year since 1975.

Mrs. Currie *[pursuant to her reply, 26 January 1988, c. 219]:* The full information requested can be provided only at disproportionate cost. However, readily available figures for regional health authorities, and for district health authorities are shown in the tables.

Regional Health Authorities (RHAs) with the highest post-neonatal mortality rates, 1975-86, England and Wales

Regional Health Authority	Rate
1975	
North Western	5·9
East Anglia	5·6
Trent	5·2
South East Thames	5·2
North East Thames	5·1
West Midlands	5·0
1976	
Yorkshire	5·1
North Western	5·1
Wessex	4·9
East Anglia	4·6
South East Thames	4·6
West Midlands	4·6
1977	
Yorkshire	5·1
North East Thames	5·0
North Western	4·9
Northern	4·9
West Midlands	4·5
Mersey	4·4
South East Thames	4·4
1978	
South East Thames	4·9
South West Thames	4·7
Wessex	4·6
West Midlands	4·6
South Western	4·5
North Western	4·5
1979	
Yorkshire	5·2
South East Thames	5·0
East Anglia	4·8
Mersey	4·8
North Western	4·7
Wessex	4·7
West Midlands	4·7
1980	
Mersey	4·9
Wessex	4·9
South East Thames	4·7
South West Thames	4·6
Yorkshire	4·6
North East Thames	4·5
North Western	4·5
North West Thames	4·5
1981	
Wessex	5·2
Yorkshire	5·1
South East Thames	4·8
North Western	4·5
West Midlands	4·4
South Western	4·3
Wales	4·3
1982	
North West Thames	4·9
North Western	4·8
South Western	4·8
South East Thames	4·7
Wessex	4·7
Yorkshire	4·7

Regional Health Authority	Rate
1983	
Wessex	5·0
North Western	4·8
Yorkshire	4·6
South Western	4·5
East Anglia	4·3
Trent	4·3
1984	
North Western	4·5
Yorkshire	4·5
Wessex	4·3
South East Thames	4·1
North East Thames	4·0
South West Thames	3·9
1985	
South East Thames	4·6
Yorkshire	4·6
North Western	4·5
North East Thames	4·0
Oxford	4·0
North West Thames	3·9
Wales	3·9
Wessex	3·9
1986	
North Western	5·0
South Western	4·9
Yorkshire	4·6
South East Thames	4·5
Wessex	4·3
South West Thames	4·2

[1] Deaths four weeks and over but under one year per 1,000 live births.

District Health authorities (DHAs) with the highest postneonatal mortality rates[1], 1983-86, England

District Health Authority	Rate
1983-84	
Grimsby	8·5
Burnley	7·9
Wandsworth	7·3
Salford	7·2
Scarborough	6·9
Bloomsbury	6·9
1984-85	
Salford	7·9
Central Birmingham	7·2
Greenwich	6·8
Scarborough	6·6
Winchester	6·4
Macclesfield	6·3
1985-86	
Rugby	8·8
Bloomsbury	7·4
Brighton	7·0
Scarborough	7·0
Torbay	6·8
Milton Keynes	6·6

[1] Deaths 4 weeks and over but under 1 year per 1,000 live births.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Register of Interests

Mr. Madden: To ask the Lord President of the Council when the latest issue of the Members' Register of Interests is to be published; how many right hon. and hon. Members have submitted entries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: The Register of Members' Interests was laid before the House on 8 December 1987 and published on 28 January 1988. As to the number of right hon. and hon. Members who have registered their interests, I refer the hon. Gentleman to the first report of the Select Committee on Members' Interests (H.C. 199).

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Farm Woodlands Scheme

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many farmers have so far expressed an interest in applying for grants under the proposed farm woodlands grant scheme.

Mr. Gummer: As the Farm Land and Rural Development Bill is still before Parliament and as the subordinate legislation will need to be made when the Bill has received Royal Assent, we cannot launch this scheme until later this year. It would therefore be premature to try to estimate the likely level of interest. There have, however, been an encouraging number of general inquiries.

Pigmeat MCAs

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will estimate the annual cost to the Exchequer of the existing European Communities monetary compensatory amounts paid on pigmeat.

Mr. MacGregor: Expenditure on monetary compensatory amounts is fully funded by the Community budget to which the United Kingdom's contribution is about 20 per cent. before abatement by the Fontainebleau mechanism. However, the available figures do not show expenditure on pigmeat MCAs separately, and therefore no estimate can be made of the cost to the Exchequer of such expenditure.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish the estimated level of public expenditure planned for pigmeat monetary compensatory amounts between now and fiscal year 1992-93.

Mr. MacGregor: United Kingdom MCAs are paid as subsidies on imports and charged as levies on exports. Because of Community arrangements designed to simplify MCA administration, many transactions involving United Kingdom MCAs are handled in other member states. Moreover, United Kingdom provision figures do not identify pigmeat mcas separately. For these reasons, it is not possible to provide the answers sought.

EEC Export Refunds

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to ensure that European Community export refunds more accurately and quickly reflect changes in international currency exchanges.

Mr. MacGregor: The Commission is responsible for operating the export refund arrangements, and does so in conjunction with the various commodity management committees. We press for modifications whenever these are required by altered circumstances.

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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 126**

SESSION 1987–88

25th January-5th February 1988

SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc, between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

Oral and Written Parliamentary Questions are indexed under subject headings and the names of Members asking and Ministers replying to them. Questions are not listed under the names of Departments replying. Departmental listings can be arrived at indirectly by looking under the names of the Minister(s) of that Department. There are, however, the headings 'Northern Ireland', 'Scotland', and 'Wales' under which one can find not only most Questions answered by the Northern Ireland Office, Scottish Office, Welsh Office but also Questions about these areas of the United Kingdom which are answered by other Departments. Ministerial statements are indexed under subject headings, under 'Ministerial statements' and the names of Ministers making them and Members speaking on them. General debates are indexed under broad subject headings and under the names of all Members and Ministers taking part. Debates on legislation (Bills, Orders, Regulations etc.) are indexed under the name of the Bill, Statutory Instrument etc, under subject headings and under the names of those taking part.

Rulings and Statements by Mr Speaker and his deputies are brought together under the heading Speaker's rulings and statements.

Other contributions by Mr Speaker and his deputies appear under the heading Speaker.

Opposition Day Debates, Estimates Day Debates and Standing Order No. 10 applications are listed under those respective headings and under subject headings too.

The date of each item except Parliamentary Questions is inserted immediately before the reference.

Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions*.

Abbreviations

Bills 1R = first reading, 2R = second reading, Money res = money resolution, Com = Committee stage, Rep = Report stage, 3R = third reading, amendt/amendts = amendment/amendments, * = matter taken formally, without debate.

Column numbers followed by the letter W refer to Written Questions. These appear at the end of each daily part or volume with their own sequence of column numbers printed in italics.

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